This is the published version of a paper published in .

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Lindholm, S. (2022)
The National Socialist-led German school in Stockholm 1941-1945: an institution of cultural propaganda
_Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea : Imagining North-Eastern Europe. Baltic and Scandinavian states in the eyes of local, regional, and global observers_, 4(52): 44-61

Access to the published version may require subscription.

N.B. When citing this work, cite the original published paper.

Creative Commons Attribuzione – Condividi allo stesso modo 4.0 Unported.

Permanent link to this version:
http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:sh:diva-50513
4/ The National-Socialist-led German school in Stockholm 1941-1945: an institution of cultural propaganda *

Susan LINDHOLM

ABSTRACT: On the 21st of October 1941, a National-Socialist-led German school opened its doors in Stockholm. At the opening ceremony, both Swedish and German officials alluded to long-standing historical connections between the two countries and described the school as a warrant for cultural exchange and Swedish-German education. The National-Socialist regime itself had a special interest in the Nordic countries in general, and Sweden in particular, as Northern Europe was imagined as an essential part of a racialized German Kulturvolk. However, while the National-Socialist regime envisioned the establishment of a German school as an instrument of cultural propaganda, a difficult balance had to be maintained at the school. This article discusses how the school became part of National-Socialist propaganda by studying the way in which a specific NS-version of Germanness was activated and instrumentalized by National-Socialist officials and teachers between 1941-45.

***

ABSTRACT: Il 21 ottobre 1941, una scuola tedesca sotto il controllo del Partito nazionalsocialista apriva le sue porte a Stoccolma. Alla cerimonia di apertura, tanto i funzionari svedesi quanto quelli tedeschi fecero riferimento ai legami storici di lunga data tra i due Paesi e descrissero la scuola come un garanzia per lo scambio culturale e l'istruzione svedese-tedesca. Lo stesso regime nazionalsocialista covava un interesse speciale per i Paesi nordici in generale, e per la Svezia in particolare, poiché l'Europa settentrionale era considerata come parte essenziale di un Kulturvolk tedesco dai connotati razziali. Tuttavia, mentre il regime nazista prevedeva l’istituzione di una scuola tedesca come strumento di propaganda culturale, al suo interno si rese necessario mantenere un difficile equilibrio. Questo articolo analizza le modalità attraverso cui la scuola divenne parte della propaganda nazionalsocialista, studiando il modo in cui una specifica versione nazista della germanità fu propugnata e strumentalizzata dai funzionari e dagli insegnanti nazisti tra il 1941 e il 1945.

Introduction

On the 21st of October 1941, an National-Socialist-led school opened its doors in Stockholm. The opening ceremony took place in a newly renovated building at Karlavägen 25, in the presence of representatives of the German legation in Stockholm, as well as Swedish aristocracy and politicians such as princess Sibylla and minister of education Gösta Bagge1. In his opening speech,

* This article is part of the research project “An Entangled History of the Kulturnation. The German Schools
The National-Socialist-led German school in Stockholm 1941-1945: an institution of cultural propaganda

professor Erik Wellander, who had been appointed the Swedish inspector of the school, alluded to longstanding historical connections between Germany and Sweden; connections, that in terms of a German school in Stockholm can be traced back to the year 1612, as Swedish king Gustav II Adolf granted the St. Getrud’s congregation the right to establish a German school in the city². Wellander’s speech, which was held in Swedish and Latin instead of German can, according to Birgitta Almgren be, seen as an attempt to navigate a difficult situation³. The school opened its doors during an ongoing world war in a neutral country, which had witnessed its neighbors being occupied by (Denmark and Norway) or joining forces with German troops (Finland). As a consequence, many feared that the school’s main purpose was to operate as an institution of NS-propaganda. The idea to establish an NS-led German school in Stockholm had, in fact, already been discussed in 1935, as Hitler’s deputy Rudolf Hess visited Stockholm, with discussions intensifying during his second visit in 1937-38, a time period during which the NS-regime intensified its propaganda efforts directed at Swedish universities and the scientific community in general⁴. Documents preserved from Hess’s visits show that the school was indeed intended to be part of NS cultural policy, which aimed at the Gleichschaltung of German institutions and associations in Sweden⁵.

The NS regime had a special interest in the Nordic countries for a number of reasons. Economically, they were of strategic importance as part of an NS Grosswirtschaftsraum, among others as providers of raw materials such as iron ore for the ongoing war effort⁶. In a political and cultural sense, the Nordic countries were imagined as part of a Greater German Kulturraum or Lebensraum, a territory which was supposedly inhabited by a Germanic Kulturvolk. NS ideologues argued that this Nordic Kulturvolk carried the essence of a healthy Northern-Germanic culture, an essence that had the potential to reinvigorate the German race and save the Western world, which was under siege from capitalism, Judaism and modernization. The idea of such a

---

reinvigoration or Aufnordung represented a new, racial biologist take on earlier political and cultural ideals\textsuperscript{7}. Although pro-German sentiments had decreased in Sweden after the First World War, there was still a significant German presence and influence in many spheres of society. The two countries were historically connected, not only through trade and politics, but also through a history of ongoing migration from Germany to Sweden with both cultural and political implications\textsuperscript{8}. As Annette Forsén has shown, friendship associations founded by German migrants, which were open to both Germans and Swedes, contributed to upholding a sense of a shared history and cultural community between the two countries\textsuperscript{9}.

However, in the immediate aftermath of the NS Machtübernahme in 1933 these earlier relationships and connections were quickly reevaluated on both a political and a societal level, as public and political opinion shifted. As the war broke out, the Swedish government led by Per-Albin Hansson opted for political neutrality, while keeping up trade with NS Germany, allowing German troops to travel through the country between 1940-1943, and implementing some measures of press censorship\textsuperscript{10}. At the same time, the tightening of NS-occupation policies in neighboring Norway, and the resulting flight of Jewish citizens to Sweden stirred up anti-German sentiments\textsuperscript{11}. Combined with the changing outlook of the war, these events contributed to an increasing political distance between official Sweden and NS-Germany after 1943\textsuperscript{12}. In such a precarious political climate, NS propaganda efforts had to be carefully drafted\textsuperscript{13}. In Sweden, such efforts included coordinating already existing German associations and organizations, creating new NS-led, or NS-influenced organizations, and exerting influence on political and cultural elites\textsuperscript{14}.

As educational institutions were of particular interest to the NS regime, it also attempted to exert influence on, and place agents in strategic positions at both Swedish universities and in the

\textsuperscript{7} ALMGREN, Birgitta, op. cit., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{8} FORSÉN, Annette, Tysk föreningsverksamhet i Finland och Sverige 1910-1950, Gidlund, Möklinta, 2015, p. 55 et seq.
\textsuperscript{9} Ibidem, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{10} ÅMARK, Klas, op. cit., p. 152 et seq. For a research summary on the relationship between Sweden and NS Germany see: ÅMARK, Klas, op. cit. See also: ANDERSSON, Lars M., TYDÉN, Mattias (edited by), Sverige och Nazityskland: skuldfrågor och moraldebbatt, Stockholm, Dialogos, 2007; ÖSTLING, Johan, Nazismens sensmoral: svenska erfarenheter i andra världskrigets efterdyning, Atlantis, Diss. Lund, Lunds universitet, 2008; HÖJEBERG, Per, Utmanad av ondskan: den svenska lärararkåren och nazismen 1933-1945, Lund, Lunds universitet, 2011.
\textsuperscript{12} WIDMALM, Sven, op. cit., p. 79.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibidem, p. 63.
Swedish education system in general\(^{15}\). Even in this regard, the regime could tap into already existing traditions and connections, as there was a historically significant German influence in the fields of education and science, as well as long-standing tradition of educational and cultural exchange between Sweden and Germany, a system of exchange that was put under tight control by the NS-regime\(^{16}\). In regard to science and education, the main objectives of NS cultural propaganda were to vehemently dispute any notion that the regime intended to politicize the fields of science and education, and consequentially, to uphold the claim that the (racial) policies introduced by the regime did not impact the nation’s scientific standing\(^{17}\). In order to reach these objectives, the NS regime attempted to control public opinion in general, that is, to control how Germanness was defined and perceived in Sweden. Institutions that were engaged in such efforts in the field of education and science were the Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung (REM, the NS ministry of education) and the Auswärtiges Amt (AA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) in Berlin, as well as the Germany embassy (Deutsche Legation), and the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD, an association of German institutions of higher education founded in 1925) in Stockholm.

In 1935, the regime set out to create a legal definition of Germanness. While the constitution of 1871 had declared all individuals who were citizens of one of the German federal states to be German citizens, the NS state introduced a series of new laws. These so-called Nuremberg Laws divided the population into citizens (Reichsbürger) who were «subjects of German or kindred blood» on the one hand, and members of the state (Staatsangehörige) who belonged to a group of «racially foreign people» such as Jews, on the other\(^{18}\). This legal change had wider implications, as the law stated that citizens had to prove their allegiance to the German Volk and Reich through their behavior\(^{19}\). A central aspect of citizenship, and thereby NS propaganda was thus to exert behavioral or social control, that is, to ensure that all German subjects lived up to a specific NS-definition of Germanness\(^{20}\). However, as NS ideology was neither uniform nor a structured intellectual endeavor, NS officials found it difficult to control the way in which central concepts were defined and perceived. This means that, in spite of there being a legal definition, Germanness could be and was defined in a number of different ways in different contexts.


\(^{16}\) BJÖRKMAN, Maria, LUNDELL, Patrik, WIDMAN, Sven (edited by), *op. cit.*

\(^{17}\) WIDMALM, Sven, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

\(^{18}\) Reichsbürgergesetz, 15 September 1935, URL: <www.dokumentarchiv.de/ns/nbgesetze02.html> [accessed on 23 June 2022].

\(^{19}\) «[…] der durch sein Verhalten beweist, daß er gewillt ist, in Treue dem Deutschen Volk und Reich zu dienen». *Ibidem*.

\(^{20}\) Hitler himself insisted that, in order to be effective, propaganda must be kept simple and limited to a very few points. CHAPMAN, James, «Review Article. The Power of propaganda», in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 35, 4/2000, pp. 679-688.
With these political developments in mind, the aim of this article is to make visible how NS propaganda worked at the NS-led German school in Stockholm by studying the way in which a specific NS-version of Germanness was activated and instrumentalized at the school between 1941-45. It does so by drawing on Stuart Hall’s notion that national identities are constructed based on the idea of a homogenous population, the creation of a national narrative, national founding myths, common origins, and traditions. More specifically, the article discusses the way in which the concept of Germanness was activated and instrumentalized at the school by focusing on three aspects: first, how the concept was connected to the idea of an imagined homogenous population (Volk) based on the ideas of race and culture; second, the way in which Germanness was tied to a specific territory (Raum); and third, how it alluded to a common founding myth or origin (Ursprung) at the school. These aspects are especially interesting in a Swedish context, considering the context outlined above, that is, the NS-regime’s special interest in the Nordic countries, and the complicated relationship between the two countries before and during the Second World War.

The archive material concerning the NS-German school in Stockholm that is available today was handed over to the Stadsarkiv in Stockholm (SSA, the Stockholm City Archive) in December 1945. It consists of annual reports, (meeting) protocols, grade-, and class-registers, teaching materials and notes, teachers’ personal files, as well as, to some extent, economic information and correspondence. However, a large part of the correspondence between the school and individual teachers, the Auswärtiges Amt (AA), the Reichsministerium für Wissenschaft, Erziehung und Volksbildung (REM), the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), and the German embassy (Deutsche Gesandtschaft), as well as official registers and more detailed economic information is not part of the archive. As will be discussed below, some of the documents that are included in the archive can be used to identify missing material such as NS-sanctioned history books.

In this article, the analysis is based on two types of material. First, material that was directed at, or made available to Swedish officials and a broader Swedish public, such as a special issue of the journal «Der Deutsche in Schweden», which was published in honor of the school’s opening in September 1941, as well as the school’s annual reports. This material is used to make visible how the school attempted to portray itself in Swedish society, that is, the attempts that were made in terms of external propaganda. The second type of material consists of the school’s internal

---

21 DU GAY, Paul, HALL, Stuart (edited by), Questions of cultural identity, Los Angeles, Sage, 2022, p. 4 et seq.
23 SSA, arkivförteckning Tyska skolan AB.
24 School reports are available for the years 1941-1942, as well as 1942-1943. Stockholms stadsarkiv (SSA), Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/MS-D53).
documents, such as notes from meetings and teacher conferences, notes written in the so-called Umlaufbuch, a notebook used by the principal to keep teachers up-to date on rules and current events; schoolbooks, as well as the teacher’s personal files containing documents such as CVs and correspondence. This material is used to make visible internal discussions and conflicts at the school, and thereby the attempts that were made in terms of internal propaganda.

The key question that will be answered is: how were the three aspects of Germanness outlined above, that is Volk, Raum, and Ursprung, activated and instrumentalized as part of NS-propaganda at the NS-led German school in Stockholm between 1941-1945? The article is divided into three parts. In a first part, it discusses the way in which the school was legitimized in Sweden by claiming institutional continuity. A second part focuses on the broader historical continuity within which the school was placed in Sweden, while a third and final part takes a closer look at specific adjustments made to a Swedish context.

1. Claiming institutional continuity

In late summer of 1941, school personnel started to arrive in Stockholm. The first teachers’ meeting took place on September 1 and with principal Dr. Paul Dorff and 9 teachers in attendance, a number that would increase to 23 as the school officially opened in October. Some of these teachers had moved to Stockholm from the Reich, while others were recruited in Sweden. As the German teachers are referred to as Reichsdeutsche in the school’s internal documents, it can be assumed that they were German citizens who, following the Nuremberg laws of 1935 were «subjects of German or kindred blood» who had been vetted by the REM prior to their teaching engagement. Initially, the school, which was led by the Tyska skolan AB, a public limited company that was founded by the NS regime, included a Kindergarten for children between the ages of 3 and 5, a primary school for students who attended grades 1-4, a triennial Realschule, as well as a first Ring for secondary education. 182 students, whose nationalities were described as German, Swedish, and «other» were admitted after having passed an entrance exam. They were taught in 19 subjects. During the second school year, the number of students increased to 232, of which 41,4% were German nationals, 50,9% Swedish nationals, and 18 came from other countries.

26 Ibidem and Serie F2, Kopior av utgående skrivelser, utfärdade betyg mm. Kopior av elevernas studentbetyg (SE/SSA/0315/B).
27 Reichsbürgergesetz, cit.
28 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F2, Kopior av utgående skrivelser, utfärdade betyg mm. Kopior av elevernas studentbetyg (SE/SSA/0315/B).
The National-Socialist-led German school in Stockholm 1941-1945: an institution of cultural propaganda

such as Italy, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland. The main language of instruction was German, with exceptions made for the subjects of religion, Swedish, Swedish history, as well as local history and geography (Heimatkunde), which were taught in Swedish. As graduation certificates were to be issued for both countries, that is, the certificate of the German Reifeprüfung, as well as the Swedish studentexamen, documents issued around the time of the opening of the school state that students were expected to become fluent in both languages.

The special issue of the Journal «Der Deutsche in Schweden» dedicated to the opening ceremony of the school featured transcripts of all the speeches that were held at that ceremony. Much in the same way that the school's Swedish inspector, Erik Wellander stressed longstanding historical connections between Sweden and Germany in his speech, the school's first principal Dr. Paul Dorff mentioned the charter granted to the German St. Gertrud's congregation by the Swedish king in 1612. The principal added that the existence of a German school in Stockholm, which was first mentioned in 1574, is evidence, both of the high standards held at the school, as well as the popularity of the German people in Sweden. Thereby, he invoked the image of Germany as a Kunturnation or Bildungsnation while, at the same time, making Sweden part of such an endeavour. Such institutional continuity is later extended to include both Denmark and Finland, as the issue of «Der Deutsche in Schweden» contains excerpts from the latest annual reports of, and greetings from the NS-led German schools in Copenhagen and Helsinki. Both external and internal documents also show that school officials placed great importance on creating and maintaining connections with Swedish officials and authorities in order to reinforce institutional ties, and to further establish the school in Swedish society.

The school’s main objective was to follow the NS curriculum and the rules devised by NS authorities such as the REM (the ministry of education) and the Auswärtiges Amt (the ministry of foreign affairs). Official NS guidelines described all teachers at German schools abroad as pioneers working at the front lines of cultural propaganda, tasked with spreading an NS definition of Germanness. As the archive material shows, teachers working at the German school in Stockholm were repeatedly urged to create and maintain contact with both Swedish authorities and the Swedish public in general, and to advocate a positive attitude towards an NS definition of

29 SSA, arkivförteckning Tyska skolan AB.
30 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F2, Kopior av utgående skrivelser, utfärtrade betyg mm. Kopior av elevernas studentbetyg (SE/SSA/0315/B).
31 Unfortunately, the archive material for the German school in Helsinki for the years 1941-1945 has been largely destroyed. For the school in Helsinki, see: LIERTZ, Uta-Marie, Begegnungen Deutsche Schule Helsinki 125 Jahre auf dem Weg – Kohtaamisia koulutiellä, Helsinki, Kouluyhdistys Pestalozzi-Schulverein skolföreningen, 2006. For the association that ran the school in Helsinki, see: FORSEN, Annette, op. cit., p. 17. For the school in Copenhagen, see: LEHMANN, Johannes, FROSELL, P. Hampton, PRAETORIUS, Hans W, Die St. Petri Schulen in Kopenhagen 1575-1975. Ihre 400-jährige Geschichte, Kopenhagen, H. Mohrdiecks Bogtrykkeri, 1975; LYLLOFF, Kirsten, Kampen om de Tyske Skoler i Danmark Efter 1945, in Fund og Forskning, 55, 2016, pp. 525-583.
Germanness. The rules that were devised by NS authorities can be found in the protocols of the regularly held meetings and teacher conferences, as well as in the Umlaufbuch, a notebook which was used by the principal to inform teachers on current issues and events. This Umlaufbuch contains several notes in which teachers were reminded of the fact that all questions from Swedish officials and the general public should be forwarded to the principal and the school board, as all information regarding the school had to be sanctioned by them, rather than individual teachers. The principal and school board were in turn expected to report back to the REM and the AA in Germany. These instances can be seen as examples of both an implementation of the Führerprinzip at the school, as well as internal and external propaganda efforts. As can be seen in the following note that is attached to the inside cover of the Umlaufbuch such efforts followed a specific logic:

As a cultural institution, the German school in Stockholm is unpolitical. Neither teachers nor students are allowed to engage in political propaganda on school premises. It is forbidden to wear political emblems or other political attributes at the school. Teachers will inform students in this regard. Any and all transgressions must be reported to the principal.

Following the logic of NS cultural propaganda, teachers working at the NS-led German school in Stockholm were closely observed and expected to diffuse any suspicions that the school was an institution of cultural propaganda, that is, to dispute any notion that the regime intended to politicize the fields of science and education, and consequently, to uphold the claim that the (racial) policies introduced by the NS-regime did not impact Germany’s scientific standing.

NS propaganda efforts also included controlling which teachers were employed at German schools abroad. Teachers were supposed to be vetted by the REM ahead of their teaching engagements, with evaluations focusing on both pedagogical skills, as well as their «political reliability», that is, the teachers’ allegiance to the NS regime, which was attested by the NSDAP. Although some of the teachers’ personal files that have been preserved in the archive include CVs and dates of employment, most official NS correspondence is not included in the archive. This

---

32 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D53).
33 These efforts to control information were not limited to the German school. See: ALMGREN, Birgitta, Krossade illusioner, cit., p. 18.
35 WIDMALM, Sven, op. cit., p. 61.
means that, based on the findings at the Stockholm City Archive, it remains unclear whether the Swedish nationals who applied to become teachers at the German school in Stockholm were subject to the same scrutiny as their German counterparts. However, the Umlaufbuch does show that both German and Swedish teachers were asked to participate in German «cultural events» in Stockholm, consisting of film screenings, lectures, concerts, and meetings. Such events were organized in order to create continuity, that is, to create a connection to earlier cultural events and exchanges between the two countries, and to heighten the political and cultural standing of NS-Germany in Sweden. These events can thus be seen as part of NS cultural propaganda directed at both the general public in Sweden, as well as Germans living in Sweden.

As pointed out above, this cultural propaganda was built on the idea of a culturally and racially homogenous Kulturvolk which was inhabiting a Greater German Kulturraum consisting of Germany and Sweden, as well as Denmark and Finland. NS officials set out to define Germanness as a group identity in which being German was synonymous with being a Nazi, a definition that becomes especially apparent considering the individuals and institutions that were not mentioned by school officials, such as those Germans who had fled to Sweden to escape the Nazi regime after 1933. The speeches held at the school’s opening ceremony also omitted the fact that the German St:Getrud’s community, which had been in charge of the earlier version of a German school in Stockholm was not involved in the new, NS led school, as well as the fact that there was another German language school in Stockholm in the 1940s that was not controlled by the NS-regime (the Fuhrmannsche Sprachschule). In order to silence such individuals and institutions that did not fit the NS definition of Germanness, it was especially important to exert control, that is, to ensure the dominance of the NS definition over potential definitions that could be created by individual teachers in communication with Swedish authorities and the Swedish public.

2. Claiming historical continuity

The speeches held at the school’s opening ceremony also contained efforts to create historical continuity between Germany and Sweden. In his speech, principal Dorff not only claimed that Germans were present in Stockholm in the «grey Middle Ages», he also ended his speech by referring to a passage taken from the Swedish school law of 1705, and describing Swedish king Karl XII as the «great king of Sweden». King Karl XII is also mentioned in the Umlaufbuch in the fall of 1941. Here, his name appears in a note written by the principal that asks teachers to mention the anniversary of the battle of Narva on the 24th of November, and to describe and

HEDMAN, Jörgen, op. cit., p. 70.
discuss king Karl XII as a «Führergestalt», that is, as a predecessor of the Führer Adolf Hitler. Two years later, the Umlaufbuch mentions another Swedish king: Gustav II Adolf. In 1943, the school’s third principal Karl Wilstermann wrote a note in the Umlaufbuch, reminding teachers that there will be an hour of remembrance at the school on November 6th to commemorate the day that king Gustav II Adolf died in Lützen. This commemoration is one of the instances that shows that school officials were carefully following the NS curriculum, which included the ex septentrion lux theory, that is, the notion that Gustaf II Adolf brought the «light» to Germany by intervening in the Thirty Years War. These instances also follow the general logic of NS cultural propaganda, which placed great importance on a specific version of history. In order to avoid controversies, theoretical and metaphysical questions were to be avoided, while those instances in which Swedish and German interests coincided were to be mentioned instead.

The NS curriculum also instructed all German schools, both in Germany and abroad to address and discuss recent events in German history connected to the emergence of the NS-state. According to the Umlaufbuch, three such events were observed at the school: the seizure of power in 1933, the November pogroms of 1938, and the birthday of the Führer on the 20th of April, which is mentioned twice, in 1942 and 1943. In both instances, school staff and students were asked to assemble in the auditorium, where they were expected to sing German national songs and to exclaim the «Deutscher Gruß» (the German greeting) «Sieg Heil!». In 1943, the birthday of then current Swedish king Gustav V on the 16th of June was included in the celebrations. These celebrations can be seen as means to pledge allegiance to the Reich and the Führer, a pledge that was expected from all Germans following the Reichsbürgergesetz of 1935. The celebrations are also part of NS cultural propaganda directed at both teachers and students, and can be seen as an attempt to describe Hitler as a successor of Swedish kings, that is, «great men», and thereby as the leader of a Greater Germany that included the Nordic countries in general, and Sweden in particular. In this instance, NS cultural propaganda was, in other words, once more tied to creating a continuity of a Kulturraum and Kulturvolk in Sweden.

This Kulturraum was to be dominated by Germany, however. In one of the articles featured in the special issue of «Der Deutsche in Schweden» which was published in 1941, Adolf Hitler is

---

38 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D53).
41 WIDMALM, Sven, op. cit., p. 72.
43 The November pogroms are described as «die Bedeutung des 9 November» in the Umlaufbuch. SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D53).
44 Ibidem.
specifically tied to the German language. The article, which is entitled «Die Weltgeltung der deutschen Sprache» (the international standing of the German language), argues that the German language is a «natural», cosmopolitan language that possesses both «soul» and «magic», as well as a natural hegemony that its enemies have tried to abolish in a violent manner. Hitler is described as the representative of such a natural, cosmopolitan NS-version of Germanness. While these statements make visible a distinct hierarchy between the languages, they also serve to stress the importance of creating and maintaining a German school in Stockholm at which most subjects are taught in German. The school is thus clearly positioned as part of NS cultural propaganda. There are no more detailed descriptions of the celebrations or events preserved in the archive material, and the fact that they are not mentioned in the Umlaufbuch after 1943 can be seen as evidence of growing tensions between Sweden and NS-Germany.

As Malte Klein has shown, efforts to control the definition of Germanness in connection to specific founding myths and historical events were also part of the debates surrounding the teaching material to be used at German schools. In May 1933, Wilhelm Frick, the NS minister of the interior published guidelines for history textbooks stating that all books used at German schools had to be oriented towards national socialism. However, the reality of publishing new books during an ongoing world war proved difficult as the process of agreeing on content, writing, approving, and distributing took longer than NS-officials had hoped. As a result, no NS-approved school books were available as the guidelines came into effect in 1933. Such problems also affected the school in Stockholm which opened its doors in 1941. Meeting protocols, letters and other notes show that it was difficult to get hold of appropriate teaching material in general, and NS sanctioned books in particular during the war. This posed a problem, since schoolbooks were seen as especially important as it was quicker and easier to change the content of books than to reeducate teachers. Schoolbooks were also used as a means to introduced NS ideology to students’ homes, as it was mandatory for students to buy their schoolbooks and take them home. Such attempts were also made at the German school in Stockholm. A note in the Umlaufbuch demands that all students take their schoolbooks home, with the exception of heavy items such atlases, which they were allowed to leave at school. This is one of the instances that shows that the school was part of an NS propaganda effort that attempted to politicize education.

Since the subject of history was important for NS propaganda, the first measures taken by the regime regarding the teaching material used at German schools concerned history textbooks. History was to be used as a means of political education and indoctrination, that is, as a means to

45 KLEIN, Malte, op. cit., p. 73.
46 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D53).
convey the basic tenets of NS-ideology, and to illustrate the necessity of a national socialist revolution to students\textsuperscript{48}. Although the themes and narratives included in the history textbooks that are preserved at the archive of the NS-led German school in Stockholm include content in which the Nordic countries are imagined as part of a Greater German Kulturvolk, none of them were sanctioned by the NS-regime\textsuperscript{49}. However, a note by history teacher Hans Wittig on the content of his history classes in 1945 mentions that the Gehl, a book written by Dr. Walter Gehl that was sanctioned by the NS regime, which contained significant amounts of ideological, that is, anti-semitic ideas, was used in his history classes\textsuperscript{50}. It can thus be assumed that not all books used at the school were handed over to the Stockholm City Archive in December 1945. The archive also includes two atlases (both published in 1941) that were used at the school. In these books there are instance in which the Nordic countries are described as part of a historical German Kulturraum: they include maps that detail the spread of the «Arian (Indo-European)» people across, among others Denmark, Norway and Sweden during antiquity, as well as maps that describe the «raids and empires of the Wikings» as a continuation of the «German migrations». They also contain several maps on the «history of the national socialist revolution», one of which details Hitler’s flights through Germany between the 15-30 of July 1932 under the caption «The Awakening of Germany», as well as several maps outlining the first, second, and third Reich and the locations of the battles fought in Europe during the First World War\textsuperscript{51}. In this case, it is in other words the geography books, instead of the history books that are preserved in the archive that live up to the demands of the NS curriculum for the subject of history.

The propagandistic idea of a Greater German Volk and Raum that includes the Nordic countries in general and Sweden in particular is here in other words connected to a common origin and foundational myth (Ursprung), an origin that is based on shared history of «great men». Hitler is described as the successor of these «great men» and thereby the legitimate Führer of the Greater German Volk and Raum. However, as the centrality of the German language for the appeal and spread of German culture also serves to exclude other (Nordic) languages, this Greater Germany is firmly placed under German leadership, which, in turn serves to stress the necessity of creating and maintaining an NS-led German school in Stockholm. While the Swedish kings are used as past

\textsuperscript{48} Ibidem, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{49} All history books preserved in the archives were published before 1933.
\textsuperscript{50} SSA. Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F2, Kopior av utgående skrivelser, utfärdade betyg mm. Kopior av elevernas studentbetyg (SE/SSA/0315/B); Hans Wittig (1910-1987) studied philosophy, history and pedagogy in Hamburg, Göttingen, Graz and Hainburg. He became Dr. phil in 1938 and a member of the NSDAP in 1937 and was a teacher at the German school in Stockholm between 1941 and 1945, when he moved back to Germany to become professor of psychology in 1948. ORTMeyer, Benjamin, NS-Ideologie im Wissenschaftsjargon : Russismus und Judenfeindschaft in der Zeitschrift "die Erziehung" 1933-1942 (Eduard Spranger), v. IV, Frankfurt am Main, Protagoras Academicus, 2016, p. 243.
\textsuperscript{51} SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie Ö2, Läroböcker på tyska – historia och geografi (SE/SSA/0315/Ö2/1).
role models in such a narrative, Adolf Hitler represents the present and future of Greater Germany. Consequently, in order to control such a definition of Germanness, the NS regime attempted to control the teaching material used at German schools. As will be discussed in the following, such attempts were not always successful at the NS-led German school in Stockholm.

3. Adjustments

There are several instances in the archive material in which it becomes apparent that Swedish and German staff members and students were treated differently. One such instance was the celebration of Hitler’s birthday in 1942 and 1943 mentioned above. While German teachers were expected to perform the Nazi salute at the celebrations that were held in the school’s auditorium, Swedish teachers could choose whether they wanted to do so or not. German teachers were also obliged to attend the «German cultural events» mentioned above, while the attendance of such events was only suggested to Swedish teachers. Differences were also made in regard to students. Meeting protocols show that many teachers complained that students were lagging behind due to lacking language skills in German, and that students often refused to speak German outside of the school. School records also show that some students had lived in Germany before their families moved to Sweden where they spent most of their childhood, and that many were born in Sweden to German parents, which often meant that their dominant language was Swedish, not German. The solution to this problem implemented at the school was to divide students into two groups, a German group for those who were proficient in German, and a Swedish group for those who were not.

While learning and using the German language was prioritized at the school, there are also examples in the archive material that suggest that the NS regime did not consider simply learning German to be sufficient. One such example can be found in a letter concerning a grammar guide for children written in 1943. Ingrid Buxbaum, one of the school’s German language teachers tried to publish her manuscript «Juchei, wir lernen Deutsch!» as a teaching book for all German schools abroad. Buxbaum, whose manuscript had earlier been rejected by Swedish publishers, presented her idea to the school’s principal Dorff who encouraged her to try to get it published in Germany. Initially, the Auswärtiges Amt expressed great interest in the book. However, 

52 Ibidem.
53 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D93).
54 Ingrid Buxbaum (1898-2006) was a language teacher at the German school in Stockholm between 1941-1944.
55 The Swedish publisher deemed the book “too modern” and too focused on preschool children, SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F3:1, Personaldossierer – lärare m. fl. (SE/SSA/0315/D/F3:1).
Buxbaum received a negative assessment from the REM which did not recommend it for publication, as it was not considered «German enough». The letter argued that foreign children (fremdvölkische Kinder) could not be approached in the same manner as German children; it was not enough to teach them German, they had to be raised to be «friends of Germany», an objective that could be reached by including texts based on a lived experience of Germany (lebensgebundene Texte), that is, texts that describe everyday life in Germany. On the one hand, this statement echoes the sentiment that Swedish and German students have to be treated differently. On the other hand, it also contradicts the idea that the German language possesses an «inherent magic» that will automatically turn Swedes into Germans, that is, members of the Greater German Kulturraum. In order to accomplish such a conversion, students had to either visit Germany or be provided with narratives that describe German culture. However, at another instance, a representative of the REM had questioned whether such a conversion was desirable for all students. In December 1942, REM representative Alfred Huhnhäuser held a meeting with the German teachers at which he initially stressed that it was important to expand the Kindergarten, that is, to start teaching children early in order to ensure that as many students as possible were proficient in German. Huhnhäuser also added that the school should be aware of its mission, namely to first and foremost work towards being a school for talented students (Begabtenschule) and German students (Reichsdeutsche), which meant that German students had to be admitted regardless of their talents, whereas only talented Swedes should be admitted, and no resources should be wasted on «untalented» Swedes.

However, the teachers at the school did not always follow NS directions. As pointed out above, the NS curriculum insisted that history classes primarily focus on current political events and important Germans. Nonetheless, in his notes discussing the classes he taught in 1944-1945, Hans Wittig decided to largely omit these instances and to include important Swedes, as well as «figures from world history» in his classes, as he believed that all classes held at German schools abroad should be adjusted to local sentiments. According to Wittig, such sentiments consisted of

---

56 Ibidem.
57 Examples of such content includes description such as: «Karls Onkel hat eine Fabrik in Deutschland. Die macht lauter schöne, feine Kraftwagen. Schaut mal her, so sieht ein Auto von Onkel Hans aus München aus: Das ist sein Haus, seine Fabrik, und das sind die Leute die da arbeiten. In Deutschland sind die Leute fleißig. Weil ihr auch so fleißig gelernt habt, fahren wir jetzt mal auf der Autobahn, Kinder. Das ist eine feine Sache!». SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F3:1, Personaldossierer – lärare m. fl. (SE/SSA/0315/D/F3:1).
58 SSA, Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie A1, kollegiets protokoll m m 1941-1945 (SE/SSA/0315/A 1:1/M5-D93). Alfred Huhnhäuser (1885-1950) was a Ministerialrat (ministerial secretary) with the ministry of Education and member of the Nationalsozialistischer Lehrerbund. He was sent to work at the Education Department in Oslo in occupied Norway in 1940. Archives and Special Collections: Alfred Huhnhäuser, University of Stirling, URL: <https://libguides.stir.ac.uk/archives/HU> [accessed on 23 June 2022].
59 SSA. Tyska skolan i Stockholm AB, Serie F2, Kopior av utgående skrivelser, utfärdade betyg mm. Kopior av elevernas studentbetyg (SE/SSA/0315/B).
a Protestant belief system, which necessitated a pedagogical approach rooted in intellectual, rather than political history. At first glance, Wittig’s adjustments, which are essentially based on the idea that Sweden is not necessarily historically connected to Germany, could be seen as a form of resistance against NS ideology and the idea that only those instances in which Swedish and German interests coincided should be mentioned. Yet, as Wittig was a member of the NSDAP and had published pedagogical articles that contained antisemitic ideas, his deviation from the NS curriculum should rather be seen as an attempt to claim professional agency as a teacher, or an attempt to adjust his teaching to the current political situation in 1945.

However, not all German teachers were ready to make adjustments to a Swedish context. In December 1944, Gun-Hillevi Hessler, a Swedish national who worked as a Kindergarten assistant at the school between 1941-1945 filed a complaint on her German colleague Ursula Riemer. In her letter, Hessler claimed that Riemer, who had been head of the Kindergarten since April 1944, was neither willing to learn Swedish, nor to take «Swedish perspectives» into consideration or understand the «Swedish or Nordic psyche». Riemer was described as repeatedly displaying an openly hostile attitude towards «Sweden and everything that is Swedish». This conflict can be seen as based on different definitions of Germanness. While Hessler, a Swedish national, seems to define Germanness in accordance with a Greater German idea that includes Swedish participants as equals, she describes her German colleague’s stance as uncompromising and based on an idea of Germanness that does not compromise or make adjustments to Sweden. The conflict can also be understood as part of NS propaganda, which relied heavily on the systematic assembly of information by NS-agents such as Hermann Kappner who sent regular reports, in which he detailed the political views of individual Swedes to the Auswärtiges Amt in Berlin.

In the instances discussed here, it becomes clear that the NS propaganda efforts faced increasing difficulties between 1941-1945. While the school was granted the right to issue its first school diplomas (studentexamen) in 1945, the imminent defeat of NS-Germany meant that the future of the school was unclear. This situation resulted in further efforts to make a difference between Germans and Swedes in the school’s internal propaganda. In the available archive material, there are several suggestions on how to persuade Swedes to become part of the German Kulturvolk. At the beginning, teachers, that is, grown-ups were given the choice to join the NS movement; students, that is, children should be taught German, as well as the history of «greatest men» and current NS events. Other suggestions included providing students with narratives of everyday life in Germany, and adjusting teaching to Swedish sensibilities, that is, to the student group and context at hand. These examples show that the Greater German Kulturvolk that was

---

60 ORTMeyer, Benjamin, op. cit., p. 165.
62 WIDMALM, Sven, op. cit., p. 65.
projected into the future was ultimately dominated by Germany, both in a linguistic and a
cultural sense. As time moved on, such dominance was further stressed by the argument that the
first and foremost mission of the school was to take care of, and protect German children in
Sweden. This argument, which denies the claim that all Swedes can or should become part of a
Greater German Kulturvolk was echoed in the apparent refusal of a newly arrived German teacher
to make adjustments to a Swedish context in December 1944.

Conclusion

As this article has shown, the propaganda efforts at the NS-led German school in Stockholm
have to be understood in the context of cultural propaganda in Sweden in general, and the
complicated relationship between Sweden and NS-Germany before, and during the Second World
War in particular. As an institution of cultural propaganda, the NS-led German school in
Stockholm was part of the attempt to persuade Swedes of the idea that the Nordic countries were
part of a Greater NS Germany, as well as a more general attempt to control public opinion and
persuade Swedes that the NS regime did not attempt to politicize the fields of science and
education. These attempts drew on different constructions of Germanness that were activated
and instrumentalized in a number of different ways at the school. In terms of a homogenous
population (Volk) and territory (Raum), Sweden and the Nordic countries were described as part of
a German Kulturvolk or Kulturraum in the past, based on a shared history or common origin
(Ursprung) dominated by «great men» (Swedish kings) and a present in which Hitler emerged as
their successor. Following the logic of NS ideology, Swedes could potentially become part of a
Greater German Kulturvolk in the future, as there were no racial differences or Blutunterschiede
(differences in blood) between Swedes and Germans.

The relationship between Germans and Swedes was nevertheless always hierarchical; there are
no traces of the notion that German culture could or should be reinvigorated through Swedish
culture (that is, the idea of Aufnordung). As the school opened its doors in 1941, officials advocated
the idea that Swedes could become German if the right pedagogical tools were used. What these
tools were were up for debate, however. Apart from a complicated political relationship between
Sweden and NS-Germany, there were also some specific reasons why it was difficult to implement
measures of cultural propaganda at the school. These included the professional agency or
outright reluctance of teachers, especially after 1943, as well as difficulties in creating and
distributing appropriate teaching material, and teaching NS ideology in a neutral country in
which parts of the cultural elites and local administration were pro-German, while others, such as
teachers at other schools, remained critical of NS-Germany. As a consequence, the REM started to stress the importance of reaching out to Reichsdeutsche children in 1944. Ultimately, the school thus had two functions. On the one hand, it was part of NS propaganda, that is, the attempt to persuade Swedes to join a national-socialist movement that was projected into the future by creating a historical narrative of continuity between NS-Germany and Sweden. On the other hand, the school’s purpose was to protect German children from «germanische Entfremdung» (“Germanic alienation”) in Sweden, that is, the influence of the democratic, liberal West and the rejection of the «wirklich Nordische Welt» (“truly Nordic World”). In the end, the school did issue final diplomas (studentexamen) to 12 students on the 5th of May 1945, three days before NS Germany capitulated and the building at Karlavägen 25 was confiscated by Swedish authorities.

64 Wether, Steffen, op. cit., p. 232.
THE AUTHOR

Susan LINDHOLM, PhD in History and History Didactics, works as a senior lecturer at the Department of Child and Youth Studies at Stockholm University. Her research interests include cultural history, memory, and gender in connection to transnational and translocal othering processes. In one of her ongoing projects, which is funded by the Foundation for Baltic and East European Studies, she focuses on the German schools in Stockholm and Helsinki between 1933-1995.

URL: <https://www.studistorici.com/progett/autori/#Lindholm>