

BISHOP OF CHICHESTER'S VISIT TO SWEDENMAY 13 - JUNE 9, 1942

I was much gratified by my visit and the welcome I received from Swedish and British alike. I greatly appreciate the friendliness and hospitality of the British Minister and Mrs. Mallet which enabled me to meet many members of the English congregation and British Colony in Stockholm, as well as American friends. I appreciate also the constant kindness of other English hosts both at Gothenburg and Stockholm.

I visited Stockholm, Gothenburg, Upsala, Lund, Malmo, Strömgnes, Vaxjo and Sigtuna. I met large numbers and a great variety of people including leaders in religious, political, university, business and social circles. I saw not only Archbishop Eiden and the Bishops of the Swedish Church, but also leaders of the Free Churches and the Catholic Bishop, to several of whom I brought personal messages from the Archbishop of Canterbury and others in the Church of England, from the Church of Scotland, the English Free Church leaders, and from Cardinal Hinsley.

I had many important and highly useful conversations about prisoners of war, and the possibility of famine relief in Greece and elsewhere, concerning which I was able to give information about a Committee of the Churches recently set up in England, and was encouraged to hope that a similar Committee might be appointed in Sweden; and also about missionary questions in India and Africa, and the future of the Jews.

I found the general attitude to Great Britain very friendly and sympathetic. Everywhere there was a deep interest in news from Great Britain, and in particular a desire for information about plans for social reconstruction and educational reform. Also, an interest in religious circles in the new movement for co-operation of the Christian Churches, and the oecumenical movement which owed so much to Nathan Soderblom. Everywhere I found a deep interest in hearing of discussions in England on post-war reconstruction in Europe, and problems of world order. I myself learned a very great deal from my experience in Sweden. I am quite sure that in England we have a great deal to gain from a study of the social institutions of Sweden, and of the democratic character underlying the national educational system.

I could not help being struck by the deep sympathy with the Norwegians under the German occupation, which everywhere found expression. I heard many pitiful tales of Nazi cruelty; and it was impossible to mistake the profoundly unfavourable impression made on Swedish public opinion by the harshness and violence which has characterized the Nazi occupation, especially since the execution of Norwegian Trade Unionists.

I could not help also being struck by the feeling of strong kinship with the Finns, and the anxiety everywhere expressed with regard to the future of Finland in relation to Russia. This latter question was in fact one on which I was invariably pressed at the conferences and meetings at which I spoke, and in private conversation. Much evidence was also pressed upon me with regard to conditions prevailing in Finland between the two Finnish wars under Soviet pressure, and also in the Baltic States. I myself greatly hope, in the light of these questions, that many of my Swedish friends will be relieved by the very positive assurances given by Mr. Eden in connection with the Treaty of Alliance between Great Britain and Soviet Russia, which leaves all frontier questions for decision at the peace conference, that there are no secret engagements or commitments of any kind whatsoever in connection with either the Treaty itself or the negotiations for it.

Speaking more generally, what struck me most was the fact that Sweden in war-time affords a unique opportunity for viewing the future of Europe as a whole, and facing present realities, and the conditions likely to arise after the cessation of hostilities. I was certainly able in a way which is not possible in a belligerent country, to get information about conditions in the Occupied Countries, and in Germany. I also learned a lesson the importance of which cannot be overstated:

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that is the duty which is laid on the victorious governments to provide for the events immediately following the cessation of hostilities. If Europe is to survive as Europe, it seems imperative that plans should be laid not only for winning the war, but for dealing with the hiatus or vacuum between military victory and the making of a settled peace, plans which will require not only the supplying of food on a large scale for the famine-stricken countries but the establishment of order and the prevention of anarchy and mob rule. My own hope was deepened that, after the overthrow of the Nazi tyranny, a strong international authority may be established for the order of Europe, and that while making the fullest provision against the revival of aggression, and doing full justice to the nations which have suffered so terribly from the aggressor, it will be possible to find a settled Europe in which a changed Germany may have its fair share.

But a deeper lesson still was borne upon my conscience - that all the nations of Europe need a reconversion to the Christian religion, that the crisis is fundamentally a spiritual and moral crisis, and that the deepest needs of statesmen and of citizens alike are faith and love.

To conclude, I have learned a great deal in all sorts of ways, and have a better understanding not only of Sweden but of Europe, and of the relation of the war to the things which immediately follow the war. I believe that such visits as I and others have paid are full of possibilities, and are most important in reviving old and establishing new links between Great Britain and Sweden. I took the opportunity of talking over plans for a much more extensive interchange of students and ministers after the war, and for exchanging theological and scientific periodicals during the war. I also hope that during the war it may be possible for a Swedish Bishop to come over to England as a guest, and see English conditions in the same fruitful way that I have been able to see conditions in Sweden, and so continue and strengthen the fellowship of the Churches.

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