

Abstract

Edward Burton, *The Swedish-American Press and the Vietnam War*. (Dissertations from the History Department at Göteborg University 34, Göteborg 2003.) Written in English.

This thesis' problem is the uncomfortable position the Swedish-Americans felt they were in during the Vietnam War. As a group, Swedish-Americans had been tied to the Republican Party and conservative politics for generations. They identified themselves as loyal and patriotic Americans and had come to support U.S. foreign policy almost reflexively. They also identified themselves with Sweden, and this double loyalty posed few problems before the Sixties. Sweden's criticism of U.S. policy in Vietnam and moral support for the FNL movement unsettled this easy dual identity, pressuring Swedish-Americans to either support or defend one side against the other. This thesis examines how the fifteen Swedish-American newspapers still printing in the Sixties handled this problem.

From a gatekeeping perspective of news flow, the Swedish Foreign Ministry had influence over the emigrant papers in North America. It had set up a system to provide news on Swedish culture, politics, and current events to the Swedish-American press free of charge. This free news displaced independent news sources. By the Sixties, the emigrant papers relied heavily on these Swedish sources. In reporting Sweden's Vietnam policy, the emigrant newspapers relied heavily on the Swedish newspaper *Sverige-Nytt*: a newspaper with ties to the Foreign Ministry. The U.S.-Swedish conflict over Vietnam got reported in a Swedish perspective in the emigrant press.

From a community-press perspective, the Swedish-American papers often commented on this conflict in different ways. *Svenska-Amerikanaren Tribunen* was a large newspaper serving an audience scattered widely across the American Midwest, and it printed conservative editorials with a consensus-feel and many letters to the editor. *Svenska Posten* was a small local paper, and it delivered its opinions through its columnists which it presented as virtual friends in the community. With a solid grasp on the local audience, and its views presented by specific individuals, *Svenska Posten* ran politically radical opinions with little risk of losing readers. *Nordstjernen* was a regional New York paper and it adopted the tone of a metropolitan daily.

This thesis uses a form of content analysis developed by Eva Block and Eva Queckfeldt. It shows the three papers surveyed were notably different from each other, and none resembled their Swedish counterparts. Their volume of comment corresponded to the number of troops deployed overseas, but their opposition to the war related neither to current U.S. public opinion nor the casualties in the field. It appears the newspapers' opposition relates to their opinion format, whether it come mostly from editorials, columnists, or reader letters. These formats are largely decided by the specific audience each newspaper targets. This thesis concludes that these editorial formats influenced the emigrant newspapers' much more than the Foreign Ministry's news-supply policies.

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