

Those others. Hostility against strangers and working-class culture in Norrköping 1890-1960. Stockholm: Carlssons 1996

Abstract

The purpose of this book is to analyze the mechanisms behind the hostility against strangers in working class-culture. The textile-industry town Norrköping serves as an empirical example. In 1945 the local textileunion demanded that all refugees from the baltic countries should be banished from Sweden. This demand is compared with actions of textile-, paper- and metalworkers who met strangers during the period 1890-1960. Another part of the study is the analyzes of how thoughts and beliefs were influenced by the meetings with strangers.

The socialdemocratic discourse that set the limits for the trade-union politics was very stable both before and after the second world war. It combined internationalism with a superiority at the labour market. In the early post-war period the discourse tolerated a limited import of workers.

The hostile mentality before the second world war was only formulated when the superiority at the labour market was threatened and when foreign foremen or entrepreneurs behaved in a menacing manor. The first mayor threat rose when refugees from the Baltic countries in 1944-45 massmigrated to Sweden. Under the early postwar period the mentality was formulated only by a minority of trade union officials when they feared massmigration and unemployment. When the mentality was formulated it meant problems for the leading trade-unionists. But, except from 1945 they could press back the self-willigness - the political expression of the hostile mentality.

The tolerance against strangers increased after the second world war. The cultural meetings in the early postwar period resulted in a higher acceptance among those swedish workers who regarded the strangers as individuals. This acceptance also resulted in a declining construction of strangeness and accompanied assimilation- and integrationalprocesses. But the hostility still effected the relations to unintegrated strangers as the gypsies and other strangers who distinguished themselves cultural far from the swedish workers.