

Conference Report – The Swedish History Days, Greifswald, Germany, 10 – 11 October, 2008

By Proscovia Svård

The Swedish History Days were hosted at the University of Greifswald in East Germany from the 10 – 11 October and were opened by the Swedish Ambassador to Berlin Ms. Ruth Jacopy. I participated in the capacity of Project Co-ordinator of the Nordic Documentation Project to try and interest History teachers and students in the Documentation Project work on Liberation Struggles in Southern Africa. The books on Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark and the National Liberation in Southern Africa were distributed free of charge to the participants who found their way to the exhibition hall. The exhibition hall was a lecture room with high tables which did not provide sufficient room for people to have a normal conversation or move around. There were three other exhibitors including the “Forum för Levande Historia” who were equally as disappointed by the space that was provided for the exhibition.

350 participants took part in the conference and numerous sessions were offered. I attended 6 sessions but I mainly focused on:

1. Two sessions where both Sweden and Germany-based doctoral students presented their research.
2. A session where the National Archives of Sweden presented the work it is doing to stimulate interest in the archives for school children and gymnasium students and the ways in which our common cultural heritage should be understood and used.
3. A session that was discussing the challenges of broadening History as a subject and where History teachers were discussing ways of making the subject more interesting for younger students.

I talked to Prof. Hans Albin Larsson who is at the Kristianstad Högskola and who has recently been appointed by the Swedish government to evaluate the new teacher education syllabus. He is the Vice-President for the newly established Swedish Government School Inspection based in Stockholm. He moderated the two sessions involving the doctoral students and was kind enough to give me space during the sessions to present the Nordic Document Project work to the audience. These two sessions had the right audience of History teachers and doctoral students.

I will continue to discuss with Prof. Larsson the Institute’s interest in seeing to it that the documentation is used for further research within Sweden. He also happens to be a member of the organizing committee of the Swedish History Days.

I also had a few discussions with both doctoral students and some of the teachers or participants who were generally interested in hearing what the Institute does. In my discussions I took up the importance of connecting history to the current global challenges like the democratic

developments, governance issues and modern solidarity which could stimulate further interest for history in younger gymnasium students and scholars.

The contacts that I established with Prof. Hans Albin Larsson and Dr. Lena Milton who is also a member of the Organizing Committee will be useful in the dissemination process of the project's work. Information about NAI and its activities were made known to conference participants and in East Germany at the Greifswald University that happens to be the first Swedish University. Several copies of the books on the Liberation Struggles were left behind to be distributed to the University libraries within Germany.

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