

1923 | 1933

Production, Reception and Cultural Significance of Swedish Non-fiction Film

Film's ability to document events and objects for its time and for the future in a comprehensible, truthful and immediate way, is now well known for everybody. It is not necessary, therefore, to discuss cinema's importance for advertising and the archive.

Ragnar Ring, 1923

1920s – Formation and Establishment

In 1923, Ragnar Ring, manager of the Tullberg Film company – Sweden's leading industrial film production company during the 1920s – presented himself to its customers with these words.¹ According to Ring, the company specialized on the production of advertising and archival films. They not only wanted to produce good films to promote companies, organizations, or Sweden as a nation; they also wanted to produce films so good that they could survive as valuable archival documents. This strategy was not motivated by a serious concern for history or the nation's cultural heritage – it was business. Tullberg Film was part of the book publishing house Hasse W. Tullberg AB and Ragnar Ring was also head of the advertising branch. At that time the Swedish industry and the Swedish government had realized how useful films could be for promotional purposes.

In 1923 discussions on cultural, scientific and pedagogical as well as promotional uses of cinema had been going on for a couple of years. In the 1910s voices were raised to establish film archives, using films in schools, and using film for telling and showing the citizens the cultural history and contemporary culture and society of Sweden. Already in 1914 with the founding of the Cinematographic Society [Kinematografiska sällskapet], and four years later, with the broader initiative of the Film and Phonogram Society [Föreningen Film och Fonogram] attempts were made to raise the issues of the cultural significance of non-fiction films.

In 1923 the Tullberg Film Company had produced more than 50 industrial films for individual companies, industry or business organizations, and a few larger compilation films for the promotion of Sweden and the Swedish industry. To establish themselves as the leading Swedish producer and distributor of industrial films, Tullberg Film was keen on labeling their films appropriately: industrial films, business films, educational films, home films, family films, etc.² Ragnar Ring also used another typology, not based on the subject, but on the purpose of their films. This typology made it possible for Tullberg to argue that their films were more elaborate than those of their competitors. Ring's typology is also useful as a characterization of the non-fiction film of the 1920s.

The first category used by Tullberg was »industrial films«. These were relatively inexpensive films promoting an industry. They sometimes included images and explanations of industrial processes, not in order to document these as such, but to show the technological sophistication of the company. According to Ragnar Ring, these films had limited importance in advertising and propaganda.³ The second category was »advertising films«. They were more complicated to make since they had to be more sophisticated to impress the audience.⁴ The two first categories represent the sorts of presentational non-fiction films that were made by many producers in the 1910s and 1920s.

The third category was »propaganda films«. These were longer and had to be both informative and entertaining.⁵ In fact, Tullberg became famous as a producer of this kind of film, and they were used to expose the company's own expertise. »Propaganda film« was also a category ranging not far from the Griersonian notion of »creative treatment of actuality«. The fourth category was »technical films«. A technical film describes, explains and/or analyses technical processes. The most pertinent feature of the filmic image was its evidentiary status, though technical films were, according to Ring, the most cinematic. In order to present an industrial process, any cinematic means could (and should) be employed.⁶ Technical films did not have to be about industrial or technological subjects. For Ring, a tourist film was, and had to be, a technical film.

Ragnar Ring's categories are somewhat confusing, but his emphasis on narrative and visual construction and the elaboration of the films is not only important to an understanding of the films made by him and the Tullberg film company, they also indicate more general characteristics of the contemporary non-fiction film production in Sweden. Exactly how many films Tullberg produced is not known. Ring mentioned in 1928 that he had made 300 - 400 films. So far notices for approximately two hundred films have been found, of which about one hundred films still exist.⁷ It is difficult, though, to decide how to count the films. Some of them are made in different versions, or rather, are remade a couple of times. A large number of the Tullberg films were also made for foreign audiences, and

sometimes re-edited for screenings in different countries. It was not just a question of intertitles in different languages – the company even re-edited the images. These problems concern the definition of individual films. Tullberg Film created an archive from which they could use the same images and scenes from specific places in many films.

The Importance of Archives

The idea of an archive for non-fiction films in Sweden had been discussed during the 1910s, but it was not until the early 1920s actual archives were started. Just one example, in 1921 the national sport association created an archive for sport films to be used for documentation and pedagogical purposes.⁸ Later in the 1920s both the Nordic Museum – a museum for Nordic ethnography – and the Ethnographic Museum – a part of the Royal Academy of Sciences – started archives. The last one never became a major archive, while the Nordic Museum, which we will return to, in the 1930s and 1940s developed into an important archive for and producer of cultural films. At the beginning of the 1920s, though, two more important collections were founded, Army and Navy Films, and Svensk Filmindustri's Educational Film Department.

In October 1920 the independent organization Army and Navy Films [Armé- och Marinfilm], from 1926 called AMF-Army, Navy and Air Force Films [Armé-, Marin- och Flygfilm], was founded. Its main purpose was to buy, produce and distribute films for and by the Swedish armed forces. The first years AMF co-operated with the major Swedish film company Svensk Filmindustri, for the production of films, but soon they had build up their own production organization. They rapidly collected a significant amount of films, and within a few years dominated the production and distribution of military films. Today, AMF is one of the largest archives for non-fiction films in Sweden.⁹

Educational Films – the SF Educational department

For almost ten years, the former film censor and SF [Svensk Filmindustri] executive Gustaf Berg had argued for using films in primary and secondary school and high schools, as well as in adult education. In the summer of 1921 SF started a department for educational films [Skolfilmavdelningen], directed by Berg. During the following two decades Berg was to be the number one proponent for educational films and all forms of pedagogical uses of film in Sweden.

The SF educational department collected films, arranged exhibition for children in schools, and produced educational films. From the start they created a large collection of film, primarily from Germany (UFA Kulturfilmabteilung, Deulig, Decla etc) but also from the US, France and the UK. They »reused« the many geographical films SF had produced in the 1910s, as they did with the different film expeditions to Africa and Asia from the late 1910s. During the autumn of 1921 they started producing scientific films, primarily biological ones. One of the leading non-fiction cinematographers of the 1920s and 1930s, Gustaf Boge for example, made films at the zoological laboratory at Kristineberg during this first year.¹⁰

For Berg, educational films were an important complement to other scientific and pedagogical illustrations, as well as an alternative, or correction, to the fictional films at the cinemas.¹¹ On the other hand, the educational films had to be capable of competing with fiction films when it came to technical qualities, as well as to attractiveness for a young audience.¹²

The educational film system was quite easy to handle, the teachers could choose any film in the catalogue, rent a cinema nearby and show the films for as many children as possible. There were therefore few pre-designed programs, which meant that the screenings were very differently set up. This does not mean, however, that the organization of the catalogue was neutral. Berg, as teacher in history and geography at the time, followed a pedagogical model of going from the close to the far away. The children should first and foremost learn about their own environment, local and regional issues, and naturally their own nation. Berg wrote in 1924

The educational film should in my opinion, as modern pedagogy argues, take its starting point in studies of the local [Heimatkunde]. Consequently, the majority of films produced in Sweden are images of local geographical origin.¹³

When looking at the structure of the catalogue this model is obvious. The titles from the 1924/25 catalogue are listed according to the following: Geography: Sweden (118 titles), the rest of Europe (102), Asia (29), Africa (35), Australia and the Pacific (12), America (48), Polar areas (4); Zoology: mammals (43), birds (46), frogs and reptiles (10), fish (5), insects (30), other invertebrates (22), general zoology (19); Health and physiology (23); Geology, meteorology and physical geography (12); Botany (9); Chemistry and physics (14); Astronomy and mathematics (7); Cultural history, art, archaeology etc (42); Agriculture (35); Hunting and fishing (36); Handicraft and industry (103); Education (17); Gymnastics and sport (36); Military images (14); Miscellaneous (31); Compilations (22); Cartoons (22); Literary and entertaining films (39).¹⁴

The films listed in the catalogue were films that often had been screened in regular programs over the years and then been stored in the archive. It is important, though, to note that in the collection there were no Swedish films made by

other producers than SF. Obviously other films were made. Many local producers, not rarely cinema owners, produced non-fiction films from their own area, often focusing on the local industry, agriculture or festivities. One of the local film makers, Ture Marcus – a hotel owner at the tourist resort Åre – made a couple of travel and tourist films from Åre as well as from travels abroad.

A case study: Industrial compilations

Even if SF tried to compete on the industrial film market, it was a subject, together with military films, they did not entirely control. Most likely, it was a serious problem for SF, since there was a lot of money in industrial and military films. The state did support the production of films for different subjects, for example communication and agriculture, but it was in the military/industrial field that state support was most important. It should be emphasized though, that almost all industrial films were fully financed by the industry itself. The state intervention concerned distribution and exhibition, primarily abroad. Which brings us back to Tullberg Film.

One specific sort of film Tullberg produced was the long compilation film made for special occasions, for example industrial and tourist expositions, or for special enterprises such as the Swedish battleship *HMS Fylgia's* promotional voyages around the world. Only one of these films exists today, in an incomplete print at the Swedish Television Archive: *Sverige och Svenska Industrier* (Sweden and Swedish Industries), probably made in 1921 or 1922. The film is almost identical with *Tokiofilmen* (*the Tokyo film*, 1922) made for the industrial exposition in Tokyo in 1922.¹⁵

Sweden and Swedish industries is presented with intertitles in English and Chinese. Each part begins with a very young Greta Gustafsson (Garbo) in front of a map of Sweden showing where the following sequences take place. The first intertitle explains what the film is about: »This series of motion pictures was made for the Swedish Government by Hasse W. Tullberg of Stockholm, for the purpose of spreading information about Sweden in the Far East.«¹⁶

The film begins in Stockholm, showing the City Hall (still under construction in 1922), the House of the Nobility, the Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Bank of Sweden, the Royal Palace, and the changing of the guard of the Royal Palace. The Stockholm Fire Brigade is then used to show different parts of the city. Then comes the foundations of economic growth: The Royal Technical University of Stockholm, interior of a Swedish Commercial College, a modern Swedish Primary School, and the Free Port of Stockholm. Traditional city views and images of street life are put together to present Stockholm as a modern city with a reliable



Bild 45: Greta Gustafsson, die später als die Garbo in die Filmgeschichte eingehen sollte, erklärt in *Sweden and Swedish Industry* (1921/22) anhand einer Karte und dem obligatorischen Zeigestock, wo die schwedische Stadt Malmö liegt.

Swedish Television Archive Stockholm

infrastructure and, most important, with an advanced educational system in the service of trade and industry.

Many of the opening shots were used in other films for different purposes. In Sweden and Swedish Industries they established the main argument: the economic growth and strength of Sweden. At the same time a second and a third argument are presented. The economic power of the nation is based on cultural and industrial traditions emanating from the wealth of Swedish nature; all set in a beautiful landscape.

The transition from the establishing sequence of Stockholm to the first industry considered in the film is, therefore, secured via a ride through the landscape. Outside Stockholm the first industrial footage is presented: »Instrument Aktiebolaget Navigator, makers of the Navigator Log, the principal automatic

ship's log in the world.« This sequence shows the manufacture and assembly of the logs, later to be exported. The Navigator sequence does not give any close analysis of the production process, only a brief overview of the assemblage and an indication of how advanced the Navigator technology was.

If we see the Stockholm sequence and the Navigator sequence as the first impression a foreign audience will have of Sweden and the Swedish industry, two things seem to be particularly important. First, Sweden should be seen as a highly developed country when it comes to infrastructure, education, trade, and high-tech industry. Second, this high level of industrialization is not only of local or regional importance in Northern Europe; the widespread use of Navigator logs is an example of the international importance of the Swedish industry. Cinematically, these sequences are very simple. They are, of course, valuable as documents of certain environments and interiors, but not much more than what a photograph could have revealed.

In part two Greta guides us to Gothenburg: »The second largest city in Sweden is Gothenburg which is the largest export harbor.« Gothenburg is, thus also, introduced through international trade. After the harbor, the film presents the second industrial sequence concerning the SKF Company (Volvo started as a part of the SKF company): »The largest industrial establishment in Gothenburg is the Swedish Ball Bearing Co. (S.K.F. Co).« According to Tullberg's categories the footage from SKF could be seen as an industrial film, although there are many close views of the production process for manufacturing ball bearings. The film shows: the staff of workmen; workmen leaving the factory (!); interiors of different parts of the factory; automatic cold pressing of small balls; ball polishing, and how races, balls, and retainers are assembled.

The film then goes on to a little demonstration of the assembly of the ball bearings. The SKF sequence only shows the wide range of ball bearings that the company produces. There are no detailed descriptions of the process, but a close study of how the ball bearings are assembled. This short scene not only presents the different parts (race, balls, and retainer); it also demonstrates how the ball bearings were assembled by hand. Thus, the SKF sequence uses cinematic means (medium shots, close-ups, and texts) in a more elaborate and analytic way to demonstrate an industrial process.

On the one hand it is possible to argue that the importance of Sweden and Swedish industries as a document of a specific industrial process is the same in both the SKF and Navigator sequences. On the other hand, if we develop Ragnar Ring's categorization and distinguish technical from industrial films by the different mode of analysis of a certain process, the SKF sequence can be seen in a different light. In using a technical sequence, mixed with industrial sequences, Tullberg also privileges a specific process. Does this mean that the manual assem-

bly of the ball bearing is especially important? When Ragnar Ring gave technical films a specific value as (historical) evidence, the filmic representation of the manual assembly of ball bearings is not only a document of a worker's skills. The film documents an argument proposing that the strength of the Swedish industry consists of the combination of high technology and skilled labor of such importance that it has to be recorded and saved for future posterity. If so, use of technical sequences in industrial compilation films («propaganda films» in Tullberg's terminology) emphasizes certain processes or products in order to present how important they were for the Swedish industry. Maybe the technical sequences were also supposed to indicate that by using a modern technology such as cinema, the processes and products should be regarded as even more modern and advanced.

Sweden and Swedish industries then continues with images from the harbor of Malmö. Part two ends with scenic shots from a fishing village on the West Coast of Sweden, and snowy winter scenes. Part three, in turn, begins with more snowy scenes, from the locks of the Göta Kanal to the state power plant in Trollhättan. Via this short journey the film reached the most important part of the Swedish industry at the time - electricity. The following scenes show different production units at the ASEA plants. The intertitles present important facts, in order to emphasize ASEA's strength.

Central to the treatment of ASEA is the promotion of international trade in transformers and other power plant equipment. It is also worth noting that the emphasis on transportation is maintained, from the Navigator logs and SKF ball bearings to ASEA's electric locomotives. Heavy Swedish industry was not to be regarded as conservative or provincial.

The film leaves ASEA, and begins to explain where the ASEA motors and transformers are used: at electric railways and hydroelectric power plants in Sweden, Norway and Canada. Thereafter, the ASEA episode ends with the symbol of the company, a swastika. Some market scenes from Stockholm replace the heavy industry, but Sweden and Swedish industries soon continues with the Swedish iron industry. Greta helps us to locate the most important companies. As in all Tullberg films of iron industries, these images really exploit the dramatic nature of the industrial process - while the intertitles explain what we see - »Swedish iron is famous all over the world for its fine quality. Map showing the location of iron mines and deposits.«

The iron sequence is the most analytic and visually elaborate sequence in *Sweden and Swedish Industries* - close to what Ring meant by »technical film«. Cinematic studies of mining and the iron industry were one of Tullberg's many specialities.¹⁷ This is not surprising if we bear in mind how dramatic these processes were: hot, glowing iron, fire and smoke in huge industrial spaces.

Part four concentrates on the production of weapons, especially the Bofors

company. In the Bofors sequence, Tullberg clearly shows what Ring meant by propaganda. Here, descriptions of processes are combined with spectacular examples and images of the armed forces. Part four, however, ends with a short sequence in a rural setting, a Swedish farm during harvest where the girls on the farm bind the grain by hand and drive harvesting machines. Thus, tradition and modernization went hand in hand in Tullberg's Sweden.

The final fifth part concentrates on another of Sweden's most important industries in the 1920s, the wood and timber industry. Again, Greta shows on the map where the economically most important forests, and the major sawmills and lumber factories are located. The film, thereafter, ends at Gripsholm Castle where a slow tracking shot stops in front of two Russian cannons. A very symbolic end, at a royal castle with cannons as trophies of past military victories. The message was clear: The Swedish industry will continue its tradition, only this time we sell the weapons – we do not use them.¹⁸

Sweden and Swedish Industries is only one example of almost one hundred films produced by Tullberg Film that survives in archives in Sweden. Most of them can be found at the Swedish Film Institute and the Swedish Television Archive.¹⁹ The archival situation for industrial films is, however, highly problematic. Like other early non-fiction films, these films have been neglected by archives and researchers, although their importance for historians and for film scholars cannot be overemphasized. Visually they are often compelling, especially films shot in steel works and mines. The ride in the Fagersta mine in *Fagersta bruk/Fagersta mine* (1923), for example, is one of the most beautiful scenes in Swedish films from the 1920s.

Sweden and Swedish Industries may give a good picture of how Sweden and the Swedish industry wanted to be seen in the 1920s: a peaceful country where tradition and modernization went hand in hand with an industry that claimed international importance. On the other hand, the film can be seen as a »propaganda film« for a nation and an industry ready to make money from a Europe in ruins and a colonial world facing more wars. Therefore, Tullberg Film was particularly farsighted in using the young Greta Gustafsson – soon to be Greta Garbo – to promote products you need for modern warfare.

1930s – Film Culture in Transition

In November 1933 the Swedish SF-weekly [Svensk Filmindustris Veckorevy] featured a short sequence – »a film historical moment«, according to an intertitle – from the first meeting of the Swedish Film Association [Svenska Filmsamfundet]. The sequence displayed critics, journalists and directors performing a

meeting in a badly disguised studio setting. The voice-over presented a few of them, particularly the critic Bengt Idestam-Almquist and the director Gustaf Molander, paradoxically, however, without stating the purpose of the new organization.²⁰

As an introduction to 1930s Swedish film culture and the place of non-fiction film within it, it might be interesting to look at the context surrounding the Swedish Film Association. Even if it hardly devoted its interests solely to non-fiction film, its agenda was clearly taken from what one could call a didactical documentary discourse. In short, the ideas behind the Film Association were to »artistically, culturally and technically promote cinema in Sweden.«²¹ As an academic undertaking it sought to promulgate a new national film culture, not only in terms of refined production guidelines, but also as to cultivate public taste and, via publications, inform on cinematic matters. It comes as no surprise that the Film Association initiated one of the first historical surveys on Swedish film. With the task to increase the cultural prestige of cinema, it addressed all kinds of filmic issues: from film aesthetics and manuscript contests to state funding of production and film theoretical speculations.

Similar tendencies to reshape national film culture had appeared in Sweden already during cinema's first decades. To some extent the Swedish Film Association of the 1930s was a later, albeit upgraded, extension of earlier film reform movements common throughout the western world. In fact, during the 1920s both Idestam-Almquist and Molander, had tried to establish an almost identical organization – Kulturfilm – with the purpose to advocate »film production of high cultural class, a film journal in the same spirit and a close co-operation with national associations concerned with adult education.«²² The name of the organization, Kulturfilm, indicates that inspiration probably came from Germany, but it remains unclear whether the plans resulted in any practical work.

The founding of the Swedish Film Association, on the contrary, not only made it to the movies, it was also mentioned in a classic editorial in one of Sweden's largest newspapers. Published in the politically conservative »Svenska Dagbladet« – entitled »Cinema as a Cultural Factor«, famous in Swedish film historiography – the editorial described cinema as the contemporary popular culture. »Cinema«, wrote the editors, has no doubt »a greater potential to influence the masses than literature, music or the arts. (...) As a creation combining modern technology, industrial organization and democratic mass culture, [cinema] is a faithful expression of our civilization.« The editorial argued that the Film Association was a clear sign of the cultural significance of cinema, since film was »not only an entertainment industry but also a cultural factor.«²³

During the 1930s the cultural significance of cinema in Sweden was in focus, not only within the film industry itself but also in society at large. Film culture was

in a transitional, almost dialectical, stage, culminating in an infamous debate on the artistic status of Swedish feature film in 1937. On the one hand the Film Association's publications, notably its yearbook, described especially non-fiction film production as a way of using cinema »culturally«, for example in educational and didactical film making. On the other hand feature film, which of course dominated commercial venues, naturally had its cultural implications. Even if the association sought to cultivate public taste, mass culture did not always stand in opposition to proper film culture. The editorial in Svenska Dagbladet, for instance, noted that the so-called »Americanization« of Swedish youth was not entirely dubious. On the contrary, international film culture had given a geographically marginalized youth greater ambition and confidence.

During the 1930s the average Stockholmer went to the movies more than a dozen times a year. In 1933 attendance decreased because of the economic depression, still 7.5 million tickets were sold in the Swedish capital alone. Among the feature films, approximately one third were produced in Sweden. As was the case in Europe, however, the most popular films were American. In 1933 for example, *tarzan the ape man* starring Johnny Weismuller, is said to have been the biggest success at the Swedish box offices.

Non-fiction film rarely made it into commercial distribution, with the exception of the SF- and Paramount-weekly. Both were regularly screened at Swedish cinemas during the 1930s. Movie advertisements in the daily newspapers often featured information about these weeklies. In fact, the major film company SF sometimes even bought separate ads to promote its SF-weekly, in particular when it contained images of well-known events. The weekly, of course, consisted of non-fiction footage of actualities; it did strive to be pertinent and objective, but, as rarely commented upon, the weekly was also produced and perceived by audiences as visual entertainment. Reviewers in the press often made short remarks about the weeklies as well as other non-fiction films in the evening program.

Commercial film programs during the 1930s regularly involved one feature film, a weekly and one or two short documentary films. Proper reviews of the latter were infrequent, but now and then reviewers found them interesting. The signature >-gen< for instance, in august 1933 commented upon »an extremely beautiful and interesting film about wild swans.« The unknown nature film was produced by UFA, but although fascinated, >-gen< did not even bother to mention its title.²⁴ Thus, even though fiction films dominated commercial exhibition, reports and reviews on non-fiction films were published in daily newspapers. From time to time documentaries were also screened in regular cinemas. »Svenska Dagbladet«, for example, reported on the 15th of September 1933, that »Henkels industry – and cultural film – *tvätta rätt, tvätta lätt / wash rightly and easy*, a film about cleanliness and hygiene, during spring screened for a specially invited audi-

ence, from now will be shown for free (...) at the China movie theatre.«²⁵

Still feature documentary films were rarely reviewed in the daily press. Naturally, exceptions occurred, such as a short article in the liberal daily »Dagens Nyheter« on a military film, *den indelte soldaten* (*The private soldier*, 1933), more likely mentioned, however, because the Crown Prince of Sweden attended the screening.²⁶ It is probably fair to state that in 1933 only a few feature documentaries got longer reviews in the daily press. These often featured remarkable visual attractions, such as the nude culture film *tillbaka till naturen* (*back to nature*) by Johan Almkvist. In a long review, Evedo criticized the film for its »Russian« photography with weird angles and thought it as ridiculous as Almkvist's own organization »Health through Nude Culture«. More unusual, however, was that Evedo also made a comment on the audience – largely made up of adolescent men.²⁷

Listening to Cinema – and Radio

The lack of Swedish press coverage on non-fiction film during the 1930s had one exception – reviews of the documentary films of Prince Wilhelm. A number of articles were devoted to him and his persona – blending filmmaker, royal celebrity and film star. In August 1933 »Svenska Dagbladet« for example, published a photo article on the making of Wilhelm's latest film *ombord* (*on board*) where the Prince himself appeared in four photographs out of five.²⁸

Prince Wilhelm is a peculiar figure in the history of Swedish non-fiction film. He was the son of the Swedish king Gustaf V, and apparently became interested in film during the teens. In 1921 he took part in an expedition to Africa and the making of *med prins wilhelm på afrikanska stigar* (*with Prince Wilhelm on african Paths*). During the 1930s and 1940s Wilhelm became a royal and hence, conservative nationalist filmmaker. Beginning with *medan båten glider* (*as the boat glides*) from 1930, Wilhelm made some twenty short documentary films on local Swedish characteristics. Based on a geographical principle, the films were organized around a visit of his to different parts of Sweden, where the Prince was seen meeting locals and having a friendly chat with them. These documentary films display a nationalist romantic narrative, full of clichés on Swedish mentality and picturesque images. Gustaf Boge shot most of them in an idyllic fashion far from the regional and political realities of Sweden's interwar period. The Swedish military firing at a workers' demonstration in Ådalen 1931 – killing five persons – or the crash of Ivar Kreuger's match-empire in 1932, were all socio-economic historical events of great national magnitude unheard of in Wilhelm's diegetic universe. In his royal eyes, Sweden was a classless society with no internal conflicts, the Swedes were decent hardworking people living far from modernity in a symbiosis



Bild 46: In Schweden begeisterte sich Prinz Wilhelm für den Film und drehte einige Kulturfilme. Bekleidet mit Smoking bereitet er sich im Studio gerade auf die Einführung seines Films *From the outer archipelago* (1930) vor, die er persönlich spricht.

Swedish Film Institute Stockholm

with nature – and the weather was always pleasant, up to the point that fluffy clouds are sometimes still called »Prince-Wilhelm-clouds«.

One of the more fascinating aspects of Wilhelm's film production was the use of sound. *as the boat glides* was one of the first non-fiction sound films produced in Sweden. His next film *från yttersta skären* (from the outer archipelago, 1931) began with an intertitle stating: »Prince Wilhelm reads from the outer archipelago«. This was literally the case in Wilhelm's films – cinema was being read. The first sequence presented Wilhelm himself, dressed up in a tuxedo and smoking a cigarette, introducing his own film and starting to read the voice-over. Then, there was a cut to the island Öja in the southern Stockholm archipelago with Wilhelm's voice describing the presented images. From time to time during the film, Wilhelm would cut back to himself reading in the studio, as if to remind the audience whose voice they were hearing. Thus, one could argue since the picturesque imagery was so stereotypical, the audience hardly saw Wilhelm's films – they listened to them.

The coming of sound, however, did not immediately change the Swedish non-fiction film production. On the contrary, a number of silent documentary films were produced throughout the 1930s, for example *vägen* (the road, 1931), a film about the Swedish road system and the changes in traffic caused by the increasing number of cars. Nevertheless, three out of four documentary films listed by the Swedish Film Association in 1933 featured sound.

Swedish audiences are most likely to have heard non-fiction film for the first time at commercial venues, since production of weeklies relatively early shifted towards sound. This was an international trend. In August 1932 the SF-weekly began with its soon characteristic voice-over, personified by Gunnar Skoglund. Sound revitalized the SF-weekly and is said to have made them more popular among audiences than the previous silent ones. Rumour has it that during the 1930s Skoglund's voice was the most imitated in Sweden. Interestingly, SF kept on producing silent parts in their weekly.²⁹ Only towards the end of 1933 were sound sequences the majority in the SF-weekly.

During the early 1930s Swedish audiences did not only hear cinema, they had also developed a taste for listening to the radio. Although early radio was listened to collectively, it soon became more of a private activity in contrast to the public sphere of cinema. Film historians often neglect the connection between these types of media, but in terms of reception and production – especially non-fiction programs – a range of similarities can be found. For example, in newspapers, radio programs to be transmitted were written about much in the same manner as reviewers remarked on the weeklies. Radio and cinema were often commented upon under the same headline, with the difference that audiences were reminded of particular radio programs in advance, not afterwards, as was the case with film. As a matter of fact, documentary radio programs, for example lectures, also received more press coverage than cinematic documentaries.

Swedish radio – Radiotjänst – was modeled after the BBC. Three years after the formation of the latter, Radiotjänst began with regular transmissions in 1925. In 1930 half a million Swedes – more than 25% of the households – had bought a radio license. From the beginning the Swedish radio was an information service provided by the government, which transmitted religion, news, culture and entertainment in an enlightened fashion. In contrast to the production of the SF-weeklies, Radiotjänst did not get its own news unit until the late 1930s. Before that news were taken from the national press agency instead. The new medium was, thus, more or less politically driven into a discourse of sobriety where documentary subjects were privileged. The radio lecture, for instance, with its close ties to the non-fiction film, sought to inform as well as intellectually foster the audience. In 1928 more than four hundred radio lectures were transmitted via Radiotjänst.³⁰ Prince Wilhelm was a regular lecturer, and early radio must have been an almost

ideal media for an organization such as the Swedish Film Association. Radio, in short, produced and transmitted the type of discourse the Film Association wanted Swedish film culture to incorporate.

The SF short film department

In 1932 SF established a short film department as a complement to its weekly production unit and educational department. During the 1930s the short film department produced a number of documentary films. The majority of these films are lost, but an estimated 200 films were made. Topics included everything from gardening – *Sveriges nuvarande Kolonier* (Sweden's present Colonies, Knut Martin, 1934) – and youth culture – *Ungdom* (Youth, Harald Molander, 1936) – to the national armament industry – *Besök i Bofors* (a visit to Bofors, Nils Jerring, 1936) – or the excavations of the Acropolis – *Akropolis* (Acropolis, Knut Martin, 1937). SF and two other film producers, Europa Film and Kinocentralen, produced the majority of Swedish documentaries during the 1930s. SF was the biggest producer, but Kinocentralen was also active, not the least in terms of technological innovations. For example, it is reported that Kinocentralen already in 1934 began producing documentaries in colour.

To celebrate the 25th anniversary of SF in 1944, the company published a jubilee publication – »Svensk filmindustri tjugufem år«. The book is interesting since it contains a chapter on the short film department. SF seems to have regretted that it had to close down in 1939. Even though a number of films were said to have been simple and sketchy, the total production, according to the company, formed a unique visual document of the period. The jubilee publication claimed that »if these films can be archived in a satisfying way, they will in the future be of great cultural historical value.«³¹

The short film department concentrated its efforts on geography and nature, rather than on the social emergence of the Swedish well-fare state. Most of Prince Wilhelm's films, for example, were produced by the department, and films alike, such as Jerring's *besök i småstaden* (Visit to a small town, 1934) or *Landet och Folket* (The Land and the People, 1936), were made in the same spirit. The production guidelines were, thus, hardly Griersonian. It is even right to state that the short film department, as well as the SF-weekly unit, explicitly avoided political themes. In fact, apart from a number of election films, Swedish non-fiction film was almost entirely a-political up until the 1950s when Peter Weiss began making his early social documentaries.

If the short film department avoided politics it did, however, produce a few aesthetic experiments. The films of Gösta Roosling are sometimes mentioned as

the most beautiful documentaries that came out of the SF-department. Nevertheless, in international histories on documentary film, *Gamla Stan* (*The old City*, 1931) is more frequently referred to as the classical Swedish documentary of the 1930s. In the city-symphony-tradition *Gamla Stan* was a short avant-garde documentary depicting the old town in Stockholm, made by a group of young Swedish authors: Eyvind Johnson, Arthur Lundqvist, Erik Asklund and the film critic Stig Almqvist. *Gamla Stan* became famous partly as an aesthetic experiment, but even more so because Johnson and Lundqvist were soon to get national literary recognition. Arguably, the quality of *Gamla Stan* lies more in the film being a symptom of a literary avant-garde's interest in cinema as a medium of expression, than in its formal aesthetics.

As an early auteur documentary, *Gamla Stan* is, thus, always mentioned in surveys of Swedish film history. In his *Non-fiction Film: a Critical History*, Richard M. Barsam for example, claimed *Gamla Stan* the only film worth noting in Sweden during the period.³² Barsam's evaluation – most likely based on prior aesthetically oriented Swedish studies³³ – is interesting, since *Gamla Stan* in the SF jubilee publication from 1944 was considered an artistic failure. The authors gone filmmakers were satirically addressed as the »fastidious collective«, who »in the Russian style believed film had its chance to become art.« Camera angles and framing in *Gamla Stan* were furthermore described as »far-fetched and ridiculously artistic.«³⁴ *Gamla Stan* is, hence, one example in Swedish film history to illustrate how film historiographical evaluations based on film aesthetics often become ahistorical.

Epilogue: Film Production at the Nordic Museum

As mentioned, the SF jubilee publication described the company's documentaries as films of great cultural historical value. Rhetoric of this kind was common in discussions on the preservation of non-fiction film. In fact, almost identical declarations had been advocated ever since Boleslas Matuszewski published his pamphlet »Une nouvelle Source de l'Histoire« – (»Creation d'un dé pot de cinématographie historique«) in 1898.³⁵ During the teens, Sweden witnessed a similar film archival discussion as other western countries in trade journals and the daily press. On the agenda was the preservation of primarily non-fiction film, particularly footage with national topographical value.

Film, however, was not only to be put into archives, it was also seen by progressive museum directors as a way of documenting parts of Swedish society vanishing because of modernity. Especially at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm a number of cinematic discussions – with practical results – took place during the

teens. The Nordic Museum was an old institution dating back to the 1870s. Like the out door folk museum Skansen – established in 1891 – it was a creation of Arthur Hazelius with the purpose to gather and display ethnographic rural objects. During the 1890s the museum had started to use photography as a museological instrument. Film was used in the same way and a few documentary films were produced during the teens, for example *Vinterscener från Skansen* (Winter Scenes from Skansen, 1916). Ten years later, however, production had become frequent, mainly due to the museum being financially supported by surplus money from the Swedish board of film censors. From 1926 to 1940 the museum produced hundreds of non-fiction films on local Swedish ethnography. Subjects ranged from dance films and local weddings to church weekends in the north and a film about moose hunt. In a text entitled »Cultural historical film. Document of the first order«, one of the amanuenses of the museum, Torsten Lenk, even compared film sequences of Swedish ethnography to regular museological objects.³⁶ For Lenk, cinema was the primary medium to capture rural activities, since moving images had the ability to register continuous series of unfolding events. Particularly, the production of local dance films came to use cinema's capacity. Almost none of the Nordic Museum's dance films had any cuts; instead they were shot with a static camera, not altered even when dancers moved out of the frame. For the director of the dance films, Ernst Klein, ethnographic authenticity was most important. After the dance, however, he often cut in sequences displaying the feet of the dancers to highlight – in close up – local choreographic characteristics.

The state funded film production at the Nordic Museum, to conclude, was preservationist in its aim. Cinema was used as a kind of light archive with a natural ability to store ethnographical information. The cinematic strategies used by the museum, thus, more or less coincided with one of the purposes behind the Swedish Film Association. Already in the first yearbook, it claimed a few films stored in their archive.³⁷ As a matter of fact, the present film archive at the Swedish Film Institute grew out of the Film Association's collection.

One of the conclusions of this essay is, hence, that non-fiction film played a crucial role for the film archival development in Sweden. It is sometimes forgotten that it were primarily documentaries that were thought worthy to keep. Moreover, the preservation of non-fiction film increased the cultural prestige and significance of the cinema. This was, for instance, evident in the SF jubilee publication. In fact, production of non-fiction film was used to defend SF in the 1937 debate on the lack of artistic quality in Swedish feature films, where the defence publication finally stated:

Swedish cinema does not only refer to what is usually called dramatic or feature films. In fact, there is something called short and educational film. If Svensk Filmindustri [SF] during last year [1936] produced five features, in all 12.500 me-

ters long, we did at the same time produce 60 to 70 short films, equal of 22.000 meters. The significance of these films, both nationally as well as internationally, should not be forgotten.³⁸

Anmerkungen

- 1 Tullberg Film. Stockholm 1923, p. 5.
- 2 The difference between home films and family films is not evident in their catalogues.
- 3 R. [Ragnar] L. [Lasse] Ring: Kallprat om film. Stockholm 1928, p. 26.
- 4 Ibid., p. 27.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., p. 30.
- 7 A project on industrial films is conducted within Mats Björkin's research project »Landscapes in motion: film, television, and cultural topography«.
- 8 »Filmarkiv för idrott«. In: Biografbladet nr 22, 1921, p. 690. This archive never became a large archive but the sports museum in Stockholm, still has a smaller collection of films.
- 9 Föreningen Armé-, Marin- och Flygfilm. Arkivkatalog 1: 1895-1945 (Stockholm: AMF, 1995), p. 1.
- 10 »För skolfilmsidéns realiserande«. In: Biografbladet nr 18, 1921, p. 524.
- 11 This broader aspect of the educational films, were more important for proponents of educational films outside production. Among others, Walter Fevrell and Dagmar Waldner – two of the most important persons, besides Berg, for the development of educational films in Sweden – argued for a broader understanding of educational film.
- 12 Gustaf Berg: »Entwicklung und Gestaltung des Filmwesens in Schweden unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Bildungsfilm«. In: Svensk Bildningsfilms årsbok 1924. Stockholm 1924, pp. 30f. Originally a speech held at the film reform days in Vienna in May 1924.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 37f.
- 14 Gustaf Berg Bildningsfilmer tillgängliga för skolor, föreläsningföreningar, social upplysningsverksamhet m.m. säsongen 1924-25. Katalog nr. 4 från Aktiebolaget Svensk Filmindustri Avd. För skolfilm m.m. Stockholm 1924.
- 15 This analysis is based on Mats Björkin »Industrial Greta: Some thoughts on an Industrial Film« Nordic Explorations: Film Before 1930 eds. John Fullerton and Jan Olsson. Sydney 1999, pp. 263-268.
- 16 The intertitles cited in this essay are quoted as they appear in the film, including anglicization of Swedish names.
- 17 For example: *från lapplands gruvfält* (1923), *fagersta bruk* (1925), *fagerstafilmen* (1925), *kättingtillverkning vid ljusne woxna ab* (1925).
- 18 In 1927 an article in a Soviet journal made fun of the Swedish history in commenting upon Tullbergs screening of industrial films in the USSR: »Not by arms, but by films«, »Icke med vapen utan med film«, Biografbladet, no 18, 1927, p. 473.

- 19 Many of the prints at the Swedish Film Institute cannot be viewed as they currently exist only as negatives.
- 20 SF-weekly 807 [Veckorevy 1933-11-27] at the Swedish Television Archive.
- 21 Erik Wilhelm Olson: »Svenska Filmsamfundets första verksamhetsår« Om film – Svenska Filmsamfundets årsbok 1934. Stockholm 1934, p. 7.
- 22 »Kulturfilm« Ariel – tidskrift för folkligt studie- och bildningsarbete vol. 9, 1929, p. 92.
- 23 »Filmen som kulturfaktor«, editorial Svenska Dagbladet 5/11, 1933.
- 24 »Röda Kvarn: Amor i ledband«, -gen Svenska Dagbladet 15/8, 1933.
- 25 »Dagens filmpremiärer« Svenska Dagbladet 11/9, 1933.
- 26 »Militärfilm« på Astoria« Dagens Nyheter 8/4, 1933.
- 27 »Arcadia: Tillbaka till naturen«, Eveo Svenska Dagbladet 12/9, 1933. For a discussion on Almkvist and tillbaka till naturen, see Ylva Habel: »Paradoxes of Paradisiac Nakedness: Fascist Aesthetics and Medicalised Discourse in the Nudist Movement ›Health trough Nude Culture«. Nordisk estetisk tidskrift no. 4, 2000.
- 28 »Ombord« Svenska Dagbladet 20/8, 1933.
- 29 From 1914 until 1960 SF produced their weekly newsreel. Nearly half a century of consecutive series of weeklies provides remarkable visual evidence of the construction and representation of national identity in Scandinavian fashion. One might argue that the SF-weekly screened the nation by displaying images of neutral innocence. Swedishness was promulgated through depiction of national as well as regional events of both banality and importance. Developed from early non-fiction film, the SF-weekly moreover, prevailed in the same form shown in cinemas before feature films, until television made it obsolete. Thus, while Sweden developed from a poor class society to a well-fare state of international recognition, the SF-weekly depicted this transition as an intermediary between early cinema and television.
- 30 Radiotjänst – en bok om programmet och lyssnarna eds. Carl Anders Dymling et al. Stockholm 1929, p. 117.
- 31 Svensk filmindustri tjugufem år. Stockholm 1944, p. 151.
- 32 Richard M. Barsam: Non-fiction Film: a Critical History. Bloomington 1992, p. 121.
- 33 See for example, Gösta Werner: Den svenska filmens historia. En översikt. Stockholm 1970 or Svensk filmografi III. Stockholm 1979.
- 34 Svensk filmindustri tjugufem år, pp. 154-155.
- 35 Boleslas Matuszewski : Une nouvelle Source de l'Histoire – Creation d'un dépôt de cinématographie historique. Paris 1898.
- 36 Torsten Lenk: »Kulturhistorisk film. Dokument av första ordningen« Svensk skolfilm och bildningsfilm nr 18, 1926.
- 37 Om film – Svenska Filmsamfundets årsbok 1934, p. 173.
- 38 Frågan blev med nej besvarad – Svensk film är icke kulturfara. Stockholm 1937, p. 11.

Peter Zimmermann
Kay Hoffmann (Hg.)

Triumph der Bilder

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vor 1945 im internationalen Vergleich

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