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The Making of Christian Men

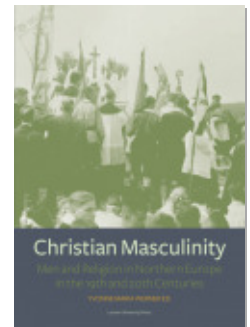
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THE MAKING OF CHRISTIAN MEN

AN EVANGELICAL MISSION TO THE SWEDISH ARMY, c. 1900-1920

ELIN MALMER

Salvation industry sprang up in Northern Europe in the nineteenth century. Revivalist literature was produced in a never-ending flow, preachers accosted people in the streets and in their homes, and several new denominations and missionary organisations came into being.¹ In Sweden growing numbers were attracted by the evangelical battle cry of Christ's advancing Kingdom. By 1920 revivalist denominations and organisations had as many adult members as the emerging socialist trade unions.² These multi-faceted revivalist bodies were united in their belief in the necessity of religious conversion. Their aim was to lead man to salvation and to support the converts in their new lifestyle. The focus of this chapter is *Svenska Missionsförbundet* (Swedish Mission Covenant or SMC), part of the mainstream in Swedish evangelical revivalism, which included a large affiliated network of local congregations, missionary organisations, Sunday schools and youth societies. The revivalist expansion coincided with military rearmament in Europe. The period from the Crimean War to the First World War was characterised by a growing nationalism, sometimes interwoven with Christian elements, and increased international tensions. It was also the age of mandatory military conscription. Sweden declared itself neutral at the outbreak of the First World War, yet its parliamentary agenda from the 1890s on had been dominated by military defence issues, and following a

¹ Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, 43-57; Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 1-19; Gelfgren, *Kristendomen och den moderna världsbilden*, 120-121.

² It is estimated that each of the two movements had about 300,000 adult members in 1920 (out of a population of about six million), after which the revivalist curve levelled out whilst trade union membership continued to rise (see Lundkvist, *Politik, nykterhet och reformer*, 26).

drawn-out political process, parliament voted yes to general conscription in 1901.³ A prodigious construction project began to supply the army with suitable barracks, and troops were moved from their traditional training camps to newly built garrisons in the towns. It is estimated that a third of government expenditure was allocated to the so-called barracks programme in the decade starting in 1901. The programme was nearly accomplished in 1920.⁴

The costs of rearmament caused intense political conflicts in the years prior to the First World War. The debate on defence investment was closely connected to the issues of parliamentary rule and universal suffrage, and the dividing lines over defence issues cut straight through the large group of revivalist members of parliament and led to conflicts within the SMC. There were three main groups: conservative supporters of a strong national defence; liberals who advocated moderate defence expenditure; and pacifists and conscientious objectors. The strength of their interrelationships and degree of influence within the SMC varied over time.⁵ For the revivalists, military camps were a new field, and missionary work got underway among the soldiers, often in the soldiers' homes, which initially were built with charitable funds next to the military training camps and barracks.

At the SMC's annual meeting in June 1914 the Liberal member of parliament E. A. Nilsson, a rising star in the movement and later minister for defence in the coalition government led by the Liberal politician Nils Edén, hailed the new cause.⁶ According to an account in the SMC magazine *Missionsförbundet*, Nilsson stressed the importance of missionary work among soldiers. He argued for the erection of an extensive network of soldiers' homes and the need for devoted people engaged in this missionary activity. The word of God was to be preached, and the young men were to be given the opportunity to read, write letters, and enjoy private conversations. The soldiers' homes should be equipped with libraries and cafeterias, situated close to the training camps so that the conscripts and regular soldiers could visit them without special permission. Moreover, activities should be shaped in collaboration between different revivalist bodies.⁷ Thus, the soldiers' homes ought to be jointly administered by SMC bodies together with the Baptists or Methodists, for example, but were not to constitute the basis for new denominations.

The account did not mention the self-evident fact that set apart the soldiers' homes from the traditional military culture, which was awash with alcohol: they were

³ Johansson, *Europas krig*, 81-85, 150-152; van der Veer and Lehmann, *Nation and Religion*, 6-7; Strömberg-Back, "Stam och beväring", 116-124; Ericson, *Medborgare i vapen*, 100-109.

⁴ Berg, *Kaserner, baracker och hyddor*, 69; Borell, *Disciplinära strategier*, 82-83.

⁵ Gustafsson, *Fred och försvar*, 226-232; Lundkvist, *Politik, nykterhet och reformer*, 214-226; Svärd, *Väckelserörelsernas folk i Andra kammaren*, 150-151.

⁶ Stockholm, Svenska Missionskyrkans arkiv (hereafter SMA), GK3, Generalkonferenserna 1910-1915: 'Program för Svenska Missionsförbundets 36:e årsmöte och generalkonferens i Stockholm den 2-7 juni 1914', 3-4. Nilsson was an MP for the Liberal Party 1906-1923, Minister of Defence 1917-1920, and member of the SMC board 1917-1923 (Norberg, Tjerneld and Asker, *Tvåkammarriksdagen 1867-1970*, IV, 503).

⁷ Nilsson's speech was published in *Missionsförbundet*, (1914), 199; and in *Ungdomsvännen*, (1914), 208.

teetotal.⁸ The SMC's increased involvement in the missionary work among soldiers is an unexplored field of research. This work was part of the movement's home missionary work, as opposed to its overseas work. Statistics from the army itself and the *Förbundet Soldaternas Vänner* (Association of Soldiers' Friends) show that there were more than fifty soldiers' homes in 1920, which means that they were to be found at almost all military camps. In the same year the SMC and its affiliated network were an established presence in at least a third of these soldiers' homes.⁹

The purpose of this chapter is to study the SMC's involvement in this missionary work and the institutional framework within which the SMC operated: the soldiers' homes. A study of missionary work among soldiers necessarily leads to the larger question of the production of masculinities in the revivalist denominations and organisations. What were the arguments put forward in the SMC about taking part in this work? How did they view the young men who were called up as conscripts? I will approach these questions by studying a range of sources from different levels within in the SMC network. The records of the SMC's central organisation do not give a full account of the gender imagery that underpinned its work among soldiers; a more fruitful source in this respect is the magazine *Ungdomsvännen* (The Young Person's Friend), founded in 1897 following the centralisation of the SMC's youth work.¹⁰ In its articles on military conscription and advice to the readers one finds notions of masculine lifestyles at the military training camps. To make the picture more complete, I have also analysed missionary work among soldiers at a local level: the soldiers' home in the town of Örebro in central Sweden. What were the reasons that prompted local SMC ministers to engage in this work, and how best to characterise the social practices at such soldiers' homes? However, I will begin by placing the SMC's work among soldiers in a broader Swedish and European context.

⁸ For Swedish military culture, see Rehnberg, *Vad skall vi göra med de blanka gevär, 95-111 passim*; and Sörensen, *Det blänkande eländet, 131-139*. See also Ahlbäck, "Där pojkar blir män"; and Larsson, "Manligt och omanligt på Karlberg".

⁹ *Svenska arméns rulla 1920*; Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1920, 100-104*; Id., *Soldatmissionens, 10-45*; Stockholm, Riksarkivet, Svenska Missionsförbundets arkiv, Huvudarkivet A, nr 13A: 'Utredning om den s k soldatmissionen vid de svenska lägerplatserna, gjord i januari 1914', 21-22 January 1914, § 39.

¹⁰ Keijer, *Ungdomen för Kristus, 32-53*. In its first years, *Ungdomsvännen* was a monthly magazine, and later a bi-monthly, with a circulation in 1919 of 15,000 copies (Svenska Missionsförbundet, *Svenska Missionsförbundets årsberättelse 1910, 10*) and in 1920 of 22,800 copies (Id., *Redogörelse för Svenska Missionsförbundets ungdoms tionde verksamhetsår, 7*).

EVANGELICAL REVIVALISM AS RE-CHRISTIANISATION

The SMC was founded in 1878 after a conflict with the established Lutheran Church of Sweden over sacramental issues. In the period studied the movement had about 100,000 members and was therefore the largest Swedish revivalist denomination. Its members usually came from the lower middle or upper working classes, and the movement's recruitment was most successful in rural areas.¹¹ Youth groups were established that put local affiliations with the SMC on a more formal basis, and in 1910 a national youth organisation, *Svenska Missionsförbundets Ungdom* (Youth of the Swedish Mission Covenant), was founded. In the same year it took over editorial control of *Ungdomsvännen* and made it their periodical. Over the following decade several local associations attached themselves to the national youth organisation, which by its own estimation had a membership surpassing 36,000 in 1912 and 56,000 in 1919.¹² The SMC was highly feminised in a literal sense, for the greater part of its membership were women. In many of the congregations two-thirds of members were women, and in some the proportion of women was even greater.¹³ They were also in the majority in the youth organisation, for according to the organisation's own calculations from 1919, men accounted for 35 per cent and women 65 per cent.¹⁴ Yet the SMC leadership remained predominantly male.¹⁵

The SMC and its network were part of a wider revivalist landscape.¹⁶ From the mid nineteenth century Low Church revivalism was increasingly evident within the Church of Sweden, matched by a strong Anglo-American religious influence. The Baptist Union of Sweden attracted extraordinarily high numbers of adherents in the period in question.¹⁷ A Methodist Church was established in Sweden in the early 1870s following the revocation of the laws that prevented freedom of worship for dissenting groups, and in the late 1870s, the Salvation Army reached the shores of Sweden and spread rapidly. From the middle of the nineteenth century Swedish revivalism was showing the influence of the Evangelical Alliance. A movement that had originated in the United Kingdom, the Alliance emphasised the revivalists' commonly held religious beliefs. Its main idea was that all born-again Christians should be united, regardless of confessional, denominational, or congregational borders. Internationally, it positioned itself on the front-line against Catholicism. It was a source of inspiration for youth organisations such as the YMCA and the YWCA as well as for the

¹¹ For statistics, see Lundkvist, *Folk Rörelserna i det svenska samhället*, 106-117; for a history of the SMC, see Andreasson, *Liv och rörelse*, ch. 2-5; Nicklasson, *En kristen livsrörelse*, 9-31.

¹² Lundahl, *Några ord om Svenska Missionsförbundet*, 46-47; Svenska Missionsförbundet, *Redogörelse*, 366.

¹³ Lundkvist, *Folk Rörelserna i det svenska samhället*, 92-93, 107.

¹⁴ Svenska Missionsförbundet, *Redogörelse*, 366. For a discussion on the effects of the feminisation process, see Malmer and Sidenvall, "Christian Manliness for Women?", 394-404.

¹⁵ It was not until 1946 that the SMC had its first female *församlingsföreståndare* ('local pastor'); see Hörlén, "Låt oss i stället göra en insats", 203.

¹⁶ For an overview, see Bexell, *Sveriges kyrkohistoria*, VII. ch. 2-6.

¹⁷ The Baptist Union of Sweden, with 43,000 members in 1905, formed the largest group of Baptists in Europe, with the exception of the United Kingdom (see *Baptistmissionens årstryck: Tidskrift för utgiftning af konferenshandlingar, statistik och circular*, 12 (1905) 1, 31).

Endeavour Movement and the Salvation Army.¹⁸ However, the Alliance would prove controversial in Sweden, and as early as the 1880s met fierce opposition from Archbishop Anton Niklas Sundberg.¹⁹ One reason for the general resistance in Sweden might have been an unwillingness to give up on the parish, which had a strong position in the Lutheran tradition as well as within the SMC. Another reason was that some leaders of the various revivalist bodies viewed the Alliance as a threat to their denominations. Yet, as we shall see, the transconfessional ideals of the Evangelical Alliance had influential supporters, and is relevant here if only for the practical implications for the soldiers' homes when members of different denominations went about their religious devotions.

The growth of revivalism was strong, and took a variety of forms and organisations. I would argue that this expansion was an empirical example of what Hartmut Lehmann has called re-Christianisation in a period notable for its secularisation and de-Christianisation.²⁰ Equally, it can be asked in what way the soldiers' homes enterprise should be considered an act of re-Christianisation. At the military training camps, the revivalists encountered a masculine lifestyle wedded to forms of behaviour they could only regard as sinful.

MISSIONARY WORK AMONG SOLDIERS

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, soldiers' homes were established by revivalist Christians in a number of countries, including Germany and the United Kingdom. There have been some studies of British soldiers' homes and the efforts of revivalist and evangelical groups to instil the Christian spirit in ordinary soldiers. A Soldiers' Home and Institute opened at the garrison at Aldershot in 1863 would spawn imitators across the British Empire.²¹ The American historian Kenneth Hendrickson emphasises the evangelical and domesticating programmes of the soldiers' homes as a crucial alternative to male, military values and the army's disciplinary and control systems. The British historian Michael Snape nevertheless downplays the importance of soldiers' homes, and concludes that their missionary activities were generally speaking a failure. However, along with various army reforms they may have contributed to the drop in crime in the British armed forces in the latter half of the

¹⁸ Gustafson, *D. L. Moody and Swedes*, 322, 327-328; Newman, *Evangeliska alliansen*, 245-250, 271-273; Karlström, *Kristna samförståndssträvanden*, 12-37.

¹⁹ Kjölleström, "Biskoparna och den evangeliska alliansen i Sverige", 296, 319; Randall and Hilborn, *One Body in Christ*, 159-164.

²⁰ Lehmann, "Von der Erforschung der Säkularisierung zur Erforschung von Prozessen der Dechristianisierung und der Rechristianisierung", 13.

²¹ On the development in Britain, see for example, Anderson, "The Growth of Christian Militarism in Mid-Victorian Britain", 54-63; Snape, *The Redcoat and Religion*, 101-106. Soldiers' homes were set up by revivalists in Denmark from the 1870s onwards; Statens offentliga utredningar 1965:52, *Soldathemsverksamheten* (hereafter SOU 1965:52), 91-92. On Protestant soldiers' homes in Imperial Germany, see Schübel, *300 Jahre evangelische Soldatenseelsorge*, 44-45 and Westdeutscher Jünglingsbund, *Ein Gang durch die Soldatenheime*, 34-38. Catholic equivalents of soldiers' homes are known from late nineteenth-century Belgium (Segers, *Charles de Broqueville*, 33-41).

nineteenth century.²² Unlike Snape, however, the ambition here is not to establish the extent to which missionary work among soldiers truly succeeded in recruiting them to the evangelist cause.

There has been no extensive historical study of missionary work among Swedish soldiers, despite frequent mentions of soldiers' homes in commemorative publications, regimental histories, and biographies. The most comprehensive survey of the soldiers' homes enterprise is to be found in an official report published in 1965.²³ In his book on the upper-class religious awakening in the wake of Granville Waldegrave third Lord Radstock's preaching tour that passed through Stockholm in the late 1870s, the Swedish church historian Lars Österlin considers early missionary work among soldiers, concluding that it was the so-called Radstock circle's particular offering to the home missionary work.²⁴ In this chapter, however, I approach the mission to soldiers from a different point of view, broadening the perspective to involve large-scale, middle-class revivalism.

Missionary work among Swedish soldiers began in the nineteenth century. Religious services were initially held in the open air or in tents near the training camps or barracks. The first proper soldiers' home was opened in Stockholm in 1876 by the wealthy Low Church couple Nathalie Meijerhelm and Carl August Andersson-Meijerhelm. Their inspiration probably came from a visit to Britain a short time before. By the 1890s, nineteen soldiers' homes had been founded across Sweden by a variety of revivalist bodies.²⁵ In 1899, a national group, the Association of Soldiers' Friends, was set up to coordinate the activities at soldiers' homes across the country. The board was made up of high-ranking officers from the Radstock circle, among them the retired Minister of War Axel Rappe and Prince Oscar Bernadotte - both of whom adhered to the ideals of the Evangelical Alliance²⁶ - and a number of civilians, among them pastors from the SMC and other denominations such as the Baptist Union of Sweden. According to the guidelines laid down by the Association of Soldiers' Friends, the purpose of the soldiers' homes was "to lead the soldier to salvation through the gospel as a force of God", and provide him with a place where he could relax in the company of pious comrades and enjoy a greater "stillness and invigoration" than was possible in barracks.²⁷ Thus individual spiritual life seems to have been prioritised over other motives such as fostering god-fearing and disciplined soldiers who would endure the hardships of war.

In this period, soldiers' homes were usually run by volunteers. The majority of homes were affiliated to the Association of Soldier's Friends, but there were also independent soldiers' homes, as well as those built by regiments where a Luther-

²² Hendrickson, *Making Saints*, 82-93; Snape, *Redcoat and Religion*, 110, 116-117.

²³ SOU 1965:52. See also Ericson, *Medborgare i vapen*, 219.

²⁴ Österlin, *Stockholmsväckelsen kring lord Radstock*, 114-117.

²⁵ SOU 1965:52, 13-14; Jansson, *Prins Oscar Bernadotte*, 192-193.

²⁶ Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1911*, 3; Österlin, *Stockholmsväckelsen kring lord Radstock*, 64, 125; Jansson, *Prins Oscar Bernadotte*, 112-113.

²⁷ SOU 1965:52, 15.

an regimental chaplain was in charge of services.²⁸ The Church of Sweden became an increasingly important operator, and in 1928 set up a special committee for this purpose.²⁹ From this period on, religious services in the soldiers' homes became increasingly ecumenical in character and the differences between the different types of soldiers' home began to disappear. By the 1960s the greater part of the soldiers' homes were broadly ecumenical, with representatives of the Church of Sweden and different revivalist denominations represented on their boards.³⁰

THE DILEMMA SOLVED: EVANGELICAL FRATERNAL GROUPS

As already mentioned, there was as much disagreement over defence issues within the SMC as among revivalists in general. Several revivalist groups backed military conscription and acts of war, supporting their views with biblical references and nationalistic arguments. Others argued that the teachings of Jesus and the spirit of the New Testament spoke against war, an interpretation of the Bible that was prevalent among Baptists, but was also heard within the SMC.³¹ Until 1920 the situation was difficult for men with conscientious scruples, as there were no statutory rights to non-combatant service. From 1902 conscientious objectors could be exempted from military training and assigned other military - albeit not civilian - duties. A number of young revivalists refused to accept this solution, and from 1902 to 1917 sentences were passed in 136 court-martials for refusal to do military service on religious grounds. Several leading Baptists and a number of activists from the SMC who found the situation insupportable took up cudgels on behalf of the conscientious objectors, and members of parliament affiliated to the SMC brought motions of support in parliament.³²

The periodical *Ungdomsvännen* kept a low profile on these thorny issues. It barely mentioned military conscription as anything other than a duty to the state; loyalty to current legislation was all. The periodical had a lively column of letters to the editor, where religious and moral issues were discussed, yet conscription was only dealt with on a few occasions. Two years prior to the reform of 1901, one 'J. E-x' drafted a cautious defence for young male believers doing military service, arguing it was a duty to defend one's country by military means. Nevertheless, the writer showed compassion for those who had genuine, scripturally justified scruples.³³ A few years after the introduction of general conscription the tone had sharpened. The question was put to the editor whether young believers were right to emigrate to America to

²⁸ In 1920, more than 75 per cent of the soldiers' homes were still run by revivalist organisations on a voluntary basis. The majority were affiliated to the Association of Soldiers' Friends. *Svenska arméns rulla*, 1920; Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1920*, 100-104.

²⁹ *Svenska kyrkans diakonistyrelsens militärutskott* (military committee of the Swedish Society for Diaconal Work), see SOU 1965:52, 78.

³⁰ SOU 1965:52, 38.

³¹ Gustafsson, *Fred och försvar*, 169, 232-236.

³² *Ibid.*, 75, 95, 106-108, 210, 218-219.

³³ Signed 'J. E-x', "Svar till A-d J-n", *Ungdomsvännen*, (1899), 222-223.

avoid conscription. The answers came in two distinct varieties of 'No'. 'G T-m' replied that a young believer also had a duty towards his earthly fatherland, which involved defending his country in times of danger, while 'Fd beväringman' (former conscript) stated that it was both a duty and an act of self-preservation for a peaceful nation such as Sweden to defend itself if it was attacked, and went on to appeal to nationalistic sentiments. Surely a true Christian should be the first to defend those most Swedish of values, inherited liberal tradition and freedom of worship? It was wrong to refuse conscription unless genuine qualms of religious conscience made military service impossible.³⁴

In the forty-odd texts on military conscription in *Ungdomsvännerna* in the period 1897-1920, far greater consideration was given a different problem: the sin that the revivalists saw spreading across the military training camps. The periodical saw it as its main concern to guide and support its young readers in spiritual and moral matters.³⁵ With the introduction of general conscription, alarm bells began ringing. As the texts show, there was a strong fear that pious young men would apostatise when far from their homes and the protective embrace of their congregations or youth societies. Military camps were seen as literally swamped by everything the evangelical revivalists defined as immoral. As 'E. Th.' put it in 1907: "Regimental life is without doubt such that it requires a special sense of vigilance if one is to make it through without being branded for life ... Many a young man has succumbed to temptation at precisely the time he needs to be at this place! There is so much moral corruption and vice that flourishes in such places that it makes one shiver merely to think about it."³⁶

In some texts, sinful behaviour was vividly described. 'A H' described a soldiers' home at the Fristad hed military camp, and mentions the "impious blasphemies, swear-words, obscene speech, card games and drunkenness etc." that it worked against. In an article from 1903, 'A S-n' urged all local youth societies to devote themselves to the mission to soldiers, declaring that "during their conscription [many] imbibe so much poison that sooner or later they turn into spiritual or moral wrecks".³⁷ In other texts sin is merely suggested. One writer explained how military conscription entailed certain "difficulties" and "discomforts".³⁸

Moral indignation was not unique to the evangelical revivalists. In the parliamentary debates on conscription in the nineteenth century, the moral arguments against holding young men in barracks for long periods kept resurfacing. Members of Parliament opposed to military conscription were concerned that young men would be weaned off proper work and would show an inclination toward idleness and vice. The debate had distinct class dimensions: it was considered especially unsuitable for sons of farmers and persons of means to cohabit with the lower echelons of soci-

³⁴ "Svar på insända frågor", *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1907), 245-246.

³⁵ *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1897) 12, inside back cover.

³⁶ Signed 'E. Th.', "Några råd till ungdomen vid lägerplatserna", *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1907), 188.

³⁷ Signed 'A. H.', "Från Fristad hed", *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1906), 188; signed 'A. S-n', "Ett ord till våra kristliga ungdomsföreningar", *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1903), 77. On the ethics of Swedish SMC and Baptist congregations, see for example Kennerberg, *Innanför eller utanför*, 25, 103, 253-254.

³⁸ Signed 'J. O.', "Till troende beväringar", *Ungdomsvännerna*, (1903), 95.

ety.³⁹ Yet *Ungdomsvännan* also offered the antidote to all this sinfulness: evangelical fraternal groups. As 'E. Th.' continued: "It is also necessary that the few believers in these places seek each other out! Thus the one piece of coal can warm the other. It is undeniably a great blessing and benefit to have mutual, separate moments to offer prayers to the Lord! By these means strength and stability are offered to those who look inward! So much greater will the meaning of 'light' and 'salt' be."⁴⁰

Socialising with other revivalists was the recipe for surviving army barracks life. The text alluded to references that would have been obvious to its readers: the British eighteenth-century Methodist John Wesley's simile that the faithful were like burning coal in a fire, which if spread out expired but if raked together would thrive, meaning that together revivalists could support each other and build on their beliefs; and Matthew 5: 13-14, where Christians are described as the salt and light of the world. 'E. Th.' reminds revivalists of their importance as virtuous role models in military training camps.

The texts abound in speaking evocations of brotherhood. 'Gunnar', who was doing his military service at Visborgsslätt on the Baltic island of Gotland, wrote that he had soon become acquainted with the other born-again Christians, and that it "gave strength" to have dear fellow brothers or allies here and there in the regiment. A senior fellow-believer invited the conscripts to his home, which was close to the barracks, where they "had meetings, delightful meetings in the evenings". Bible readings were followed by an edifying discussion of what they had read. Occasionally the conversation was interrupted by a comforting and stirring song. As a rule the meetings would be concluded with prayer. "One felt strengthened in both body and soul after such an evening gathering."⁴¹ In certain instances the *Ungdomsvännan* authors emphasised that conscripts belonging to different denominations were part of the fraternal group, thus referring to the ideals of the Evangelical Alliance.⁴²

This bald stereotype, where notions of the threat of sin were set against idealised depictions of fellowship with other 'true' Christian brothers, was typical of the texts that treated conscription in *Ungdomsvännan*. The chasm between sin on the one side and the evangelical communion on the other is characteristic of edifying meditations and is found in abundant variety in revivalist literature.⁴³ When the periodical dealt with the issues of conscription it did so along established patterns of description. This black-and-white discourse⁴⁴ of the military training camp lifestyle is key in

³⁹ Strömberg-Back, "Stam och beväring", 13, 46-47, 50-52, 77.

⁴⁰ Signed 'E. Th.', "Några råd till ungdomen vid lägerplatserna", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1907), 188, original italics.

⁴¹ Signed 'Gunnar', "Ett sommarminne från Gotland", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1908), 188; further examples are signed 'K. B-n', "Minnen från beväringmötet å Visborgs slätt 1906", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1907), 108; and Bernh. Pettersson, "En hälsning från troende militärer vid Västmanlands Trängkår", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1911), 332.

⁴² Bernh. Pettersson, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1911), 332; signed 'N-t', "Soldatmission", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1907), 10.

⁴³ For an analysis of SMC periodicals, see Kussak, *Författaren som predikant*, 136-141.

⁴⁴ A discourse is here defined as a particular way of representing a part of the world, and a genre as a way of acting linguistically. Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse*, 17.

understanding the SMC's missionary work among soldiers, as well as the evangelical male identity of the day.

A genre analysis highlights the periodical's intentions with regards to its readers' at the military training camps. One recurring genre in *Ungdomsvännan* is the evangelical conscription letter. This genre combines characteristics of the usual conscript's letter home with traits typical of edifying stories. As in the ordinary letter, the writer narrates his experiences of military life for the reader, yet in the evangelical conscription letter there is one clear solution to all difficulties. Just like the hero of an edifying story could overcome any obstacle thanks to his faith, the letter-writer declares that he has survived military camp life because of his belief in Christ.⁴⁵

All texts in this genre were published prior to 1910, at a time when conscript reform was still fresh in people's minds. The ideological work of the evangelical conscription letters was the same. First, they either encouraged young men to perform their duty or they took the completion of service for granted. At least implicitly, they led the evangelical revivalists towards military conscription. Second, the texts encouraged revivalist conscripts to seek one another out. Some writers offered the advice that they make their way to the soldiers' homes; others wrote about religious devotions at the regimental camps, outdoors or in a rented room. In all instances the writers had themselves received training at these dreaded camps, and thus presented themselves as examples. The texts were written by men of much the same age as the readers and most likely from the same social strata - and bear the characteristics of advice being given by men of equal status, from one true Christian brother to another.

A second genre in *Ungdomsvännan*, this time present throughout the period in question, is the presentation of an evangelical fraternal group at a military training camp. The genre is represented by a considerable larger group of texts, often illustrated with group photographs.⁴⁶ It was usually formally organised evangelical societies at the various regiments that introduced themselves to *Ungdomsvännan*'s readers in this way, although at times texts report on a looser circle of evangelical conscripts gathered in a soldiers' home. Conformity and ritualism were more conspicuous than in the evangelical conscription letters, and the presentations had certain noticeable ingredients: the writers took it for granted that even revivalists would do their military service, and the texts monotonously repeated the idea that military camps were dens of iniquity and that salvation was only to be found in an evangelical fraternal

⁴⁵ Examples of evangelical conscription letters are signed 'J. O.', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1903), 95-97; signed 'B. A-n', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1906), 255-256; signed 'K. B-n.', "Minnen från beväringensmötet å Visborgs slätt 1906", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1907), 108-110; signed 'B. A-n.', "Tankar och reflexioner av en 'beväring'", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1908), 66-68; and signed 'B. A-n', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1908), 86-88.

⁴⁶ Examples of presentations of evangelical fraternal groups are signed 'Alla åtta', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1903), 219-221; signed 'A. H.', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1906), 188-190; 8-10; signed 'Titus', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1907), 205-207; unsigned, "Hessleholms Kristliga Ungdomsförening", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1911), 110; Carl Bergqvist, "Trossnäs Soldathem", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1912), 29-30, 43; signed 'A. H.', "Hälsning från Fristad hed", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1913), 255; unsigned, "Sköfde militära brödrakrets", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1915), 270; unsigned, "Från Hälsinge regemente", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1916), 46; signed 'H-n', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1917) 17, inside front cover; and unsigned, "Hälsinge regementes kristliga ynglingaförening", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1920), 304.

group. In this way, a plan of action was presented to young readers facing military conscription.

The fact that *Ungdomsvännan* did not encourage conscientious objection should come as no surprise, but by the same token the significance of those texts that called for conscription or assumed its existence should not be underestimated. The general impression is one of young evangelical revivalists who were to be forged in the great nation-building venture of the day. In terms of masculinity, this meant that the periodical demonstrated its loyalty to the new legislation on general conscription: like other men, its adherents were to carry out their newly found duty for their country, despite the pacifist tendencies of revivalist circles. Yet at the same time the periodical propagated for a specific masculine lifestyle at the military camps. The crucial feature of true Christian manliness, according to evangelical revivalists, was to turn one's back on sinful masculine pastimes such as drinking and playing cards, and instead seek the company of an evangelical fraternal group. In sermons and worship among born-again Christian brethren, conscripts would work on the one thing needful: their spiritual and moral growth.

Instead of focusing on the reasons for undergoing military training - and the complex moral issues on which this impinged - the main issue became the supposedly sinful lifestyle at the military training camps. Revivalist activities at Sweden's military camps thus legitimised conscription and at the same time side-stepped the problem of divided opinions over conscription.

GROWING INTEREST IN THE WORK AMONG SOLDIERS

In the records of the SMC's central board and annual meetings, the missionary work among soldiers is increasingly in evidence in the first two decades of the twentieth century. At the SMC's annual meeting in 1912, delegates from local congregations could attend lectures delivered by supervisors of voluntary soldiers' homes, and the key-note address was delivered by a board member of the Association of Soldiers' Friends.⁴⁷ This suggests extensive contacts between the SMC and the Association, as well as the growing interest in this branch of missionary work. The SMC annual report of 1913 stated that the missionary work among soldiers was a crucial branch of its spiritual operations⁴⁸, and measures were taken accordingly at the next annual meeting, when the central SMC decided to build a soldiers' home and employ a supervisor for the soldiers' benefit in Boden in northern Sweden, where a large, costly, and politically controversial fortress was being built. The same annual meeting agreed to support missionary work and soldiers' homes in three other places.⁴⁹ Subsequent

⁴⁷ The meeting was held at Betesdakyrkan on 9 June 1912 (SMA, GK3 Generalkonferenser 1910-1915: 'Program för Svenska Missionsförbundets konferens och 34:e årsmöte i Stockholm 6-9 juni samt predikantmöte 10-12 juni 1912', 4).

⁴⁸ Svenska Missionsförbundet, *Svenska Missionsförbundets årsberättelse 1913*, 21.

⁴⁹ Missionary work among soldiers was to be supported in Sollefteå, Östersund, and Ystad. See record from SMC's annual meeting, 4 June 1914, § 20 (SMA, Missionsförbundets konferensprotokoll 1899-1920).

annual meetings from 1915 to 1920 resolved to invest financially in missionary work among soldiers, principally in Boden, but also in soldiers' homes at other military camps.⁵⁰

The evangelical motive for these initiatives was clear: it was a Christian duty to do missionary work.⁵¹ However, the records are generally meagre and record few of the discussions on the issue. *Ungdomsvännan* is again a better source of information on why this particular missionary field was thought so important, for one of its genres concerned the promotion of missionary work among soldiers. Texts in this genre argued the case for readers to support or participate in this missionary work.

The first such text was published in 1903 in which one 'A. S-én' encouraged local youth societies to put missionary work among soldiers on their agendas in order to counteract the lack of morals at military camps, arguing that 'thinking people' had always considered garrison life a danger: when a large number of young men were gathered together for as much as an entire year, there were ample opportunities for sin. Three main paths for the mission to Sweden's soldiers were staked out. The converts among the conscripts should be supported in their faith. Conscientious conscripts who were not yet converts should be saved from lapsing into sin 'so that they could return to their parents without lowering their gaze when meeting them'. The third, and most difficult, task was to work to convert the sinners.⁵²

In an article in *Ungdomsvännan* in 1913 pastor David Melchersson, who had just visited a local SMC soldiers' society in southern Sweden, pleaded the case of missionary work among conscripts. His arguments differed from those put in 1903. The main issue was no longer to combat the sinful life of the military camps but to win male adherents. This shift was perhaps a consequence both of the dominance of female adherents within the SMC and of the prevailing gender order, which made it necessary to counteract the feminisation of the SMC's membership. Melchersson's case was coloured both by nationalistic sentiments and his belief in the superiority of the male: it was crucial for Sweden and its continued existence 'that its 'core and hope' grew in wisdom and compassion before God and mankind'. Strength and potential lay dormant within Sweden's young men, but they must be compelled to choose the right path in life.⁵³

Over the next few years several texts were published in *Ungdomsvännan* that made similar points. The two main lines of argument remained the same. First, military service presented a recruitment opportunity, for at the military training camps one could reach the young men the correspondents considered to be the hope of Sweden. Second, there were assertions of the particular sinfulness of military life. There was talk of the 'detrimental consequences' of military life, and of the need to

⁵⁰ The camps in question were Hässleholm, Ystad, Karlskrona, Karlsborg, and Oskar-Fredriksborg, while the work managed by Ångermanlands Frikyrkliga Ungdomsförbund also received financial support: SMA, Missionsförbundets konferensprotokoll 1899-1920: 3 June 1915, § 26; 15 June 1916, § 31; 7 June 1917, § 17; 6 and 7 June 1918, § 32; 12 June 1919, § 31; and 17 June 1920, § 38.

⁵¹ Svenska Missionsförbundet, *Svenska Missionsförbundets årsberättelse 1913*, 21.

⁵² Signed 'A. S-én', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1903), 76-78. See also signed 'A. H.', *Ungdomsvännan*, (1906), 190; signed 'S. F.', "I kronans kläder", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1910) 6, 135.

⁵³ D. Melchersson, "Ögonblicksbilder", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1913), 12 ff.

preserve the spiritual life of the converted. In his 1914 speech, E. A. Nilsson used both lines of argument, speaking of the “flower of Sweden’s male youth” who could be reached by the Word of God, and the danger of “keeping bad company” at the military training camps.⁵⁴

It is significant that the issue of the work among soldiers moved up the agenda in the years when the debate on military defence matters reached a peak. The SMC’s commitment was not constrained by the opposing opinions on defence issues within the leading circles of the SMC.⁵⁵ Apparently the missionary work among soldiers grew in importance despite these conflicts, and the work drew even greater attention during the First World War, when large numbers of men were called up for extended periods of military service.

There are only a few comments on the work among soldiers in the central records of the SMC from the first decade of the twentieth century⁵⁶, possibly because this was seen as a work administered by regional and local bodies. Other parts of the home missionary work, such as the thriving network of Sunday schools and youth work were also treated in passing in these records. Another reason could have been a sense of doubt among the SMC leadership regarding the Evangelical Alliance ideals that dominated the soldiers’ home enterprise, which they felt to be a particularly disturbing element when it came to the SMC’s youth work.⁵⁷ After 1910, when the youth movement had been centralised as the Youth of the Swedish Mission Covenant and the risks inherent in the creation of independent local youth societies were less marked, a more open attitude was adopted.

By the end of the First World War there had been a transfer of power on the central board of the SMC. The death of the SMC’s founding father Paul Petter Waldenström in 1917 marked a watershed.⁵⁸ The new SMC leadership publicly supported missionary work among soldiers and appealed in *Ungdomsvännan* for help in setting up a soldiers’ home in Sollefteå. The new SMC supervisor Janne Nyrén, its new chairman Sven Bengtsson, and E. A. Nilsson all supported the appeal.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ “Soldatmissionen”, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1914), 208; *Missionsförbundet*, (1914), 199; examples of further articles in favour of the missionary work among soldiers are E. G. Pettersson, “Några tankar om soldatmissionen”, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1915), 216; signed ‘S. M. U:it 90 mil hemifrån’, “Tag vara på de unga männen!”, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1917), 288; and Josef Jansson, “Från vår soldatmission”, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1920), 219-220.

⁵⁵ Gustafsson, *Fred och försvar*, 132-136.

⁵⁶ For example, protocol from SMC’s annual meeting, 13 June 1907, § 25 (SMA, *Missionsförbundets konferensprotokoll 1899-1920*).

⁵⁷ Keijer, *Ungdomen för Kristus*, 32-26.

⁵⁸ Gustafsson, *Fred och försvar*, 204.

⁵⁹ Albin Karlsson, “Upprop”, *Ungdomsvännan*, (1919), 288.

EVANGELISATION OR A TEETOTAL CAFETERIA?

On a local level, the SMC invested substantial financial and human resources in its missionary work among soldiers. As early as the 1890s, the SMC's local bodies were operating in some soldiers' homes.⁶⁰ When regiments moved from their traditional training camps into town garrisons, the evangelical revivalists normally followed them and continued their missionary work. One example was the soldiers' home outside the newly erected barracks for the infantrymen of *Kungl. livregementets grenadjärer* (Royal Grenadier Guards Regiment, regimental number I 3) in the industrial town of Örebro in mid-Sweden. The soldiers' home was inaugurated in September 1912⁶¹, at the behest of three organisations under the SMC umbrella⁶² - and was run by *Föreningen Soldaternas Vänner inom Örebro län* (Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County), which was affiliated to the Association of Soldiers' Friends, and continued the missionary work done when the regiment was stationed outside Örebro.⁶³

The Örebro soldiers' home was inaugurated with readings from the Bible, prayers, and lectures by local SMC ministers. The leaders of the other revivalist and evangelical bodies in the town gave shorter speeches. Entertainment between speeches was provided by the congregation's choral and music clubs, and sandwiches, milk, and coffee were served upstairs. As at the SMC's annual meeting held in Stockholm in June the same year, Major Fredrik von Malmborg from the Association of Soldiers' Friends was one of the preachers.⁶⁴ Certainly he was able to stir up enthusiasm in revivalist circles with the dramatic story of his own conversion: in his youth he had been a successful cavalryman in *Kungl. Smålands Husarregemente* (Royal Småland Hussars Regiment), but during an equestrian competition he was thrown from his horse, and in that moment of mortal danger saw his life flash before his eyes and found himself to be a sinner.⁶⁵

In the early 1900s Örebro was a growing town, with an expanding industrial sector and rapidly rising work-force along with a trade-union movement that was increasing in strength. At the same time it was also one of the major strongholds of evangelical revivalism.⁶⁶ The prominent figures in the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County were pastors and leaders from the region's SMC bodies who all had good contacts with the town's leading circles. The organisation in Örebro followed the usual Swedish revivalist pattern: the board members were recruited from among

⁶⁰ In the 1890s, the SMC-affiliated network started to operate in soldiers' homes in, for example, the following camps: Kronobergshed, district of Småland; Sanna hed, district of Närke; Malma hed, district of Södermanland; and in Trossnäs, district of Värmland.

⁶¹ Arkivcentrum Örebro (hereafter AÖ), Föreningen soldaternas vänners inom Örebro län arkiv (hereafter FSVÖ), FII: 'Program för invigningen av soldathemmet i Örebro'.

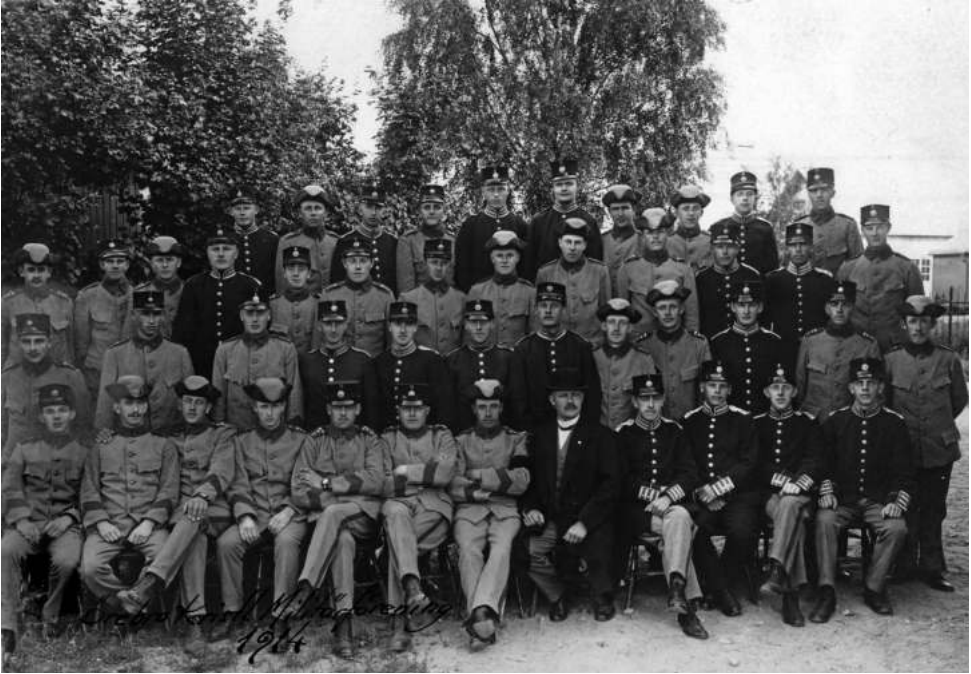
⁶² *Örebro Brödraförsamling* (Örebro Brotherhood Congregation), which was the largest SMC congregation in the city; *Örebro läns fria missionsförening* (County of Örebro Free Missionary Society); and *Örebro läns kristliga ungdomsförbund* (County of Örebro Christian Youth Society).

⁶³ AÖ, FSVÖ, AI, vol. 1: 30 October 1909, § 1, 6-7; AII, vol. 1: Styrelsen 30 October 1910, § 10.

⁶⁴ AÖ, FSVÖ, FII: 'Program för invigningen'.

⁶⁵ Jansson, *Prins Oscar Bernadotte*, 203; Österlin, *Stockholmsväckelsen kring lord Radstock*, 70.

⁶⁶ Lundkvist, *Folkrörelserna i det svenska samhället*, 71-72.



Örebro kristliga militärförening (Örebro Christian Military Society), 1914.
[Archives Centre Örebro, Föreningen Soldaternas vänner inom Örebro län arkiv]

the congregation's economic, social, and - obviously - male elite.⁶⁷ The chairman of both the board and the executive committee, which had day-to-day responsibility for building the soldiers' home, was the successful building contractor Per Eriksson - who was also chairman of the Örebro Brotherhood Congregation. Among the other board members were the congregation's ministers Erik Fritiof Holmstrand and Erik Ungerth, the latter a regional SMC leader and member of the national board of the Association of Soldiers' Friends.⁶⁸

The establishment of the soldiers' home was made significantly easier by board members taking out bank loans on behalf of their associations and standing surety when purchasing plots of land and signing building contracts.⁶⁹ However, the amortisation of the loans had to be covered by funds collected by the revivalists from I 3 regiment's conscription area. All possible methods of fund-raising were put to use. Subscriptions lists were circulated; the SMC bodies were requested to take up collections for the missionary work among soldiers; youth societies and congregations were

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

⁶⁸ AÖ, FSVÖ, AI, vol. 1: 30 October 1909, § 8; Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1911*, 3; Hermansson, *Minnesskrift med anledning av Örebro brödraförsamlings sjutiofemåriga tillvaro*, 75, 81-82, 84-88; Föreningen Soldaternas vänner inom Örebro län, *Soldatmissionen i Närke*, 17-21, 49-51.

⁶⁹ AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Styrelsen 30 November 1909, § 8-9 and 30 December 1911, § 4.

asked to arrange benefits and musical evenings, preferably at times when conscripts were on their way to join their regiments; and a special travelling representative was sent out to stir up enthusiasm for the cause.⁷⁰ In other words, the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County pulled out all the stops to establish its missionary work among the soldiers in its region.

The purpose of the Örebro soldiers' home was to work on behalf of the soldiers' 'spiritual and moral edification' by means of 'the Word of God' and 'wholesome and Christian reading'. The Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County also served as a vanguard against socialism and trade unionism, and its regulations expressly prohibited political meetings.⁷¹ The building itself looked like a cross between a chapel and a large family home. It had all the functions considered useful for a conscript far from the bosom of his family and congregation. The ground floor had a large assembly-hall, eleven by eight meters, equipped with an organ. There was also a reading-room, a kitchen where the female staff prepared food and drink, and a pantry.⁷² According to the annual report, books were acquired by voluntary contributions and as gifts from publishers and private citizens.⁷³ The soldiers' home subscribed to a number of daily newspapers, revivalist youth magazines, and periodicals of an edifying nature. They also had a telephone installed and equipment for letter-writing.⁷⁴

In their first policy statement, the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County working committee gave priority to preaching, religious devotions, and sacred music over nationalist or temperance lectures. In accordance with the regulations it was 'the Word of God' which took precedence. There were to be sermons four evenings a week. Uplifting music and singing was allotted a great deal of time; there was a rehearsal once a week along with evenings of song and music. Among the more sporadic points on the agenda the working committee indicated evenings devoted to "talks about the place where father and mother live" as well as the showing of sciopticon slides. One of the last items noted that, "if appropriate" there would be "lectures on sobriety, morality, the fatherland etc."⁷⁵

Personal contact with the conscripts, reaching out to them with the spoken word, was regarded as central to the work; it also meant that the supervisor of the soldiers' home became a key figure. The instructions given on the appointment of the first supervisor show what kind of qualifications were desired. He - for the thought that a woman might hold the position did not enter their minds - was not only expected to give sermons and lead religious services, but should also be able to establish a rapport with the young conscripts. His work would be facilitated by the close contacts between the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County and the regimental command, for from 1913 the supervisor did not need special permission to get

⁷⁰ AÖ, FSVÖ: AI, vol. 1: Årsmötet 30 December 1911, § 5, 9 and 2 April 1910, § 8; AII, vol. 1: Styrelsen 30 November 1909, § 4, 7; 4 September 1911, § 7 and 29 December 1911, § 3.

⁷¹ AÖ, FSVÖ, AI, vol. 1: 30 October 1909, § 3-4.

⁷² AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 14 November 1910, § 4 and 9 May 1912, § 3.

⁷³ Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1913*, 49-51.

⁷⁴ AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Styrelsen 30 December 1912, § 8 and arbetsutskottet 18 February 1913, § 12 and 4 April 1913, § 5.

⁷⁵ AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 4 April 1913, § 7.

in contact with soldiers at the camp, or indeed for them to visit the soldiers' home.⁷⁶ The vocational character of the supervisor's position was emphasised by the fact that he was to live in an apartment on the top floor of the soldiers' home.⁷⁷

The first supervisor stayed barely a year on his post, but his successor, the preacher Karl Axel Öberg, stayed on for over twenty years. The seminal importance of marriage and family life in the Protestant gender discourse noted elsewhere in this volume was equally in evidence in the material regarding the Örebro soldiers' home. In accordance with the wishes of the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County, Öberg was thus a married man, and his wife took on increasing responsibility for the catering of the soldiers' home, her efforts duly acknowledged in the annual reports. However, it was only her husband who as a supervisor was on the payroll of the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County.⁷⁸ This was a recurring pattern at all the soldiers' homes up to the 1960s. Thus in much the same way as Sweden's deaconries, the soldiers' homes were managed by married couples, where the husband was the supervisor and his wife the matron.⁷⁹

In 1917, *Ungdomsvännan* published an idyllic portrayal of life at the soldiers' home, written by 'H-n', who had been posted to the I 3 regiment:

There were a lot of people in the soldiers' home. When I visited it for the first time both the cafeteria and the reading-room were full. I entered the latter. All the seats were taken. In a corner I see someone reading the New Testament. 'Good Day! - nice to meet a brethren.' ... as often as we could we would meet at the soldiers' home where we also got to know its warm-hearted supervisor, Revd K. A. Öberg, who was willing to do anything for 'his boys'. ... in the cafeteria, which was run by Mrs Öberg, excellent coffee was served at a reasonable price, as long as there was any to be had. They also served milk and sandwiches. In other words, it was well equipped to cater to both the spiritual and bodily needs.⁸⁰

The fighting did not reach Sweden during the First World War, but 1917 was a year of social unrest. The food crisis and unrest among workers and soldiers were felt in Örebro as in many other parts of the country.⁸¹ However, these problems are not evident in the 'H-n' article, except for a casual reference to the lack of coffee. The article shows how evangelical revivalists wanted their soldier's homes to be perceived: a true home for the faithful, with a father-figure as its spiritual leader and a mother-figure caring for their 'boys' physical well-being.

⁷⁶ Ibid, § 11; see also Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1913*, 50.

⁷⁷ AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 13 January 1913, § 4; 4 April 1913, § 5 and 2 December 1913.

⁷⁸ Föreningen Soldaternas vänner inom Örebro län, *Soldatmissionen i Närke*, 42, 65; AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 2 July 1913, § 6; 29 September 1913, § 6 and 2 December 1913, § 3; Ibid., AI, vol. I: Årsmötet 22 November 1918, § 5 and 15 January 1921, § 6.

⁷⁹ SOU 1965:52, 70; for the deaconess houses, see, for example, Christiansson, *Kyrklig och social reform*, 72.

⁸⁰ Signed 'H-n', "Intryck från soldathemmet i Örebro", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1917) 17, inside front cover.

⁸¹ Johansson, "Beredskapstjänst under första världskriget", 105; Borell, *Disciplinära strategier*, 58-62.

When it came to the ideals of the Evangelical Alliance, the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County took a pragmatic approach. When the soldiers' home was being set up, Per Eriksson dismissed an offer of collaboration with the town's other congregations, among them Örebro's powerful Baptist congregations, which had more than twice as many members as the SMC congregations.⁸² The exclusion of the Baptists gave Eriksson and the SMC bodies greater leverage in their negotiations. Erik Ungerth, who was an old adherent of the Evangelical Alliance, was nevertheless disappointed, and in April 1910 it was noted in the minutes that he had wished more co-operation with the other local congregations in accordance with the Evangelical Alliance model.⁸³ In the event, they were repeatedly asked to contribute to the activities in the soldiers' home, which was natural enough given that members of different denominations attended the meetings there. Meanwhile the *Örebro kristliga militärförening* (Örebro Christian Military Society), consisting of born-again Christians, was founded in 1913, an evangelical fraternal group of the same kind advocated in the articles in *Ungdomsvännan*. The Society was made up of a core section of the soldiers' home. According to the annual report of 1916, the fraternal group numbered 96, and had attracted members from various revivalist and evangelical denominations.⁸⁴ This shows that the ideals of the Evangelical Alliance mattered in practice, despite the resistance noted above. In earlier research it has been noted that British army life in the nineteenth century promoted inter-denominational co-operation between religious soldiers from different Protestant churches and denominations.⁸⁵ This seems to have been true for the Swedish army too at the beginning of the twentieth century. Whatever the case, the findings of the study of the soldiers' home in Örebro certainly accord with the British results.

The source material tells us little of daily life at the soldiers' home. However, group activities appear to have adhered to the working committee's guidelines: sermons and worship were on the programme each week. Preachers and choirs from the various local congregations and societies, including the Salvation Army, put in regular appearances. Evangelical revivalists as well as those with only a lukewarm interest in religion were welcome to join in. According to reports to the Association of Soldiers' Friends, the meetings were well attended.⁸⁶ It is difficult to draw any conclusions from such statements regarding the popularity of the sermons or devotional meetings. In any case, the Örebro soldiers' home was not of a size to gather all conscripts in its assembly-hall. In April 1914, 770 conscripts signed on to I 3 Regiment. Periodically during the First World War there were considerably larger number of conscripts assigned to I 3. In 1915 the number was in excess of 1,600. In addition

⁸² Bergström, *Från Betelkapellet till Sörbykyrkan*, 13.

⁸³ AÖ, FSVÖ, AI, vol. 1: 25 August 1909, § 4; *Ibid.*: Årsmötet 2 April 1910, § 11.

⁸⁴ Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1913*, 50; *Id.*, *Årsberättelse för 1914*, 34; *Id.*, *Årsberättelse för 1916*, 37.

⁸⁵ For example, Snape, *Redcoat and Religion*, 229-235.

⁸⁶ AÖ, FSVÖ, AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 4 December 1914, § 6; Centralstyrelsen för förbundet soldaternas vänner, *Årsberättelse för 1913*, 49-51; *Id.*, *Årsberättelse för 1914*, 34; *Id.*, *Årsberättelse för 1916*, 37; *Id.*, *Årsberättelse för 1917*, 46-48.

there were the regular recruits - the non-commissioned officers - who according to staffing plans came to 240 men.⁸⁷

The only figures for attendance appear in a circular from February 1916, drawn up and circulated by the Association of Soldiers' Friends. In answer to a question, chairman Per Eriksson reported that the Örebro soldier's home had approximately 200 visitors every day in 1914 and 1915.⁸⁸ This was apparently a rough estimate, but it tallies with reports from other soldiers' homes.⁸⁹ However, it is uncertain how many of those visitors attended the sermons. In his portrayal of the soldier's home, 'H-n' noted that for many soldiers it just served as a handy cafeteria.⁹⁰

Indeed, the financial reports of the Örebro Society of Soldiers' Friends indicate that the cafeteria attracted many customers, for the soldiers' home had substantial takings from the cafeteria business.⁹¹ Soon the Society no longer needed to ask for financial contributions from other bodies in the region. During the First World War and in subsequent years the soldiers' home in fact became a net contributor to the economy of the evangelical revivalists, and contributions were made to other SMC bodies in Örebro as well as in other regions.⁹² The Society was inclined to spread the word of God, to evangelise among conscripts, and its home was a place where born-again revivalists could gather for worship; yet it was equally important as a teetotal cafeteria.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The SMC's missionary work among Sweden's soldiery increased throughout the first two decades of the twentieth century. The introduction of compulsory military conscription and the subsequent increase in its length, combined with the general mobilisation during the First World War, meant that young men spent longer periods at military training camps. One of the main reasons why the SMC embarked on this particular mission was their belief that the threat of sin was more pressing during military service. The SMC were not alone in expressing concern over the moral standards in garrison towns and military training camps, of course, for similar notions were expressed in debates in the nineteenth century over changes to Sweden's military organisation, but the evangelical revivalists, with the demand for activism inherent in their religious beliefs, were given to putting words into deeds. With religion as a driving force, the SMC, the Association of Soldiers' Friends, and other revivalist bodies all busied themselves about the mission to soldiers.

⁸⁷ Guillemot, "Militären och det civila samhället", 42; Johansson, "Beredskapstjänst under första världskriget", 95, 97-99.

⁸⁸ Stockholm, Krigsarkivet, Svenska soldathemsförbundets arkiv, EI, vol. 2: Cirkulär från Centralförbundet soldaternas vänner 7 februari 1916, signed Per Eriksson, Örebro, 22 February 1916.

⁸⁹ Ibid.: Cirkulär från Centralförbundet soldaternas vänner 7 februari 1916, 'Svar på frågan 1'.

⁹⁰ Signed 'H-n', "Intryck", *Ungdomsvännan*, (1917) 17, inside front cover.

⁹¹ AÖ, FSVÖ, AI, vol. 1: Årsmöte 2 January 1915, § 4 (suppl.); 29 December 1917, § 6 (suppl.) and 28 December 1918, § 6, (suppl.)

⁹² AÖ, FSVÖ: AII, vol. 1: Arbetsutskottet 3 November 1915, § 4; AI, vol. 1: Årsmötet 29 December 1917, § 6 (suppl.); 28 December 1918, § 10 and 27 December 1919, § 11.

There were two clear extremes to the discourse on life at the military training camps, as found in *Ungdomsvännan*. On the one hand, there was the notion of sin, which elicited calls for the abjuration of the alcohol, immorality, and swearing so abhorrent to revivalist morals. On the other hand the religious fellowship of born-again Christians was described by means of its expression in religious services and inner edification. Against this backdrop it is easy to view the SMC's involvement in the soldiers' mission as an attempt to lessen the moral perils of military service for their own believers. The evangelical fraternity groups were portrayed as safe havens for the new classes of conscripts. By investing in building soldiers' homes, the SMC offered an institutional setting for evangelical revivalists, safeguarding their lifestyle during military service with religious devotions, prayers, spiritual music, Bible reading, and edifying literature, and a cafeteria where alcohol was banned. At the soldiers' homes, evangelical male identity was preserved.

Yet it is apparent that the SMC was not content to preach to the converted. Through its missionary work it wanted to prevent conscripts from being lured into sinful behaviour. The foremost aim was conversion, of course - the winning of new adherents. The military training camps gained new topicality as a mission just prior to the outbreak of the First World War, for, as it was said in *Ungdomsvännan*, conscription lent itself to the recruitment of young men to the faith. At barracks and training camps they could easily be reached. In the *Ungdomsvännan* texts, we can observe Christian, nationalistic sentiments at work; Sweden needed young men who were born-again Evangelicals. However, this also needs to be viewed against the background of the SMC's gender structure, with a leadership that was predominantly male yet a membership that was largely female. Due to the prevailing gender order in society it became important to break with the feminisation of the SMC's membership: re-masculinisation became the desired aim. The spreading of the word of God among soldiers in evangelical sermons and meetings is best described as an act of re-Christianisation, as are the soldiers' homes as such: their erection, and the economic activities that they instigated. Nevertheless, it would be an over-simplification to describe the expansion of the soldiers' homes enterprise *solely* as a case of re-Christianisation. My study of the social practices at a soldiers' home gives a hint of what else it was.

I have used here an example from the local level, describing the founding of the SMC's soldiers' home in Örebro for the infantrymen of the 13 regiment. A driving force behind the Society of Soldiers' Friends in Örebro County was indeed religion, but the actual result of its activities can only partially be characterised as re-Christianisation, a fact that stemmed much from the discrepancy in the aspirations of the soldiers' homes there and elsewhere. Soldiers' homes offered religious services, but they were also places one could go for a cup of coffee or to write a letter. They were just as much a convenience for conscripts who were less religiously inclined or who were even out-and-out hostile when it came to religious matters, as they were a solace for the faithful. Therefore, it is more justifiable to characterise the soldiers' home in Örebro as an environment marked by the ideals of domesticity; of orderliness, respectability, and self-discipline. As John Tosh has emphasised, the relationship between domestication and masculinity has always been ambivalent, and he sees a tension between

the demands of domestication and male homosocial communities.⁹³ Yet, strikingly, the soldiers' homes were places in which a male collective was subsumed into the ideals of domestication.

⁹³ Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinities*, 70.

