

# Visit Romantic Sweden

Chris Singer

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Marilyn Olson is a pretty, blue-eyed blonde from Stockholm, Sweden. She and her husband, Bertil, operate the Cafe Marx in Stockholm.

She is a warm and friendly woman who talks easily. And she tells stories. She speaks of "a lot of CIA agents around" her and her co-workers. She tells the story of "one fellow who was hiding in a closet for three months" in Japan.

The fellow hiding in the Japanese closet was an American soldier. Mrs. Olson works with the American Deserters' Committee in Sweden.

Mrs. Olson, a 31-year old American, attended school in Sweden and married a Swede. She was in Detroit recently, visiting her father. She talked to the Fifth Estate about the Committee and the American soldiers it represents.

American soldiers have "more or less taken over the entire committee," she said. "Now the boys have organized themselves and the one thing that is great is that they're now taking an active stand, they're going out and making speeches."

There are now, Mrs. Olson estimates, "100 to 150 boys in Sweden and a hundred more waiting in Japan, hidden by the underground." These are usually American men assigned to Vietnam or Korea duty who are in Japan on leave when they desert and are aided by the Japanese left.

The deserters are relentlessly pursued by various American agencies, Mrs. Olson claimed. "To begin with," she said, "the boys didn't notice it so much, but then they realized they were being tailed." Some of the agents pose as American newspapermen, supposedly in Sweden to get the deserters' stories, she claimed.

Mrs. Olson got involved in the Committee along with her husband, as a result of their cafe. Left students in Stockholm meet there. The Olsons have three American soldiers living with them.

The Committee, she said, "works with the fellows; with their difficulties. A lot of these boys have not made up their minds that "this is it," she explained.

The Swedish people welcome the influx of Americans, she said, partially because Sweden needs people, but mostly because Sweden has a long history of giving refuge to those seeking it.

She recalled that about 200 Czechs were granted asylum in Sweden after the Soviet intervention in their homeland.

Many of the soldiers are subjected to pressure from their relatives, Mrs. Olson said. Their relatives will write and "a lot of them say 'this is it, boy, if you stay there,'" she said. Some return home because of this kind of pressure. About 19 deserters have either returned to their units to face punishment, or come back to the United States, she reported.

"Many soldiers desert for political or moral reasons," she said; but some leave their units simply because they don't like the army or the work they do. But, she added, "middle-class youth have been definitely radicalized by their experience in the army." Many soldiers desert, rather than work against the war within their units, so that they can retain the freedom to act at all, she said.

She told of one Marine who was a 19-year veteran of the Corps, with only one year to go until retirement, who deserted.

Many of the married men who desert are coincidentally black, she said. "Sometimes, some things crop up; but, in general the Negroes have it good in Sweden," she added. Scan-SNCC, the Scandinavian arm of SNCC, is a large and important group on the political left in Sweden, she said, and they have assisted Afro-American soldiers who desert.

Because of the historical attitudes of the Swedes, and the assistance of the Committee and other groups, American soldiers who desert and go to Sweden, "in general, have found it rather easy," Mrs. Olson concluded.

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