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Rasmus Hästbacka
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2024-04-30

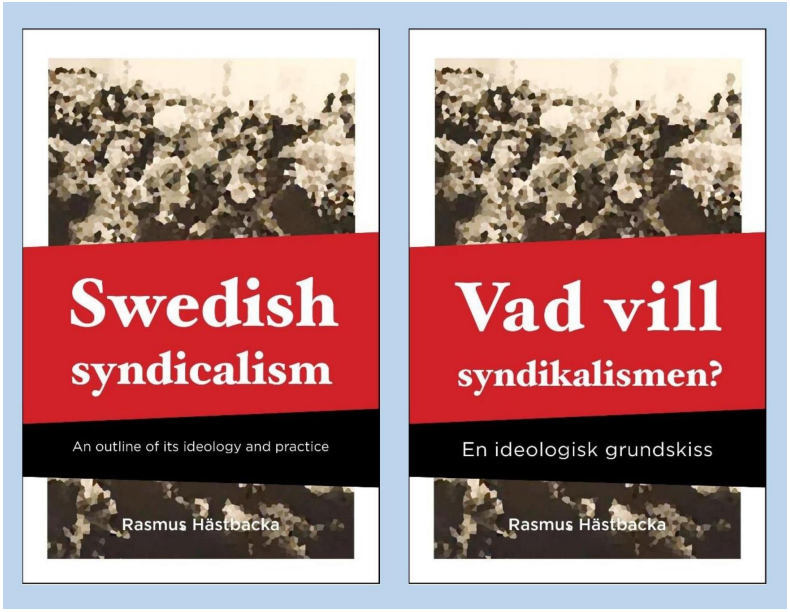
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Basic book on syndicalism – some tips on how to use it

Rasmus Hästbacka

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Swedish
syndicalism
An outline of its ideology and practice
Rasmus Hästbacka
Vad vill
syndikalismen?
En ideologisk grundskiss
Rasmus Hästbacka

In 2024, SAC and Federativ Publishing House released the book *Swedish syndicalism*, written by Rasmus Hästbacka. Here, the author gives suggestions on how the book can be used in local trade unions.

The book I've written is an introduction to the ideology of syndicalism related to its practice. In the book, the word ideology refers to three things: (1) a critical perspective on the labour market and today's class society, (2) guidelines for successful organizing and (3) a long-term vision of democracy in the workplace and an equal society. What follows are six tips on how to use the book in the Locals of SAC.

(1) Short intro texts

Syndicalism has an archaic language in its baggage. I have written a book in up-to-date and everyday language. The book can be used as a source of inspiration for writing flyers and short texts for websites. If Swedish readers want to see an example of a website that is influenced by the book, see the site of the Umeå Local of SAC. If you want to read a short presentation of syndicalism, see the article by Erik Bonk on Syndikalisten's website.

(2) Intro courses

Many Locals of SAC offer union intro courses for new members and potential members. It usually takes a few hours on a weekday evening. My book provides summaries of the key concepts of syndicalism, including the terms class struggle, organizing and direct action. Those who arrange basic courses can explain these concepts. That can be the starting point of a fruitful course if participants also are given space to talk about their workplaces.

(3) Study groups

The book gives a broad overview of syndicalism and can therefore be used in study groups for beginners. The book contains a proposal for a study plan. Before each planned meeting, participants read sections from the book. At the meetings, participants discuss issues related to their workplaces. The purpose is for participants to

critically examine SAC's tradition of ideas, pick the ideas that participants find reasonable and get started with organizing at work.

(4) Themes at regular meetings

The mentioned plan for study groups includes four meetings around four different themes. These themes can also be discussed at regular member meetings in our Locals and industrial branches. In that case, meetings need to focus on the participants' workplaces.

Instead of everyone being expected to have read the book beforehand, participants can go straight to the questions in the study plan. The questions are divided into these themes: *1. From division to unity at work, 2. From union demands to methods, 3. Results and conclusions from the workplaces, and 4. From daily demands to economic democracy.*

(5) Resource for recruiting co-workers

The book presents many arguments for organizing through syndicalist sections. It also highlights the building of a union community at work and cross-union groups larger than the section.

At the same time, I want to emphasize that the book's strength is also its weakness. Since it is a broad overview of syndicalism, it is not a deep dive into organizing. As a supplement, members are recommended to attend SAC's courses in organizing and read the Labor Notes book Secrets of a successful organizer or the Swedish translation Organisatörens handbok released by Federativ Publishing House.

(6) Basis for seminars

Last but not least, my book can be used to examine the strengths and weaknesses of syndicalism today and discuss the possibilities of syndicalists to play a role in the struggle for a better world. In this respect, I would especially like to recommend the afterword, written by Niklas Averstad Ryd and Jonas Hammarbäck.

Rasmus Hästbacka

More articles by the author can be found in this library here.

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HOW DID THE BOOK COME ABOUT?

The book is not only based on an extensive list of official SAC documents and books about and by syndicalist unions. The book is an attempt to capture majority views among active SAC members today. How has the author gone about achieving this? In the book's bibliography, the process is summarized as follows. The author has…

"…read a large number of articles in *Syndikalisten* and *Arbetaren* and furthermore SAC congressional minutes, especially from 2002 onwards, as well as SAC's educational material (see: www.sac.se/user/login).

The author has also tried to act as a sampler of contemporary syndicalism by participating in SAC union conferences since 2001, arranging ideology seminars, initiating debates in *Syndikalisten* and *Arbetaren*, by participating in an online forum (administered by the Gothenburg Local of SAC and the bookstore Syndikalistiskt forum) and then on the email list *SAC-utveckling* together with more than 100 active syndicalists.

The first drafts of this book were presented on the mentioned email list in 2015. Responses to drafts were later obtained in SAC's online discussion forum. The email list has been terminated in favour of the discussion forum."

It can be added that SAC's central committee read a version of the script in 2018. At that time, the proposal was rejected with the argument that a wider discussion was needed within SAC. That was also arranged. After countless suggestions for improvement, the script was revised ten times before it was ready to be printed in the fall of 2023.

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