

Professional ethics. Has there ever been a Finnish-German common destiny?

Marjatta Hietala
De finländska forskarna och orienteringen mot Tyskland under andra världskriget

[The Finnish Researchers and the Orientation Towards Germany during World War II], in *Historiska och litteraturhistoriska studier 83* [Historical and Literary-Historical Studies 83] (Malin Bredbacka-Grahn and Johan Strömberg, eds.). Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland: Helsingfors/Helsinki 2008.



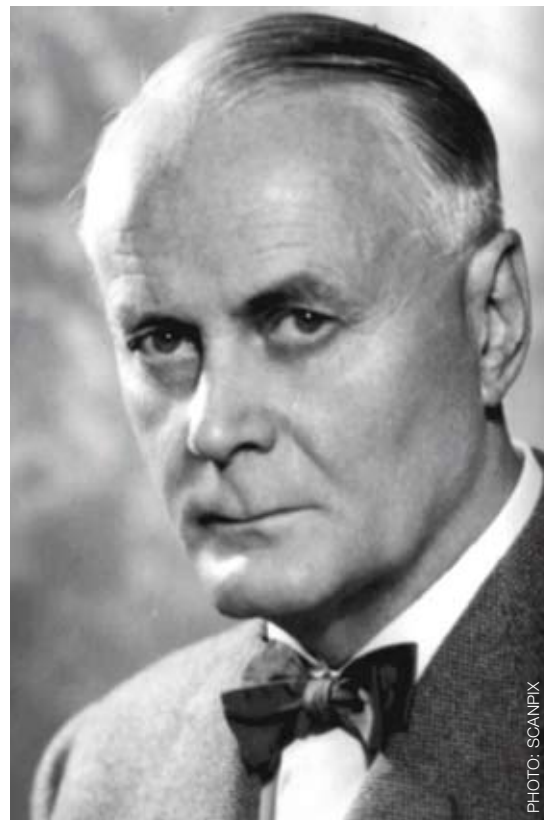
THORSTEN NYBOM Professor of history at Örebro University, vice-rector there. Has done research on World War II and the Swedish state administration. The country's leading academic expert on university policy. Visiting Professor at the Humboldt University, 1999–2001. In 1989–1997, secretary general of the State Council for research on colleges and universities. Secretary of the major evaluation of the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (*Hinc robur et securitas? En forskningsstiftelses handel och vandel*, 2004).

LET ME BEGIN BY NOTING what a solace it is, when all is said and done, to be able to experience a traditional close study of source material concerning a theme that, today, in Sweden, almost as a matter of decree, seems to be a domain for the unquestioned moralizing production of ideology. At certain Swedish history departments, the main purpose of research into the 1930s and World War II would no longer appear to be to analyze systematically, or to make substantial contributions to transparency and perhaps even to explanatory power in our dealings with the recent past. The main task seems rather to be providing contemporary Manicheans with ideologically and morally useful material for the "active use of history".

The subject addressed by Hietala should thus hardly be uncontroversial, least of all in a nation with such a highly traumatic recent history like Finland. In addition, she is addressing a professional ethics theme that academics themselves have an obligation to problematize ceaselessly: the relationship of research to the zeitgeist, power, and the political agenda. Hietala deals with these delicate issues with an exemplary dispassionateness, which sometimes can even be a mite *too* pronounced.

THE SOURCE MATERIAL IS FOR the most part public, since much of the private, possibly compromised material was destroyed in connection with the so-called war-responsibility trials. Based on travel patterns, participation in symposiums, membership in academies, organized collaborations, etc., Hietala is trying to identify the frequency and direction of the Finnish researchers' international contacts during the war – and particularly the academic relations to German science. Despite Finland's isolation from the "world to the west" – especially starting in the summer of 1941 – the contacts that the Finnish researchers had changed only marginally. Not surprisingly, Sweden remained by far the most important point of contact. It is thus no coincidence that Finland's two future Nobel Prize laureates, Ragnar Granit and A.I. Virtanen, as well as Finland's forthcoming "World philosopher", Georg Henrik von Wright, were incorporated during precisely these years into Swedish or Anglo-American research networks.

BUT THE SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP to Germany in 1941–1944 naturally led to parts of the Finnish research community actively orienting themselves towards their brothers-in-arms in the south. As one might expect, it was physicians who had the most developed contacts with their German colleagues. The cooperation included not only such obvious research topics as the care of the sick and wounded during times of war, it also included some of the most notorious institutions, such as the Kaiser Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik, led by Ernst Rüdin, with its research on twins, which were associated with the extermination camps. Likewise, a number of philologists, ethnologists, anthropologists, and historians found themselves at home in the relationship with Germany, and actively contributed to the discussions of the "hot topics" of *Lebensraum*, ethnic purity, and the mysticism of *Blut und Boden*. A rather telling example is historian Eino Jutikkala's and geographer Väino Auer's book *Finnlands Lebensraum* from 1941. Relatively soon after the disaster of the war,



Ragnar Granit, a Finnish Nobel laureate.

Finnish researchers were nonetheless reintegrated into the international research community, not least thanks to U.S.-based research funding.

SO WHAT, THEN, DO I THINK might be missing in Hietala's a bit *too* "down-to-earth" portrayal? My concerns surround essentially three dimensions: 1. I would like to have seen a much more active attempt to analyze and uncover the Finnish scientists' societal role and their science-ideological values, because the community of researchers and therefore international cooperation involves far more than travel, lecture tours, and official academic ceremonies. 2. The reader receives only sparse information about the researchers' *actual* political activities and involvement, which in some cases (Linkomies and others) was by no means negligible. 3. As for the notions involving *Lebensraum*, ethnopolitics, and so on, I would like to have seen Hietala discuss at least the degree to which these intrinsically historically situated currents of thought referred back, with regards to content or argumentation, directly or indirectly, to ideas about/hopes for a special Finnish-German "common destiny" and hence also an "expansionist destiny", which greatly influenced the Finnish debate more than 20 years earlier.

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