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NORDIC OR SOUTHERN ORIENTATION? FINNISH VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS' FOREIGN RELATIONS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD

СЕВЕРНАЯ ЕВРОПА ИЛИ ЮГ? МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЕ СВЯЗИ ДОБРОВОЛЬНЫХ ОБЪЕДИНЕНИЙ ФИНЛЯНДИИ В МЕЖВОЕННЫЙ ПЕРИОД

Аннотация: В начале 1920-х гг. Эстония, Латвия, Литва и Финляндия активно и с удовольствием пользовались новообретённой независимостью. Прежде редкие международные контакты стали частыми даже между добровольными объединениями. Говорившие на финском языке финны встречали в странах Балтии тёплый приём — без того несколько надменного отношения, с которым они могли столкнуться в Скандинавии. Особенно большое значение придавалось родственным и языковым связям с эстонцами — такие связи ощущались как противовес высокомерию скандинавов.

Однако политическая ситуация в Европе привела к переменам в этой сфере. Контакты с южными соседями сделались в Финляндии менее популярными, и после принятия парламентом в 1935 г. декларации о Скандинавской ориентации наличие скандинавских связей стало почти обязательным в том числе и для добровольных объединений. Возможно, такому сближению поспособствовали обновлённые расовые теории, переставшие чётко отделять финнов от скандинавов. В то же время авторитаристские тенденции в политическом развитии государств Балтии отталкивали гражданское общество Финляндии от сотрудничества с южными соседями.

Keywords / Ключевые слова: Finland, Scandinavia, Baltic countries, civil society, pan-identity, foreign relations, voluntary associations, interwar period / Финляндия, Скандинавия, страны Балтии, гражданское общество, общая идентичность, добровольные объединения, международные связи, межвоенный период.

Since the 1940s it has been self-evident that Finland is one of the five Nordic Countries. In the 1920s however, the Baltic countries were an alternative for Finns to orientate towards, instead of Scandinavia. Here, the term ‘Scandinavia’ includes Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, ‘Nordic Countries’ includes those four and Finland, and ‘Baltic countries’ means Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

This article deals with the citizen-level relations between Finland and Scandinavia and between Finland and Baltic countries, reflected in the foreign relations of voluntary associations and in the so-called functional (practical and technical) international cooperation.¹

¹ The article is based on the licentiate thesis: Riitta Mäkinen, “Pohjola vai Baltia? Suomalaisten pan-identifioituminen 1920—1930-luvuilla kansalaisyhteistyön valossa” (Turun yliopisto, Poliittisen historian laitos 5.2.2015). Digital version: <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/117726>. An earlier article in English on the same theme: Riitta Mäkinen, “Finnish Voluntary Associations’ Contacts with Scandinavian and Baltic Counterparts during the Interwar Period”. In Jörg Hackmann (ed.), *Associational Culture and Civil Society in North Eastern Europe* (Wien, Köln, Weimar, Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 451—67.

Did the Finns identify themselves and feel more togetherness with their western or southern neighbours? — The eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union was an ideological ideal to some but not a region to feel togetherness with.

Method and sources

The actual, official foreign politics and diplomacy of Finland have been thoroughly researched and described. In my research the key point and focus were the opinions and emotions of active citizens who, however, were not in leading political or ideological positions. During the 1920s and 1930 a vast part of people was still only locally or nationally oriented, without any international perspectives. However, more and more received some kind of contact with other countries, through the media and the associations to which they belonged. The questions I am interested in is whether these Finns identified themselves with the neighbours and whether they had e.g. a Nordic *pan-identity*. Pan-identity here means *an experienced, expressed and popular feeling of togetherness with other nationalities over state borders while the own nationality being the primary identification.*²

Also the citizen level and emotions are influential in international politics and here is the focus of this article. Attitudes and emotions can be traced in travel and conference reports written in newspapers and association journals. How were meetings, study tours and guests described? With feelings of togetherness or difference? Did the citizens follow the official foreign policy or not?

The research method was a careful reading of news articles and reports where different contacts were described. Even a few words can open how the relationship was experienced.

As primary sources I used three newspapers from the years 1922, 1930 and 1938; these specific years were chosen to represent the beginning, middle and end of the research period and to represent “normal” years, not times of crisis or transition. The newspapers *Hufvudstadsbladet*, *Uusi Suomi* and *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* represent different political orientations. Another group of sources was issues of several organization journals from the period of 1920—39. One on them was published by a trade union (book workers), one by a national musical society, two by scouts, one by women for voluntary defence (Lotta-organization) and one for agricultural professionals. All of those organizations had lively relations across the borders. I tried to find all texts, which dealt with either Scandinavia or Balticum. In addition, Hungary proved to be a country with which Finns could pan-identify themselves.

² See further: Riitta Mäkinen, “Pohjola vai Baltia?”, 34—5.

As supplementary sources I used different diverse printed materials where foreign relations on citizen level were dealt with, but not as the main theme. The idea was to find in all source material “innocent”, personally experienced grass root pan-identity, not any national reflection by social scientist or politicians.

An example of the supplementary sources is a booklet written by a religious minority priest, reporting his journey in Scandinavia in 1937. The aim for the journey was to learn about building praying houses and the aim of the book was also to tell about the religious life of the Scandinavian brothers and sisters. But the book also expressed the new Scandinavian pan-identity of the late 1930s.³

Finland — a Nordic country?

Finland was a part of Sweden until 1809 when, as a consequence of the last Russo-Swedish War of 1808—9, it became an autonomic grand duchy in the Russian empire. The administrative and legal structures and traditions remained nearly untouched and Swedish remained as the language of the administration, culture and the upper class. The majority language was Finnish.⁴ However, the only public sphere where Finnish was used was the church at local level except in coastal areas, where also common people spoke Swedish. Also in the justice system Finnish could be used, orally. The need and use of Russian language was very limited.

During the 19th century the Finnish language and its speakers got more and more rights but not without conflicts with Swedish speakers. The situation can be called language struggle between “Fennomans” and “Svekomans” since 1880s. One part of the Fennomans was originally from Swedish-speaking homes but turned to promote Finnish as an act of social justice. By the 1910s Finnish became the more dominant language in state affairs, higher education and culture. The Swedish speakers often felt themselves threatened, since many advocates of Finnish looked forward to a purely Finnish-language public life.

The discussion was rather bitter, with different waves under several decades. Even the intellectual and racial level of the majority was questioned by the Svekomans, according to the current race theories. In those theories Finns were counted to the Mongol or to some ancient

³ Eino Manninen, *Pohjoismaita kiertämässä* (Helsinki: Ristin Voitto, 1937). (Title in English: Getting round in the Nordic countries.)

⁴ The Finnish language is by its structure very different from the Scandinavian and other Indo-European languages. Estonian is rather nearby to Finnish, also Hungarian belongs linguistically, but very distantly to the same Finno-Ugric language group.

primitive race.⁵ Finnish Swedes also sought support from language brothers and cousins in Sweden and other Scandinavian countries, something what the Fennomans found disloyal.

In spite of the language struggle, race prejudices and some political issues the university circles met without problems in their frequent Nordic conferences. Also the civil servants of these states negotiated in good spirit about traffic, marine affairs, trade, insurance and other matters and regulations to smoothen the Nordic cooperation in all kind of practical areas.

These discussions were held in Scandinavian languages, which are mutually understandable. Highly educated Finns were fluent in Swedish until about 1920s. Some of them were of Finnish-speaking lower classes but mostly they came from educated Swedish speaking or bilingual families. From about the 1910s, the part of university students with purely Finnish background grew. They had learnt Swedish only at secondary school. Thus they were more or less disadvantaged to those who in the Nordic meetings could speak their mother tongue. (However they managed, since the educated speech and articulation were more careful in those days. Nowadays is English often needed even between the native Scandinavians.) Anyway, these Finns were often considered and felt as a kind of half brothers.

*Maybe after three years, when it is the time for a similar meeting in Finland, we can get our voice better heard than in those foreign (alien) countries whose inhabitants feel so much closer with each others than with us.*⁶

This was the sigh of a Finnish priest from Ostrobothnia (Western Finland) as a finishing remark in his report from the Nordic priest meeting in Norway.

*Even if one is our carnal brother and the other is of different blood / both of you guard the border/ with the same faithful courage.*⁷

This verse from a festivity poem for the Nordic Writers' meeting expresses the belief that there are two biological races in Finland.

There were also political reasons for distrust towards Finns. The Finnish Civil War of 1918 had been shocking and the dispute over Åland islands between Finland and Sweden

⁵ See: Aira Kemiläinen, *Finns in the Shadow of the "Aryans"* (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1998).

⁶ *Ehkä kolmen vuoden kuluttua, kun samanlainen kokous on vuorostaan Suomessa [...] saamme äänemme enempi kuuluville kuin noilla vierailta mailla, joiden asukkaat tuntevat olevansa niin paljon lähempänä toisiaan kuin meitä.* Newspaper *Ilkka* 8.10.1930.

⁷ *Om en är vår bror efter kjødet/ och en är av främmande blod/ I vogter begge vor graense/ med samma trofaste mod.* Cited by newspaper *Hufvudstadsbladet* 2.6.1930.

created unpleasant feelings in the beginning of the 1920s. However these crises did not necessarily affect cooperation, if the field in question had a long tradition or a great intensity.⁸

The Nordic journalist meeting of 1922, again, was an example with some problems. The meeting was due to be held in Finland, but the Swedish journalist association was against and some journalists referred quite straightforward to the uncountable, unreliable Finns. The Danes and Norwegians were positive, and in the end, also the Swedes. After the conference a common tune in the reports was as well positive. Some reports and interviews, however, proved unintended prejudices. A Norwegian journalist e.g. told how he understood that even *the Finnish language has all possibilities to serve higher culture*. This happened when he had seen a Norwegian novel in Finnish translation.⁹

A difference in the attitudes among the Scandinavian nations can also be seen in *Suomen Musiikkilehti* (Finland's Music Journal), e.g. in a report of a choir tour. A prominent Finnish male choir made a long tour in all the three countries in 1923. Everything and everybody were positive in Denmark and Norway, but less in Sweden. It is difficult to state how objective the report was. In any case, it reflected some attitude problems on both sides.¹⁰

There were, of course, differences in the (Swedish) attitudes towards the Finns. A special group were so called Finlandsvänner (friends of Finland). They were mostly upper and military class men with some family contacts to Finland, who were prepared to fight or help on the side of the Finnish whites in 1918 and went on as promoters of these relations.¹¹

As a pointed conclusion about the Nordic role of Finns it can be said that they were considered Nordic if they were fluent in Swedish. But even Finnish-speaking Finns, if they travelled in Sweden in the 1920s or in the beginning of 1930s, were usually friendly, even very friendly met.¹²

⁸ The formation of relations between independent Finland and Sweden are described in Jorma Kalela, *Grannar på skilda vägar: Det finländsk-svenska samarbetet i den finländska och svenska utrikespolitiken 1921—1923* (Helsingfors, Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1971).

⁹ Newspaper *Uusi Suomi* 17.6.1930.

¹⁰ Hugo Holmström, "Laulu-Miesten Skandinavianmatka," *Suomen musiikkilehti* 1923, 79—83. Riitta Mäkinen, "Pohjola vai Baltia?," 102—4.

¹¹ Riitta Mäkinen, "Pohjola vai Baltia?," 63, 176.

¹² Ainur Elmgren in her dissertation *Den allrakäraste fienden: Svenska stereotyper i finländsk press 1918—1939* (Lund: Sekel, 2008) points out that Sweden was described either very negatively or very positively in the Finnish press. Negative stereotypes could live even if the writer states how friendly she or her had been met. According to Elmgren the reason to that was that the right wing in Finland constructed Sweden to be an enemy. In my opinion Elmgren's interpretation builds too much on the perceived enemies model and does not consider the contempt, which the Finnish speakers experienced. More about Elmgren's interpretations: Riitta Mäkinen, "Pohjola vai Baltia?," 70—1.

Shared euphoria with the Balts

Among the southern neighbours, in the Baltic countries, the situation was completely different in the beginning of the 1920s. Finnish visitors were welcomed overwhelmingly friendly. The atmosphere could be described even as euphoric. Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania shared the joy of newly achieved national independence.

Earlier the association and organization contacts had been scarce, but now they were increasing quickly. And there, especially in Estonia, Finnish-speaking Finns found warm friendship without that certain scorn which they may have met in Scandinavia.

A representative example comes from group of Finnish commerce students who visited Estonia in 1920. One of them wrote in the county newspaper:

*[...] That tender friendship and abundant hospitality, which the Finnish students met, is impossible to describe completely. During the splendid banquets, which were arranged for the Finnish students and participated by the leading military and civil persons and the elite of Narva town, many speeches were given with thankfulness and respect [...]*¹³

Similar stories about warm and abundant welcomes, even by ministers, even toward very ordinary students, also came from Latvia. Altogether, expressions of warm, positive emotions were met far more often than in Scandinavia. Finns themselves were rather reserved but enjoyed this abundance. However, it looks as if the leaders stayed more reserved than the masses.

The boat journey from Helsinki to Tallinn was so cheap that even lay workers could afford it when travelling in groups. It was rather common to meet a brotherly Estonian group who welcomed the travellers already in harbour and organized for them an interesting weekend. This experience was several times described e.g. in the journal *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete* (The bilingual journal for workers in book prints and binderies). The closing words were e. g.:

*big crowds of Estonians had arrived to the harbour to say good-bye, and in many glances you could see a velvet-like moist glittering, which in a silent way told of the deep togetherness, which is felt by book workers on both sides of the Finnish gulf.*¹⁴

It is possible that an emotional tone, especially with the Estonians became even expected. A joking boy scout wrote how he had tried to get an enough *festive and theatrical*

¹³ Johannes Nopola, "Opintoretellä Virossa", Newspaper *Uusi Aura*, 10.11.1920. *Sitä hellää ystävyyttä ja sitä tuhlailtavaa vieraanvaraisuutta, jota suomalaiset ylioppilaat siellä saivat osaksensa, on mahdotonta muutmin rivein tyhjentävästi kuvata. Niillä suomalaisille ylioppilaille järjestetyillä loistavilla juhla-aterioilla, joihin oli kutsuttu johtavia sotilas- ja siviilihenkilöitä ja Narvan kaupungin hienostoa, lausuttiin virolaisten pitämässä lukuisissa puheissa kiitollisuutta ja kunnioitusta uhkuvia tunnustuksia. [...]*

¹⁴ "Suomalaiset Eestin kirjatyöläisten vieraina", *Kirjatyö-Bokarbete* 1938, 129—130. Citation: *Runsaat joukot oli eestiläisiä saapunut satamaan saatolle ja monista katseista kuvastui samettimainen koskea kimallus, mikä omalla äännettömällä tavallaan kertoi siitä syvästä yhteistunnosta, jotka kirjatyöläiset tuntevat toisiaan kohtaan kummallakin puolella Suomenlahden.*

mine on his face when arriving to Tallinn harbour. One of the leaders of the group again was so moved that forgot to set his two horribly heavy rucksacks on the waiting carriage. Yes, in this case the young men, leaders of the groups expected great emotions, but the younger boys did not want to show their feelings by order.¹⁵

One reason for people to keep contacts with ideological brothers and sisters in other countries was the very positive feeling of togetherness. At its best, the feeling was both national and ideological / professional, as described the writer in *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete*. And the similarity of Finnish and Estonian gave some possibilities to communicate even to those who had learnt no languages at school.

Some professions established organizational cooperation between the four small countries round the Baltic Sea as a kind of equivalent with the Nordic organizations. Finnish-speaking university students broke contacts with Scandinavians and instead joined a Baltic organization called SELL. The agronomists established an organization with regular meetings and also at least journalists, doctors and botanists had regular Baltic cooperation. Bilateral ties with Estonia were even more common.

More to learn from Scandinavia — and push from Baltic countries

Most of the associations had foreign relations stretching in both directions, but their nature used to be different. The difference is reflected e.g. in *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete*. The type of Scandinavian contacts was quite different from that to Estonia. Estonia was a resort to mass visits. The leaders of the trade union, again, met their Scandinavian colleagues, discussed union matters and made agreements of mutual support. So did also the representatives of their employers' unions. Nevertheless, the ordinary members could hardly afford a journey to Scandinavia, not even to Stockholm without a grant.¹⁶

The agronomists, with their higher salaries and or willing employers could afford study tours to Scandinavia. Even their reports expressed a clear difference in the nature of the relations. Reports from the Baltic countries were filled with expressions of togetherness and warmth, while from Scandinavia — with descriptions of practical details. Yes, in the South, where the agriculture had an especially strong position as in Finland, the visiting agronomists

¹⁵ “Pakinaa”, *Partio* 1921, 104. Citations: *Ei tiennyt oikein, mitten juhlallisen ja teatraalisen ilmeen olisi kasvoilleen ottanut. Maisteri Aulamo oli niin liikutettu, ettei hän muistanut panna kahta hirmuisen painavaa reppuaan rattaille. [...] Oli siellä ihanaa muuten siellä Virossa, vaikka pojat eivät tahtoneetkaan tuoda tunteitaan esille komennon mukaan, kuten hra Åberg olisi halunnut.*

¹⁶ See and compare eg.: “H:gin Kirjat. yhdistys käymässä Tallinnassa”, *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete* 1921, 93—4; “Virolaisten ja Viipurilaisten kirjatyöläisten vierailu”, *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete* 1921, 124; “Työväen Sivistysliiton opinto- ja virkistysmatka Tukholmaan”, *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete*, 119—21. “Kirjatyöntekijäin skandinavin yhteistoiminta laajenee.” *Kirjatyö — Bokarbete* 1932, 93—4; Riitta Mäkinen, “Pohjola vai Baltia?”, 126—31.

enjoyed positive feelings. From the more progressive Scandinavia they again could learn more. So learned also the Estonians. The agricultural politics of Estonia was called "Denmarkization".¹⁷

During the 1920s and 1930s, new Nordic organizations on the most varied areas were established and Finland became a member, also into those, which earlier had been purely Scandinavian. Often the form was — and is — an organization of four national organizations, with yearly leaders meetings and a big conference held in two—four year intervals. But the cooperation could also be in small scale and informal without publicity, like the yearly professional and social leaders meeting of dairies, which served milk products in Helsinki, Stockholm, Copenhagen and Oslo.¹⁸ The best benefit of this kind of cooperation was the sharing of practical experiences. Sure, conference banquets and other social activities gave also positive emotions to share.

The Nordic cooperation became more and more popular in the 1930s and the popularity of southern contacts maybe lessened in Finland, partly due to the better practical profit in Scandinavia, partly due to international politics and partly due to the political development in the Baltic countries. The constitution of the new republic of Estonia had been ultra-democratic, but in early 1930s all three Baltic countries turned to authoritarian regimes. There had been some similar pursuits in Finland but the democratic regime prevailed. The half-dictatorships in South were experienced as strange and repulsive. The political climate in Scandinavia, even if with monarchs, was indeed more appealing.

And what also had a certain importance for Finnish-Scandinavian relations on citizen level was that the race ideology had meanwhile weakened in Sweden. A prominent race researcher Rolf Nordenstreng had prepared new classifications where Finnish-speaking Finns no more were such a separate group as in the previous classifications. Besides the Nordic race Nordenstreng formed a class called Eastern Balts, and explained that even many prominent Swedes like the famous writer Selma Lagerlöf, Prime Minister Harald Hjärne and archbishop Nathan Söderblom belonged to this race. In Finland, the future president Paasikivi commented in his diary about his feeling of relief: *No difference. Not in gifts, not in talents — we all are alike, of the same race* and looked forward to closer Nordic cooperation. In Finnish

¹⁷ About agricultural pan-identification with Baltic countries and Scandinavia: Riitta Mäkinen, "Pohjola vai Baltia?", 207—20 and Riitta Mäkinen "Agronomernas skandinaviska kontakter, deras alternativ och betydelsen av bondens nationella roll". In Heidi Haggrén, Ruth Hemstad & Jani Marjamaa (eds), *Civilsamhällets Norden: Papers presenterade på ett seminarium om nordiskt samarbete i januari 2004* (CENS 2005), 42—55 (<http://www.helsinki.fi/hum/nordic/civilsam.pdf>). About the "Denmarkization" in Anu Mai Köll, *Peasants on the World Market: Agricultural Experience of Independent Estonia 1919–1939* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 1994), esp. 70—5, 125.

¹⁸ Riitta Mäkinen, "Pohjola vai Baltia?", 219.

newspapers, the race classifications became subject to humour. The old burden of the lower race disappeared at last.¹⁹

Scandinavian orientation — a citizen duty

In the beginning of the 1920s there had been a short period when the official Finland sought for international security in the so-called Border State cooperation with the Baltic countries and Poland. However, Finland withdrew quickly and declared international neutrality.

The rise of Nazi Germany and the international tension starting from about 1934 made leading Finnish politicians to reconsider the situation. The conclusion was that the neutrality policy was not enough and allies were needed, preferably from Scandinavia. This new doctrine, Scandinavian Orientation, was published in the Finnish Parliament in 1935. The silent final pursuit of the foreign policy makers was a defence alliance with Sweden.

The advocates of the new orientation understood that the new orientation also needed popular support. They succeeded. The name and spirit of the declaration became quickly well known, which could be seen in many texts. The word ‘orientteering’ (“orientteeraus” in better Finnish ‘suuntaus’) was in frequent use and people knew that it means political orientation toward Scandinavia.²⁰

In addition, the Scandinavians became interested in closer relations with the Finns. From about 1938 the amount of contacts grew to a new high level. It became a common practice that all kind of national organizations and associations invited at least one Swedish representative, if not several Scandinavians to their yearly conferences or summer festivities. Their greeting speech or lecture was translated to the public. The speech usually stressed the significance of Nordic ties, but the lecture used to explain some practises that the listeners could learn from. And vice versa: the circumstances in the Nordic countries were both similar and different enough that comparisons were useful and the ideas of the neighbours easy to adapt.

In a couple of years, Nordic contacts became nearly a patriotic duty in voluntary associations in Finland. At the same time, it was understood that togetherness with the southern

¹⁹ Ibid., 198. Citation of Paasikivi as a bit longer version: *Ei erotusta. Ei myös lahjoissa — lahjakuudessa. Rolf Nordenstreng: “Itä-balttilainen” rotu. [...] Tämä osottaa, että olemme kaikki samaa maata — rotua — kuulume kaikki samaan rotuun.* Kauko Rumpunen (ed.), *J. K. Paasikiven päiväkirjoja 1914–1934* (Helsinki: Valtionarkiston ystävät ry, 2000), note 17.7.1930. Riitta Mäkinen, “Pohjola vai Baltia?”, 196–205.

²⁰ About the Scandinavian orientation and campaign for the spreading of the idea: Timo Soikkanen, *Kansallinen eheytyminen — myytti vai todellisuus? Ulko- ja sisäpolitiikan linjat ja vuorovaikutus Suomessa vuosina 1933–1939* (Porvoo—Helsinki: WSOY, 1984). Examples of the spreading in the civil society: Riitta Mäkinen, “Pohjola vai Baltia?”, 153–6.

neighbours does not really help in the new insecure European situation. The authoritarian political development in the Baltic states, again, silently pushed also civil society away from there. One can not say that Finns had turned its back to the South but the priority, however, laid with the West.

The shift from southern to Nordic orientation can be followed e.g. from the documents of the Biological Society “Vanamo”. (Vanamo is the name of the pretty forest flower *Linnea borealis*.) The society was grounded in 1897 as a Finnish language protest to the monolingual “Societas pro Fauna et Flora Fennica” and the strong pro-Swedish atmosphere in natural sciences at the University of Helsinki.²¹ One of the first tasks was to establish the Finnish scientific botanical and zoological terminology but also to create self-confidence among the Finnish-speaking scientists and serious amateurs. They often came from modest circumstances, whereas leading personalities were from old academic Swedish speaking families.

To the orientation of the society belonged that foreign contacts were sought rather from other directions than from Scandinavia. Leading personalities from the society Vanamo started cooperation with Baltic botanists and organized Fenno-Baltic conferences with excursions from 1922. In 1934 the Vanamo decided to call foreign corresponding members. All of them were from the South: six Estonians, two Hungarians, one Latvian and one Lithuanian. However, starting from the year 1937, a turn can be seen in the minutes of the society: several Vanamo members had participated in a Nordic conference of natural historians in Finland. Between the lines one can understand that such conferences had hitherto been less popular with the Vanamo members. However, now the chair reflected:

*I am convinced that the conference left good, encouraging impulses and a desire to continue positive cooperation with Nordic biological scientists on the stable basis of equality.*²²

Yes, the certain experiences of down looking Scandinavian colleagues had been an obstacle, which now was disappearing. Next year, in 1938, the society called two new corresponding members, one from Germany and one from Norway. The yearly report told also: *Even on another way has our society proved its sincere will toward Scandinavian orientation.*

In this case, Nordic orientation meant that new positive contacts were started with Swedish biologists. The chair wrote also that *good relations with the Balts, especially with Estonians continue of itself but Scandinavian relations need determined work, without intermediaries.* The “Finnishness” was not any more showed through avoiding contacts to

²¹ The archives of the Society Vanamo in the Archive of University of Helsinki.

²² *Minulla on, omakohtaisestikin arvioiden, varma vakaumus siitä, että luonnontutkijakokous jätti jälkeensä hyviä, kannustavia herätteitä ja halun antavaan yhteistyöhön pohjoismaiden luonnontutkijain kesken samanarvoisuuden vakaalla perustalla.* Mauno Kotilainen in Annual report of the Vanamo from the year 1937.

Sweden and other Scandinavia, but on the contrary, through making contacts, but directly, without Finnish Swedes as middlemen.

The case of the Vanamo presents a pure example of how the Scandinavian orientation was realized in civil society. The pan-identity of Finns was definitely turning toward Scandinavia. However, some groups still preferred southern, Estonian contacts.

At least elementary school teachers in Finland and in Estonia went on with active contacts and learning from each other. In the teachers meeting in 1938 the foreign greeting was not from Sweden but from Estonia, and the teachers' journal referred often to Estonian practices instead of those in Scandinavia.²³ There are several obvious reasons for this. The elementary school in Finland became compulsory only in the beginning of the 1920s and the resources were more modest than in more prosperous Scandinavia. Thus there were more real matters for true exchange with the southern neighbours. Another thing was the language nationalism, which culminated in elementary schools. Communal disputes on Finnish or Swedish schools in bilingual communities were rather frequent and emotionally reported. And a very evident point: most of the Finnish elementary teachers had no studies in other languages. In Scandinavia they could not communicate without interpretation. Learning some Estonian was, however, not any big effort.

The Nordic pan-identity of the Finns was at its strongest from the 1950s to the 1980s. Still, even after Finland joined the EU, the civil society has its Nordic contacts. The latent sisterhood between Finland and Estonia was revitalised in the beginning of the 1990s. From that time also many Baltic interest groups and professional specialists have joined the Nordic cooperation and sometimes colleagues from North East Russia as well. A new North European pan-identity to come?

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