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STATE, EXPERTS, AND ROMA: Historian Allan Etzler and pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden

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Like other Nordic countries, Sweden has its dark chapter of ignominious history involving discrimination targeting Roma. However, less is known about the role of historians in the process of bringing so-called ‘scientific grounds’ to solving the ‘Gypsy problem’. In this article, I focus on this topic, using the case of the historian Allan Etzler, in order to analyse the role that Etzler played as a scholar and expert in the development of pseudo-scientific racism in Sweden.

Keywords pseudo-scientific racism, experts and instrumental expertise, World War II, Romani people in Scandinavia

Introduction
In the last decade, scholars have become increasingly interested in the role of experts in the formation of policy targeting the Roma and Travellers. Martin Ericsson has traced the role of academics in the development of political strategies to ‘solve the tattare problem’, and has shown that increasing radicalization occurred during World War II. Ludvig Wiklander has noted that Allan Etzler was one of the most influential experts in Sweden ‘within the race-biology paradigm’. According to David Sjögren and Thom Axelsson, experts found ‘scientific’ grounds to segregate Roma children from ordinary schools. Sjögren has mentioned the significant role played by Etzler within the state-run expertise, and Axelsson has remarked on the role of Etzler in the formation of school policy targeting Roma and Travellers. Norma Montesino has studied the role of Arthur Thesleff in the formation of Nordic expertise and the impact of Thesleff on Etzler. Jan Selling has discussed the key role that Harry Söderman played in the anti-Roma agenda of the International Criminal Police Commission. Birgitta Svensson has postulated that ‘tattare’ functioned as a necessary public ‘other’ to the Swedish folkhem. Anne Minken has pointed out the role of Etzler in academic debates.
Through his affiliation to both law enforcement and academia, Etzler played a significant role as a leading expert on Roma. He was active in public debates and government investigations of Roma in Sweden. However, Etzler’s role as an expert, along with his personal network, has not previously been a focus of research. The personal archives of Etzler are kept at the Nordic Museum in Stockholm. The collection contains letters, documents, and articles, as well as manuscripts and other materials connecting to his research. No scholar has previously used these materials, which shed light on the following questions.

- How did Etzler build his reputation as an expert on Roma issues?
- How did his academic and prison administrative careers develop?
- What factors led to the decline of his reputation as a scholar and expert?

The analytical tool used here is the concept of *pseudo-scientific anti-gypsyism* (aka pseudo-scientific racism); this term has been defined by various scholars. In this study, *pseudo-scientific racism* refers to the concept of ‘scientific racism’ elaborated by Elazar Barkan, John Jackson, and Nadine Weidman. They define ‘scientific racism’ as the pseudo-scientific approach based on questionable empirical data and methods (i.e. measurements of body parts and intelligence tests) that were used to support the so called ‘racial inferiority’ of certain ethnic groups. In the case of Roma, pseudo-scientific racism justified ‘scientifically’ their exclusion from mainstream society through discrimination and persecution.

Another analytical term that will be used here is *instrumental expertise*, which was first proposed by Steven Shapin. According to Shapin, the 20th century experienced accelerating links between the state and expert-based knowledge. The modern state exploits ‘instrumental expertise, not knowledge but knowledge-power, not Truth, but competence in predicting and controlling’. In other words, modern governments seek out scholars who can deliver expertise that governments find convenient for solving certain issues. As Herbert Heuss has pointed out, the investigation of the interaction between the experts on Roma and states shows how and why the Roma and Sinti minority, which hardly figured in Nazi political rhetoric, became a focus of a German extermination policy.

The Romani people first appear in Sweden in 1512, when a caravan denoted as *Thaatra* arrived in Stockholm. Their arrival is described in very positive terms. The group, which was led by Count Anthonius, was given a house to stay in, and the city council donated them 20 marks (about SEK20,000 in today’s value). Despite this auspicious beginning, the Romani people in Sweden quickly became a pariah group. The historical dismissive terms *zigenare* and *tattare* were in official use until the 1990s. They designated two groups that, in Sweden, were considered separate: Gypsies and Travellers. Today, the former ‘zigenare’ group is officially termed *Svenska roma* (Swedish Roma) and the ‘tattare’ group is termed *Resandefolket* (Travelling people). Both of them are a part of the composite Roma national minority. However, there are Travellers that strongly opposed such a designation. To avoid misunderstanding, this text retains the original wording used in the documents (i.e. *tattareand zigenare*). In the analytical parts, I will use Swedish Roma for zigenare, Travellers for tattare and Roma if and when both groups are meant. I use the English word ‘Gypsy’ in translations of derogatory references such as ‘the Gypsy problem’, as well as for translating Etzler’s own use of *zigenare* that sometimes meant both *zigenare* and *tattare*. 
Background

The Nazi occupation of Norway and Denmark affected the Romani people. In Norway, after the deportation of Jews, the pro-Nazi administration led by Quisling began to discuss a final solution for the ‘Gypsy question’. Jonas Lie, the police minister, proposed gathering all the Roma and placing them in labour camps. He also wanted to start a mass sterilization programme. Oliver Møystad, the chief of the security police, argued for deporting the Romani to the German concentration camps. In 1943, Ragnar Söderberg, a well-known businessman and the Consul General of Quisling’s Norway in Stockholm, asked the Socialstyrelse (the National Board of Health and Welfare) to share its survey of Roma with Oslo. In Denmark, the Institute of Human Genetics – at the request of the Municipality of Copenhagen – provided a national-scale study of Roma. The results were published in 1943. In Finland, which was allied with Germany, the government’s Centre for the Welfare of Evacuees proposed a Special Arrangement for the Gypsies, according to which homeless Romani would be placed in labour camps. A radical proposal was made in 1942 by Dr Urho Kekkonen, member of Parliament, Director of the Centre, and later Minister of Justice in 1944–1946 and President of Finland. Sweden was not an exception to the movement to separate Roma from the population. On 25 September 1942, the Swedish government declared that the ‘Gypsy problem’ had to be resolved immediately, as the population known as ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’ constituted a problem with which the people of the country ‘have had to fight for almost four centuries’. Many academics volunteered their services to the Socialstyrelse. Two of them, Allan Etzler and Gunnar Dahlberg, played a final role in establishing official expertise.

The first Swedish doctoral dissertation on Roma was defended in 1730. However, the establishment of Romani scholarship took place mainly after World War I. In 1919, Herman Lundborg, the head of the Department of Racial Biology at Uppsala University, put together a travelling exhibition entitled ‘Swedish Folk Types’ that was shown in many cities. Lundborg praised the exhibition catalogue, which included over 600 photos, as ‘the first race-biological visual collection in the world’. In it the Romani people were positioned alongside other minorities and were described as ‘a distinctive race that consists of two small groups of tattare and zigenare’. Lundborg defined ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’ differently. He placed the first group in a chapter titled Zigenare, which included about 30 photos. Most of these pictures presented them positively, as an exotic oriental group. The ‘tattare’ were placed in another chapter, titled ‘Vagabonds, Tattare, Criminals and Alike’, and were described as a criminal group. Nevertheless, Lundborg failed to make a clear difference between these two groups. He applied the term ‘race mixing’ (rasblandning) to both ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’ and stated that some of the ‘tattare’ were of mixed Finnish-Roma descent. In 1919, Lundborg edited an anthology entitled Race Questions in Modern Analysis, with Special Regard to the Swedish People. Arthur Thesleff wrote a chapter about Roma in Sweden. In 1904, Thesleff organized the first Gypsy exhibition at Skansen: an open-air ethnographic museum in Stockholm. The exhibition, which was called Zigenarläget, pretended to show a typical camp. However, the organizer failed to persuade any Romani to participate in the event. Instead, amateur Swedish actors pretended to play the Roma. In 1912, Thesleff published a study on Stockholm’s criminal jargon, in which he drew a difference between ‘pure Romani language and the secret language of the tattare’, which was, he believed, a mix of Romani and Swedish. Thesleff defined ‘tattare’ as a group of Gypsy origin who, in Sweden, had been denationalized and become ‘a hybrid race with more or less Romani descent’. According to Thesleff, they
spoke ‘a dialect of Romani and have a special common physical appearance and behaviour that show their Gypsy origin’. 33 Thesleff pointed out that ‘tattare should not be confused with original zigenare who came to Sweden from the Basque Provinces [sic.] and speak a pure Romani that the tattare do not understand’. 34 Unlike them, the ‘zigenare’ were ‘pure-blood and original vagabond Romanies’. 35 In a racist manner, he condemned both groups as ‘a biological threat to the Swedish nation through sexual relations between them and ordinary Swedes’, in what (he believed) was ‘the injection of Gypsy blood into Swedish families’. 36 However, as Gunilla Lundgren shows, Thesleff was not regarded as a scholar by the academic world and his thinking had no political impact. 37

Pseudo-scientific racism received enthusiastic support in universities and the government. The focus of most academic research of this sort was on perceived ‘racially-alien’ ethnic minorities. In 1922, the State Institute for Racial Biology, led by Lundborg, was established at Uppsala University. In the same year, the parliamentary Committee on the Poor Law initiated an investigation of ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’ that was completed in 1923. 38 The aims of the investigation were to map this population and establish legal definitions of ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’. The investigation failed to develop such definitions. However, the committee proclaimed ‘tattare as the greatest racial problem of the Swedish nation’, because their ‘inter-relations with the Swedish racial group means a deterioration of our race’. 39 Frustrated, the government looked for experts who could solve the ‘problem’.

Between prison work and academia: the career of Allan Etzler
Allan Etzler was born in 1902 in Nydala, Jönköping region, in the family of a Lutheran priest. Jönköping was a traditional residence area for Travellers. After graduating from Stockholm University College, Etzler in 1928 became an administrative officer at Långholmen, the Central Prison in Stockholm. At first, Etzler’s academic interest was on medieval history. 40 However, the Roma soon became the main object of his studies. In 1933, he received a grant of SEK500 from Längmanska kulturfonden to study the Romani language. 41 In the same year, Etzler made a research trip to Norway to study the policies towards the Roma in that country. 42 In 1939, he took a research trip to Riga and Tallinn to study the correction systems there. 43 Like the Nazi expert Robert Ritter in Germany, Etzler was affiliated to both academic and law enforcement institutions. While a doctoral candidate in history, Etzler could conduct observations inside prison. From 1929 to 1943, he collected linguistic and genealogical information from 65 inmates of Traveller origin.

Etzler was one of the first historians in Sweden to use the media to build up a public reputation; in his case, as an expert in Romani issues. He published a dozen articles on Roma in the national media and gave many interviews to newspapers. 44 For a time, mass media considered Etzler to be the leading Swedish expert on Roma. 45 In 1942, he became acting director of the Central Prison and, in 1944, he received a doctor of philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities, Stockholm University College. 46 At that time, Etzler occupied a leading position within the penitentiary administration and as the only historian in Scandinavia specializing in the Roma. The Department of Investigation at the Socialstyrelse, led by Anders Tengström, promoted Etzler as an expert on Roma and sent him internal promemoria for review and comments. 47 The official report on Swedish Roma published by the Socialstyrelse in 1944 was based on Etzler’s findings. 48
categorization of ‘tattare’ presented in a 1945 report of the Socialstyrelse was based on Etzler’s research.\footnote{49}

On 27 May 1944, Etzler defended his doctoral thesis, titled *Gypsies and Their Descendants in Sweden: History and Language*. The dissertation was a coherent monograph that was unusual for that time. New research was presented in the chapters titled ‘Swedish tattare – descendants of Gypsies’, ‘Gypsy language in the Nordic countries’, and ‘Modern Swedish tattare language’. Three other chapters, titled ‘The Gypsy problem in Europe’, ‘Gypsies in Sweden’, and ‘Gypsies in Swedish military service’ were based on Etzler’s previously published articles.\footnote{50}

The thesis also used documents donated by Thesleff to the Royal Library of Sweden.\footnote{51}

Since early modern times, Swedish authorities used both the terms ‘zigenare’ and ‘tattare’ as interchangeable synonyms for the Romani people. ‘Pure-blood’ zigenare were, in fact, seen as foreigners: those already inside Sweden were strongly encouraged to leave. The greatest problem lay with their supposed progeny, the tattare who could not be perceived as foreigners. Who were they, exactly, and what was to be done with them? Therefore, the first task, according to Etzler, was to differentiate between tattare and zigenare. Etzler argued that, while both groups had Gypsy origin, they have different backgrounds. Travellers arrived in Sweden at the beginning of the 16th century, coming from Germany. However, the zigenare arrived much later, during the 19th century, coming from Russia and Hungary. According to Etzler, the zigenare were a small group of newcomers. In terms of religion, they belonged to the Roman-Catholic and Orthodox denominations (see Figure 1). These

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Roma were considered by Etzler to be a group that was ‘less problematic [and] easy to control’. In contrast, Etzler presented the Travellers as a large group that constituted a threat to the Swedish nation due to their clans and high birth rate. They had Swedish names and spoke the Swedish language. Therefore, according to Etzler, the urgent task was to register them to be able to separate them from ordinary Swedes. The native language of the Travellers was described in negative terms as a pidgin which had ‘a parasitic nature’. Language became a key element in Etzler’s typology. The ‘tattare’ could be distinguished from other Swedes not only by physical appearance but also by linguistic criteria; that is, they were seen to be Gypsy because they spoke a variant of Romani.

Etzler’s public defence of his thesis was a media event in Sweden. Many professors and the heads of law enforcement agencies attended the disputation along with journalists and writers (i.e. Ivar Lo-Johansson). The Gypsy Baron Johan Dimitri Taikon also attended. His faculty opponent was Ernst Söderlund, associate professor of economic history. The second opponent, Per Sandberg, was responsible for fact-checking, control of critical apparatus, and notes. The third, non-academic opponent, was Gunnar Skoglund, a theatre director, who was, according to Swedish academic tradition, supposed to keep the disputation running and fair. The examination committee had six members (very unusual for Sweden), all professors at Stockholm University College: Sven Tunberg, a professor of history and the University Vice-Chancellor; Nils Ahnlund, a professor of history; Ernst Arbman, a professor of the history of religion; Elias Wessén, a professor of Nordic languages; Herbert Tingsten, a professor of political science; and Einar Tegen, a professor of practical philosophy.

The press reported enthusiastically on the defence and claimed that Sweden finally had a real expert who combined academic research with the education of imprisoned Roma. The reaction of academics was less positive. Söderlund gave critical feedback to the examination committee. He noted that Etzler’s selection of historical documents led to ‘far-reaching conclusions based on selective records’. Söderlund stressed that the thesis about the existence of a specific race of ‘tattare’ but with a Roma past was unconvincing. He found this idea ‘very dangerous’, as it implied using an ethnic-based approach to solve the social problem of vagrancy in Sweden. Wessén gave a generally positive review of the linguistic chapters. He noted that he had been following Etzler’s research for many years and agreed that a knowledge of Romani indicated a person of Gypsy origin. However, he pointed out that Etzler had simply collected Romani words without going into their etymology. Tunberg, Etzler’s supervisor, expressed concerns about bias in choice of primary sources. However, none of the members of the examination committee was critical to the racist content of the thesis. Finally, Tunberg gave it his stamp of approval with a passing but low grade (med berömd godkänd) and the members of the examination committee agreed. This low grade meant that Etzler could not be entitled to be associate professor or a position as lecturer at the department of history. In the Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, Etzler published a summary of the thesis.

No review of the thesis was published in Historisk tidskrift, Sweden’s leading academic journal of history. Olof Gjerdmann, a senior researcher at the Institute for Language and Folklore discussed the dissertation in the ethnological journal Svenska landsmål och svenskt folkliv. He took issue with Etzler’s belief in the Roma origin of the ‘tattare’ group. He argued that the language of Travellers is Swedish according to its grammar and syntactic typology, and contains only a mixture of Romani words.
Bertil Lundman reviewed the dissertation for *Ymer*, a journal of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography. Lundman was associate professor in physical anthropology at Uppsala University and was one of the main advocates for using racial-biological methods to solve Sweden’s ‘tattar problem’. He praised the relevance of the study, but added some critical observations. According to Lundman, the dissertation had a misbalance of secondary literature and new knowledge. He noted that the selection as informants of only middle-aged men seemed problematic from a scientific point of view.

In the present perspective of Romani studies, the dissertation was a failure. The author used problematic data collected exclusively from prisoners to claim a ‘deep asocial nature and criminality’ of Travellers. The book contains many racist expressions, such as ‘a special Gypsy glance’ and ‘a strong and race-based love of the knife’. Etzler also gives positive reference to Nazi researchers, at a time when the news of the Holocaust of Jews had reached Sweden. His presentation of Quisling’s Norway as a model for solving the ‘problem’ was extremely unwise, given the knowledge of the deportation of the Jewish population to the Nazi extermination camps. Etzler selected sources from court and police records as empirical evidence of the ‘deep asocial, parasitic and criminal nature of the tattare’. His thesis described a long-term conflict between Travellers and the state and society at large. He excluded sources that told of peaceful co-existence between the Travellers and farmers. Etzler also used an unpublished survey of the ‘tattare’ group made by the Socialstyrelse. Gunborg Lundholm pointed out that this source was not wholly negative and included positive observations describing the ‘tattare as normal people like others’. Etzler mentioned his knowledge of such positive observations, but avoided making conclusions that did not align with his negative concept.

One of the main points of the thesis, that of ‘natural intellectual inferiority’, lay outside of the research competence of the author. Therefore, Etzler decided to refer to some Swedish and Norwegian studies to prove his point. In 1942–1943, Manne Ohlander, licentiate in pedagogies at the University of Gothenburg, performed intelligence tests and genealogical examinations of children of Traveller descent attending special schools and orphanages in Sweden. Norwegian physician Mikael Kobro performed intelligence tests on Roma children on behalf of a Christian philanthropic organization called *Den norske omstreifermisjon*. Ohlander published his study in the journal of the Nordic Association of Special Schools, and Kobro’s study was published by *Nordisk Sosialpedagogisk Tidsskrift*, both of which were platforms for educators in the Nordic countries. Kobro’s findings were presented by Ingvild B. Carlsen, the general secretary of *Den norske omstreifermisjon*, at the Fourth Nordic Congress on Child Care in Helsinki as new and scientific proof for the selection of children at the orphanages. Both Ohlander and Kobro based their studies on extremely questionable intelligence tests of children and selected family history to show the ‘hereditary inferiority’ of Roma. The methods of both Nordic studies are similar with those of the Nazi Roma expert Eva Justin. Etzler planned to develop the findings of Ohlander and Kobro. Using his high-ranking position within law enforcement, he requested police chiefs to send him reports on crimes committed by Travellers who had before been inmates of the Central Prison. For example, the Police Commissioner in Stockholm, Sune Carleman, sent Etzler an internal report on a male Traveller, and promised ‘in case of future investigations in
Tattare issues, to contribute with more such reports.\textsuperscript{82} Etzler also gained access to court protocols concerning individuals of tattare origin.\textsuperscript{83}

In 1942, \textit{Social-Demokraten}, the Social Democratic Party’s official newspaper, published a debate concerning ‘the Gypsy problem’.\textsuperscript{84} Two leading experts were invited to participate – Etzler and Gunnar Dahlberg – as well as author Ivar Lo-Johansson, who had published a bestseller about vagrant Romani.\textsuperscript{85} Dahlberg refused to discuss the definition of ‘tattare’ before more research had been done. Lo-Johansson maintained that the ‘tattare’ had no Romani roots. Instead, he theorized that ‘they are degenerated descendants of Tattars who came to Sweden from the East, more exact from the Baltic countries’,\textsuperscript{86} which he seemed to mix up with the so-called Lithuanian Tattars, a Muslim group in Lithuania and Belarus. Etzler disagreed with Lo-Johansson and insisted that, according to the ‘family relationship’ theory, which he had developed, the tattare had Gypsy origins.\textsuperscript{87}

Etzler believed that physical appearance and knowledge of Romani language were the best criteria to identify ‘tattare’. However, during his duty at prison, Etzler met inmates of ‘tattare’ descent who did not fit this typology (see Figure 2). He called

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\caption{A group of travellers in Bohuslän. Photo by Johan Johansson, 1919. The man on the left is Frans Oskar Rosenkvist-Magnusson, and the man with a dog is Adel Rosenkvist-Magnusson. The woman on the right is Charlotte Rosenkvist-Magnusson, the wife of Adel. The photo shows five of their nine children. The 10-year-old girl in a kerchief is Hildegard Teoline Rosenkvist-Magnusson. This information was conveyed to the Bohuslän museum by Ronny Magnusson, the grandson of Hildegard Teoline. Source: Bohuslän Museum: UMFA53464:0636. Digitalt Museum. Public domain mark (CC pdm).}
\end{figure}
them ‘vita tattare’ (white tattare) and described them as ‘people of Germanic appearance with blonde hair and blue eyes’. How did Etzler perceive this group? In accordance with international racial studies, Etzler perceived them as ‘the worst element, due to a higher level of race mixing’. Actually, Etzler was one of few scholars in Scandinavia who followed the evolution of Nazi racial research targeting Roma. In 1938, Etzler published his article ‘The Gypsy problem’, in which he presented Nazi policies towards the Romani people:

In today’s Germany, the Gypsies are under a very strong control. To move from one place to another, they must have a special vagabond permission. In big cities, they can move only within special urban quarters. Their life is surrounded by police instructions.

Etzler referred to the Nazi ethnologist Martin Block to convince his readers of the efficiency of police control and segregation of Romani people:

No Gypsy would be able to leave prison anymore, if the law were followed to the letter. Fingerprints are taken from each Gypsy over 6 years old. The children are subject to special compulsory schooling.

His thesis included a short version of this article, albeit without the pages describing the Nazi experience. Nevertheless, Etzler praised Robert Ritter, the Nazi investigator of Romani people as a major international expert who, ‘during the last decade provided research on the Gypsies and their mixed descendants from genealogical and biological points of view on the basis of enormous data that includes 30,000 to 40,000 individuals’. He supported Ritter’s racist ideas on ‘the disastrous influence of Gypsy blood on the German nation’ that had underpinned the Nazi persecution. An article printed in 1938 in Swedish with the prophetic title ‘Gypsies in Germany will share the destiny of the Jews’ is included in Etzler’s archives. Etzler used Ritter’s findings to criticize the results of the previously mentioned Danish investigation. Erik Bartels and Gudrun Brun concluded that there was good possibility to integrate the Roma within three or four generations into mainstream Danish society. Etzler called the results of this investigation ‘unscientific’, and claimed that the case of the German Roma was fully relevant to Denmark, as ‘the Gypsies in this country moved from Germany just two generations ago, and from a biological standpoint are not less asocial compared with those who stayed in Germany’.

In newspapers Etzler presented his views on the solution to the Swedish ‘Gypsy problem’. His first proposal was to unite scholars and experts: a national conference should be arranged in cooperation with the Institute for Racial Biology. This was never done. His next proposal was to create ‘an extensive inventory of all Gypsies and Travellers in the country’. Etzler proposed establishing a central personal registry of all individuals of Roma origin. The government adopted this proposal and, by the end of 1944, the Socialstyrelse had registered Swedish Roma and Travellers residing in the country. Etzler’s proposal involved concrete measures. Based on the Norwegian model, Etzler argued for forced prison education of adult Roma and special orphanages for Romani children. According to Etzler, workhouses should be established for all adult
Romani in each region of Sweden. Special orphanages should collect all the children of both the ‘tattare’ and ‘zigenare’ groups, ‘to separate this bad element of the population and plant them in a healthy environment’. It is notable that Etzler later changed his view on Swedish Roma and he saw them as the ‘less problematic group’, but he proposed radical measures against them too. As is evident from the foregoing, Etzler based his proposals on racial exclusion and prison education. Forced compulsory labour should, according to Etzler, become a pedagogical task ultimately handled by the state. However, in democratic Sweden, Etzler met powerful opposition. Many police chiefs were sceptical of his radical measures, and stated that ‘now the situation with “tattare” is much better than ten years ago’. In a debate with Etzler, the Police Commissioner of Gothenburg, Axel Svensson, stressed that ‘there are Tattare who are as well-behaved and decent as ordinary Swedish citizens and are completely integrated into society’.

Against mass sterilization
Sterilization was a key element of negative eugenics. Since the mid-1930s, the pro-German press (i.e. Aftonbladet) agitated for race-biological measures against the Roma people. World War II radicalized this discourse. In a proposal to the Riksdag regarding The Law on Work Education, forced mass sterilization was presented by the Socialstyrelse as the only way in which the ‘tattare question’ could be solved. It deemed social measures to be meaningless, and stated that a sterilization policy must be ‘consistently applied to these elements, which are disorderly, usually incapable of being integrated into society and, to a significant degree, dangerous’. In this proposal, the Travellers were described in extremely negative and aggressive terms as hereditary criminal vagrants that lacked morals and behavioural norms and were a ‘burden to Swedish society’. The high birth rate within the Traveller group was an additional argument and urged the parliament to consider systematic sterilization. In a manual for perinatal social workers, the Socialstyrelse ordered that all nomadic ‘zigenare and tattare’ who used such services should be referred for further medical investigation regarding eventual sterilization. The 1941 Medical Board’s manual – used by physicians and the governors of early treatment centres – defined vagrancy as a clear indication for sterilization on ‘asocial grounds’. The individuals of ‘tattare’ origin were overrepresented in applications for sterilization.

Many experts argued that it was urgent to implement systematic sterilization of the ‘tattare’. One of these experts was Nils von Hofsten, who occupied several top positions within academia and state agencies. He was professor of zoology at Uppsala University and Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University, a member of the Board at the Institute for Racial Biology, and the chief member of the Academic Commission at the Swedish Medical Board. Instead of sterilization made on an individual ‘free-choice’ basis, Hofsten proposed compulsory sterilization of ‘all tattare’. In June 1943, he tried to persuade the Riksdag to follow this proposal. In an address regarding a new sterilization law, Hofsten stated: ‘The tattare [people] exhibit, to a relatively high degree, a substandard psychological profile and would thus fall under the Sterilization Act, so they could be sterilized without their consent’. He proposed not waiting for new legislation, but rather beginning the systematic sterilization of tattare immediately. Another powerful advocate of forced sterilization was
Professor Olof Kinberg, the chief psychiatrist at the Central Prison and a colleague of Etzler. He visited hospitals and asylums and tried to convince the staff of the effectiveness of sterilizing patients of ‘tattare descent’.\textsuperscript{114}

As historian Mattias Tyden points out, a core issue of contemporary academic debates concerning the sterilization of Travellers involved belief in the racial origins of the group.\textsuperscript{115} Did the ‘tattare’ compose a separate race? Or was it a mixed group of Swedes and Romani that developed over a long period due to different factors? Etzler, who supported the theory on the mixed origin of ‘tattare’, was strongly opposed to mass sterilization. He based his argument on the doubtful grounds for sterilization, as, ‘in some cases, ordinary Swedes will be the victims of wrong decisions’.\textsuperscript{116} Etzler’s position may be explained by his personal interest. As a high-ranking official convinced of the benefits of re-education within the penitentiary system (and not a race biologist!) he might have seen himself as the one who would lead a state-run project on the building of workhouses for Roma. In the end, unlike Norway and Finland, Sweden did not establish workhouses for Roma.

In 1945, Nils Beckman reviewed Etzler’s dissertation in \textit{Svensk Juristtidning}.\textsuperscript{117} Beckman praised the practical value of the study of this ‘historically problematic group’, and commented that the Travellers continue to be a significant problem for criminal policy because of their tendency, in contrast to the normal Swedish temperament, to engage in crimes against property (theft and fraud) and violent crimes (stabbing). Their link to the Gypsy people is shown by the fact that the tattare have to a greater or lesser extent preserved knowledge of and use of Gypsy words, of which some have entered Swedish criminal argot and slang.\textsuperscript{118}

In 1943–1945, Beckman was acting head of the Swedish Juvenile Detention Board, which consisted of lawyers, judges, psychiatrists, prison chiefs, and members of the Riksdag, and which decided the fate of inmates. Beckman used Etzler’s findings as ‘scientific’ grounds for the decisions made by the Board. He categorized the inmates of ‘tattare origin’ as abnormal persons.\textsuperscript{119}

In the thesis, Etzler criticized an unpublished survey prepared by Gunnar Dahlberg,\textsuperscript{120} which had been sent to Etzler by the Socialstyrelse.\textsuperscript{121} On the request of the Socialstyrelse, Dahlberg, a genetic scientist and head of the Institute for Racial Biology, performed a race-biological study of Travellers and measured the craniums and skin pigmentation of 115 individuals across Sweden. In 1945, Dahlberg published his findings in the journal of the Uppsala Association of Medical Doctors. Using race-biological methods, Dahlberg drew unexpected conclusions. He reported finding no racial difference between ‘tattare’ and ordinary Swedes and concluded that any problems had a social rather than racial background.\textsuperscript{122} The Socialstyrelse tasked historian Etzler to criticize Dahlberg’s findings.\textsuperscript{123} Etzler called the results of race-biological investigations ‘questionable’, as Dahlberg ignored Travellers’ knowledge of Romani and their typical vagrant way of life. Interestingly, Etzler’s criticism was not backed up by the data collected by the Socialstyrelse. Only 7% of Travellers spoke Romani (according to the inventory takers) and the majority of Travellers were settled, not nomadic.\textsuperscript{124} In response, Dahlberg questioned the quality of Etzler’s
work, and argued that knowledge of Romani words among the Travellers could be explained by inter-ethnic contacts between them and Swedish Roma, rather than by a shared ethnic origin. As a result of this debate, the Socialstyrelse was forced to declare the investigation indecisive. Afterwards, the official agenda stopped, resulting in a shift in policies targeting Roma and Travellers from solving our problem with them to solving their problems.

As a marginalized scholar
Pseudo-scientific racism was discredited in Europe because of the horrors of Nazi occupation and genocide. In Germany, the authorities brought charges against Robert Ritter for his role in the genocide of the Romani as a people. The trial terminated in 1950 and soon thereafter Ritter died in a mental hospital. In Sweden, a national academic round table called Race Conflicts and Race Stereotypes was held in 1953 at Gothenburg University. Etzler was not invited. The participants (which included the historian Hugo Valentin) pointed out that the Travellers should not be treated as a threat to society and that the ‘problem’ had social, not racial, origins. Although marginalized, Etzler continued to study the inmates of Traveller descent, but, after 1945, he focused on Romani language and folklore and left aside criminological examinations. In 1950, he left the Central Prison administration for a position as a high school teacher in history, literature, and civics at Lidingö high school.

The academic quality of Etzler’s work soon began to be questioned by scholars who were inspired by Dahlberg’s findings. Torgny T:son Segerstedt, professor of sociology at Uppsala University and a son of Torgny Segerstedt (a prominent anti-Nazi journalist), recruited Adam Heymowski, a young student from Poland, to write a licentiate dissertation on the origin of Travellers, which was completed in 1955. Heymowski concluded that Travellers were not related to the Roma, but rather were a group of social outsiders of Germanic ethnic origin, which had evolved as a result of a long-term exclusion and a vagrant way of life. In an article ‘Romani studies in Scandinavia’, Swedish ethnologist Carl-Herman Tillhagen pointed out that ‘Etzler’s thesis did not correspond to the demands of modern research, since the author uncritically adopted the information from official sources that mistakenly mixed zigenare and tattare’.

In 1954, the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs chose Tillhagen as an expert for its investigation on the ‘zigenare’ group. Tillhagen commented on their long-term discrimination and proposed a set of measures to combat poverty and exclusion from mainstream society, such as access to jobs, schools, and habitation. He criticized Etzler’s concept of the Roma origin of Travellers. The Ministry gave Etzler an opportunity to respond to this critique, although his response had no practical impact. It was concluded that welfare measures could solve all the ‘problems’. On the one hand, such progressive ideas were consonant with an era of social optimism and great reforms in Sweden. On the other hand, the spreading of such ideas in society devastated the unique identity of Travellers. Due to this new perspective, some civil officials and activists dealing with the Roma began to view Travellers as a kind of ‘waste product [avfallsprodukt] of the Swedish nation’. Heymowski’s conclusions were met critically by the Travellers, who were greatly disturbed by attempts to portray them simply as a group of social outcasts.
Genealogist Lars Lindgren and writer Bo Hazell have severely criticized Heymowski’s work, and stated that ‘real’ Travellers are Roma. They based their argument on the ancestral lineage of Travellers with links to the Finnish Roma as well as on their knowledge of Romani.137

In 1965, Evert Kumm, a prominent journalist, social democrat, and member of the Working Group for Gypsy Schools published a book titled Zigenare and Ordinary Swedes. Facts about the So-called Race Conflict. Kumm harshly criticized Etzler. Without naming the author, Kumm condemned his dissertation as a typical example of Nazi-inspired racism and expressed his surprise that such a work could have been defended at Stockholm University.138 The strongest attack on Etzler’s position came from the Roma themselves. In 1965, a law office led by Göran Luterkort tried to bring a charge against Etzler based on the law forbidding racial hatred that had been adopted by the Riksdag in 1948.139 Katarina Taikon, a Romani civil activist, stood behind this charge. The grounds for legal action was an article written by Etzler for the encyclopaedia Bonniers konversationslexikon in 1948. Indeed, the article contained a number of racist comments, such as ‘the main occupation of Romani are theft, begging and divination or sorcery’.140 Etzler defined Travellers in a dismissive manner as ‘a mixed race of Gypsies and a second-rate element within the country’s population’.141 As a result of the charge, Etzler was required to write a letter of apology to Taikon.142

In 1964, Taikon had met the Nobel Prize Laureate Dr Martin Luther King. She opened his eyes to the systematic discrimination of the Roma in a country that Dr King had believed was a global model for democracy and human rights.143 The conflict between the democratic constitution – which guaranteed the equality of all citizens – and the exclusion of a certain minority brought the problems of Swedish–Roma relations into a new phase.

Taikon continued to accuse Etzler of racism. In 1966, the Socialstyrelse published the reports about Swedish Roma written by Taikon under the remarkable title Even We Own This Country, which contained strong criticism of Etzler.144 She repeated these criticisms in the famous book We Are the Roma, which was included in the high school curricula.145 According to Taikon, the denial of the school access for Roma children was based on Etzler’s idea that the mixing of ordinary Swedes and Roma was a threat to the health of the nation.146 These critical publications by Taikon marked a new shift in Swedish social policy that could be formulated as nothing about Roma without the participation of Roma.

Bertil Lundman was one of the last scientists who continued racial research on Roma and referred to Etzler. However, there was no longer a platform for such publications in Sweden.147 New times, with a focus on civil rights and a policy of inclusion for Roma, led to the retreat of pseudo-scientific racism and a loss of face for its followers. For some time, Etzler was affiliated with the Institute of Ethnology at Stockholm University. Starting in 1969, the Institute was led by Professor Mats Rehnberg, a former member of the Swedish National Socialist Workers Party’s youth organization, who had also contributed to pseudo-scientific racism.148 Etzler continued to deal with Romani studies until his retirement, but after the conflict with Taikon he changed his research focus.149 He prepared two manuscripts about the representation of Roma and Travellers in fictive literature.150 Despite many applications to publishing houses, these manuscripts were never printed. His dreams to be a full-time academic scholar never became a reality.
Conclusion

Ground-breaking critical studies on scientific racism written by Ashley Montagu, a British-American professor of anthropology, and Gunnar Myrdal, professor of economics at Stockholm University College, were published in New York while Nazism still flourished in Europe.\textsuperscript{151} Unlike the United States and Great Britain, interwar Sweden had no group of scientists who openly confronted racist theories.\textsuperscript{152} Under the leadership of Dahlberg, however, the Institute for Racial Biology gradually distanced itself from Nazi-inspired racial investigations.\textsuperscript{153} Following the rise of Nazism, the fight against pseudo-scientific racism became a primary concern for the Jewish minority in Sweden. However, due to the lack of local scholars, the Jewish press had to refer to international experts.\textsuperscript{154}

Allan Etzler was a man of his time, as pseudo-scientific racism was accepted in the academic circles and racist theories were criticized in Sweden by only a few liberal and Leftist authors.\textsuperscript{155} The career of Etzler is a clear example of \textit{déformation professionnelle}. His long-term professional socialization within the penitentiary system resulted in a distorted perception of the Roma as inherent criminals. Etzler never studied ordinary Travellers and Romani outside of prison. All his informants were men with a criminal background. After examining these men through the lens of a prison officer, Etzler applied this view to all Roma. For decades he promoted scientific anti-Gypsyism in Swedish political, academic, and cultural circles. Using his network, which covered both academia and law-enforcement agencies, Etzler contributed to anti-Roma instrumental discourse. In the mid-1940s, Etzler was at the top of his professional career. Like Robert Ritter in Germany, he was closely linked to authorities.\textsuperscript{156} This allowed him to introduce his ideas to law-enforcement agencies. At the same time, his leading position, perhaps, may have stopped plans for the compulsory sterilization of Travellers, a crime that was recognized in 1948 by international law as genocide.\textsuperscript{157} As Jukka Nyyssönen points out, the role of scholars in Nordic countries changed in the 20th century when governments began to recruit academics \textit{en masse} to provide expertise for public projects, to provide scientific grounds for various investigations.\textsuperscript{158} A community of experts affiliated with different state-run projects emerged in Sweden as a result of various welfare programmes.\textsuperscript{159} However, Etzler’s ambitions to be a great expert were dashed as a result of new social policies and the disgrace of pseudo-scientific racism. The academic quality of Etzler’s works was undermined by a new generation who were sceptical of racial theories. This led to the marginalization of Etzler as a scholar. The civil movement of the Romani people forever destroyed his reputation as an expert.

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Notes
1. Kott, ‘It is in their DNA’, 43–74.
2. Ericsson, Exkludering, assimilering, 192.
8. Svensson, Bortom all ära och redlighet.
10. Selling et al., Antiziganism: What’s in a Word?
20. Bartels and Brun, Gipsies in Denmark.
25. Lundborg, Svenska folktyper.
26. Lundborg, Svenska folktyper, 11.
27. Lundborg, Svenska folktyper, 197–216.
35. Thesleff, Zigenare, 14–16.
42. Ericsson, Exkludering, assimilering eller utrotning, 143.
44. See Original Sources to this article.
46. Stockholms högskola under Sven Tunbergs rektorat, 106.
47. Allan Etzlers Arkiv. NMA. ACC.NR 1981/038.
54. Etzler, Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar, 236–45.
60. Protokoll hållet vid filosofie licentiaten Allan Etzler disputation.
66. Etzler, Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar, 169–70.
67. Etzler, Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar, 163.
68. Svanberg and Tydén, Sverige och förintelsen.
70. Åmark, Att bo granne med ondskan, 259–61.
73. Allan Etzlers Arkiv. NMA. ACC.NR 1981/038.
74. Lindholm, Vägarnas folk, 79.
79. Sæther, *Folk med hjertelag vil sikkert forstå*.
80. Carlsen, ‘Tar vårt nuværende barnevernsarbeid tilstrekkelig hensyn til de friske og normale barn?’, 7–16.
84. ‘Är Söderkisen en zigenareättling, tattarna äro tartarer förmodar’, *Social-Demokraten*, 17 July 1942.
86. ‘Är Söderkisen en zigenareättling’, *Social-Demokraten*, 17 July 1942.
87. ‘Är Söderkisen en zigenareättling’, *Social-Demokraten*, 17 July 1942.
88. Etzler, ‘Svenska tattare’, Svenska Dagbladet 28 December 1933; About Etzler's definition of the so-called 'vita tattare' see also: Eriksson, 43–4.
89. Etzler, *Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar*, 162.
91. Etzler, ‘Zigenarpromblemet’, 376. Martin Block was an internationally renowned German scholar. He worked at various Nazi academic institutions and did his service during World War II as an expert within the Wehrmacht.
95. ‘Zigenare i Tyskland få dela judarnas öde’, *Svenska Morgonbladet*, 29/12–1938.
102. ‘Tattare åro bättre nu än för 10 år sedan’, *Aftonbladet*, 21/7–1942.
103. Etzler, ‘Tattarna mötes in i bokföringen’.
106. ‘Förslag till lag om arbetsfostran mm’, 807.
107. ‘Förslag till lag om arbetsfostran mm’, 807.
108. ‘Förslag till lag om arbetsfostran mm’, 807.
110. Råd och anvisningar rörande tillämpning av 1941 års steriliseringslag, 8.
114. Edman, Torken, 140–5.
115. Tydén, Från politik till praktik, 63.
117. Nils Beckman occupied several leading positions within the state apparatus. In 1953, he was set to become an honorary Doctor of Law at Stockholm University College.
120. Etzler, Zigenarna och deras avkomlingar, 156–7.
127. Al Fakir Ohlsson, Nya rum för socialt medborgarskap.
129. Bordssamtal i rasfrågan, 26.
143. Lawen, Den dag jag blir fri, 135.
144. Taikon, ‘Även vi äger det här landet!’, 78; Taikon, ‘Kampen mot analfabetis-men’, 121.
147. Lundman, ‘The Swedish Gypsies’, 142–6. This controversial journal (*The Mankind Quarterly*) is the international forum for pseudo-scientific racism.

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