Paavo Ahonen, Simo Muir, and Oula Silvennoinen

# 7 The Study of Antisemitism in Finland

## Past, Present, and Future

**Abstract:** Finland's vulnerable postwar position impacted interpretations of its wartime history. This is likely the reason why the study of antisemitism was marginal or almost non-existent in twentieth-century Finland. The lack of research led to a widespread view that antisemitism was a marginal phenomenon in Finnish society, both before and during the Second World War. In the last twenty years there have been a growing number of studies making it clear that this was not the case – Finland was no exception when it came to antisemitism. This article will present the history of the study of antisemitism in Finland from three different vantage points: (1) fascism and the Holocaust, (2) religion and the Church, and (3) from the perspective of Finnish Jews, via several case studies of latent antisemitism.

**Keywords:** Antisemitism; fascism; history of Finnish Jews; history of Finland; Holocaust; latent antisemitism; religious antisemitism.

## Introduction

The stage for postwar studies of antisemitism in Finland was set after the country emerged from war against the Soviet Union (1941–44) allied with Germany, and by the final brief hostility towards German troops retreating from Finnish territory in 1944–45. After that, Finland was left outside of Western security arrangements and under considerable Soviet influence, even if it was not occupied or turned into a people's democracy in the style of the rest of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe.

The study of antisemitism was marginal or almost non-existent in twentieth-century Finland, despite the widespread and strong anti-Jewish attitudes described by activist Santeri Jacobsson in his book *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista* (The Struggle for Human Rights) on the emancipation process of the Finnish Jews, published as early as 1951.[1] Instead, there was a twenty-year silence. Antisemitism started to appear alongside other topics in the social sciences and humanities in the 1970s, and the dispute over Jewish refugees deported from Finland

1 Santeri Jacobsson, *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1951).

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**Figure 7.1:** Santeri Jacobsson, a civil rights activist and a writer of the book *Taistelu ihmisoikeuksista*, the first publication to describe the antisemitic ideas present in Finland. Finnish Jewish Archives/National Archives of Finland. Public domain.

in 1942 led to a suspicion that when it came to antisemitism, Finland was not so exceptional.

A sense of Finnish exceptionalism, an interpretation of antisemitism as a marginal phenomenon that mainly attracted right-wing extremists in the 1930s, was in harmony with so-called "driftwood" or "separate war" theories, i. e. theories understating Finland's role alongside Nazi Germany in the Second

World War. At the time of the Cold War, these views might have been politically necessary, but when times change, necessity can become a burden. During the last twenty years, there has been a re-evaluation of Finland's wartime history and, consequently, the number of studies on antisemitism has also increased. In this article we will evaluate the history of the study of antisemitism in Finland from three different vantage points: (1) fascism and the Holocaust, (2) religion and the Church, and (3) from the perspective of the Finnish Jews, via several case studies of latent antisemitism. We will conclude the article with some thoughts on the present and future study of antisemitism in Finland.

## Fascism, war, and the Holocaust

Finland's vulnerable postwar position was reflected in the tendency of Finnish scholarship to avoid subjects that touched upon obvious political hazards. In the same vein, for a country struggling to rebuild after the war and to maintain its security in an uneasy situation, it was ill advised to address subjects that threatened the wartime myth of a unified nation fighting together, first to defend its liberty, and then to conquer the future.

The research field was in fact a minefield: study antisemitism, and you would run into fascism and be forced to name names. Similarly: study fascism, and the subject of antisemitism would be sure to crop up. And from antisemitism there would be but a small step to the Holocaust and the question of Finland's involvement in it, an altogether undesirable subject. Therefore, subjects like Finnish antisemitism, the history of fascism or the Holocaust in Finland, or the obvious anti-Soviet and anti-communist implications of the Finnish-German alliance, were best left largely unexamined.

One result of this tendency to avoid politically sensitive subjects was that scholarly investigations into the nature and influence of fascism in Finland were few and far between. The subject started to attract scholarly attention in the 1970s and 1980s. Like everywhere else, Finnish studies on fascism at the time were hampered by the conceptual confusion prevalent in the field, as scholars struggled to establish a precise definition for a protean political ideology with a bewildering array of incarnations. After the "new consensus" of the 1990s, when scholars increasingly found themselves in agreement on at least the broad outlines of the definition of fascism, the stage was set for a new round of Finnish scholarship on the subject.[2]

**2** Roger Griffin, Werner Loh, and Andreas Umland, eds, *Fascism Past and Present, West and*

A few works bear mention. One seminal study on the history of fascist movements was Henrik Ekberg's *Führerns trogna följeslagare* (Loyal Followers of the Führer) in 1991. It was the first in-depth look into the Finnish National Socialist groupuscules, their worldview and ideology.[3] While groundbreaking, at the time of its publication the work received little attention outside of scholarly circles, and was never even translated into Finnish from its original Swedish.

A new phase of studies of fascism in Finland nevertheless seems to have opened with the publication of *Suomalaiset fasistit* (Finnish Fascists) in 2016, by Oula Silvennoinen, Aapo Roselius, and Marko Tikka. The study is a general history of fascist movements in Finland up to the end of the Second World War.[4] Regarding studies of the postwar period, *Politiikan juoksuhaudat* (Political Trenches) from 2018, by Tommi Kotonen, deals with the fascist movements and groupings of the Cold War era.[5]

In the field of Holocaust Studies, Elina Sana's 2003 work, *Luovutetut, Suomen ihmisluovutukset Gestapolle* (Handed Over: Finnish Deportations into the Hands of the Gestapo), reopened the question of the Shoah as part of Finland's history. It re-examined the deportation of civilians and prisoner-of-war exchanges between Finland and Germany during their joint war against the Soviet Union from 1941–44. Sana's central claim was that through these actions, the Finnish authorities contributed to Nazi policies of terror and genocide on a wider scale than had been previously believed.[6]

One of the most important consequences of Sana's work was that Finland's recollection of problematic political questions around the Holocaust was also noticed abroad. Sana's results were publicized outside Finland, and the US-based Simon Wiesenthal Center directed an enquiry to the president of the republic, asking whether Finland would investigate the issues raised by Sana. As a result, the Finnish government funded a research project to clarify the issue of wartime prisoner exchanges and the deportation of civilians from Finland.

A direct result of this project was Oula Silvennoinen's 2008 doctoral thesis, *Salaiset aseveljet: Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933–1944* (Se-

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*East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart: Ibidem-Verlag, 2006).

**3** Henrik Ekberg, "Führerns trogna följeslagare" (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 1991).

**4** Oula Silvennoinen, Aapo Roselius, and Marko Tikka, *Suomalaiset fasistit: mustan sarastuksen airuet* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2016).

**5** Tommi Kotonen, *Politiikan juoksuhaudat: äärioikeistoliikkeet Suomessa kylmän sodan aikana* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2018).

**6** Elina Sana, *Luovutetut: Suomen ihmisluovutukset Gestapolle* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2003).

cret Comrades-in-Arms: Finnish-German Security Police Cooperation, 1933–44), exploring Finland's relationship to Nazi policies of genocide and systematic mass murder. For the first time in the postwar period, this study brought to light the long-term German-Finnish security police co-operation, which had culminated in the activities of a previously unknown detachment of the German security police, the Einsatzkommando Finnland, in Finnish Lapland. This unit had been, along with the better-known Einsatzgruppen elsewhere on the German-Soviet front, part of the campaign of ideological and racial war against the Soviet population; actively supported by the Finnish security police, it had engaged in the mass murder of mainly Soviet prisoners of war, deemed either ideologically or racially undesirable as communists and/or Jews.[7]

Another more recent work, emanating from the same research project, is Ida Suolahti's 2016 doctoral thesis, *Yhteinen vihollinen, yhteinen etu: Sotavankien luovutukset ja vaihdot Suomen ja Saksan välillä jatkosodan aikana* (A Common Enemy, a Common Cause: The Handing-Over and Exchange of Soviet Prisoners of War between Finland and Germany during the War in 1941–44). Suolahti is concerned with the treatment of prisoners of war; she concludes that Soviet Jewish prisoners in Finnish custody were generally treated no better or worse than those of Russian nationality. Those prisoners handed over to the Einsatzkommando Finnland, however, constituted an exception to this rule.[8] The politics of memory regarding the Holocaust have received their most detailed treatment in the 2013 anthology *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, edited by Simo Muir and Hana Worthen. Two articles discuss the manifold debates Sana's work generated on Finland's role in the Second World War.[9]

One encouraging recent development has been the renewal of interest in the part played by the Finnish volunteer SS battalion, active on the German Eastern Front from 1941–43. The recent contribution by André Swanström, in his 2018 work *Hakaristin ritarit* (Knights of the Swastika), challenges the hitherto uncomplicated image of the Finnish volunteers being at worst bystanders to genocide and mass violence.[10] At the same time, a government-funded effort to chart

**7** Oula Silvennoinen, *Salaiset aseveljet: Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933–1944* (Helsinki: Otava, 2008).

**8** Ida Suolahti, "Yhteinen vihollinen, yhteinen etu: Sotavankien luovutukset ja vaihdot Suomen ja Saksan välillä jatkosodan aikana" (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 2016).

**9** Simo Muir and Hana Worthen, eds, *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

**10** André Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit: suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2018).

the sources and relevant research for further studies on the subject is underway, under the auspices of the Finnish National Archives.

## Religious antisemitism and the Church of Finland

The roots of antisemitism extend deep into Christian tradition and the history of the Church. The first forms of secular antisemitism with no actual ties to the religion only developed as late as the end of the nineteenth century. Secular, also known as modern, antisemitism was based on national, political, and racial views, but it also found religious supporters. It can be argued that many non-religious antisemitic accusations fortified the negative religious image of the Jews, and many priests were able to harmonize the ideas of modern antisemitism with the Christian worldview based on the New Testament and Christian doctrine. Therefore, to understand antisemitism one must understand its religious dimensions, too.

It has not been easy for Christians to become aware of the anti-Jewish background of their religion. Before the end of the 1940s, even the whole idea of the New Testament being somehow anti-Jewish was non-existent. It might be said that Christian theologians practised antisemitism before the Holocaust, and conducted research on it afterwards.[11] This argument applies in Finland, too, although it took more than half a century for the latter to happen here.

The first theological studies that referred to antisemitism and the Finns did not address antisemitic ideas or deeds in Finland. In 1972, Professor Eino Murtorinne published his research *Risti Hakaristin varjossa* (The Cross in the Shadow of the Swastika), on the German *Kirchenkampf*. He described how the struggle was discussed in the Scandinavian Lutheran churches and how Hitler's politics, e. g. anti-Jewish laws, affected relations between Nordic and German churches. Three years later, Murtorinne published *Veljeyttä viimeiseen asti* (Brotherhood until the End), a similar study on Finnish and German churches during the Second World War.[12]

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**11** Matti Myllykoski and Svante Lundgren, *Murhatun Jumalan varjo: antisemitismi kristinuskon historiassa* (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2006), 15.

**12** Eino Murtorinne, *Risti hakaristin varjossa: Saksan ja Pohjoismaiden kirkkojen suhteet Kolmannen valtakunnan aikana 1933 – 1940* (Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä, 1972); Eino Murtorinne, *Veljeyttä viimeiseen asti: Suomen ja Saksan kirkkojen suhteet toisen maailmansodan aikana 1940 – 1944* (Helsinki: SKHS, 1975); Murtorinne has later written inter alia about the Luther Academy in Sondershausen: "Luterilaista yhteistyötä Kolmannen valtakunnan varjossa: Sondershausenin

The ominous political situation following the Second World War led to the disposal of sensitive archives in Finland.[13] Even some churchmen felt threatened, and important documents were lost. It is possible that the attention Murtorinne's books received led to such desperate measures nearly three decades after the war. For example, the archives of the Luther-Agricola Society vanished in the 1970s, perhaps for good. The Luther-Agricola Society was founded during German bishop Theodor Heckel's (1894–1967) visit to Finland in November 1940, and it maintained inter-church connections until the end of the Finno-German military alliance in 1944. Unfortunately, the details of these relations remain unknown.[14]

A few theological master's dissertations on antisemitism in Finland were also written in the 1970s. The focus of these works was not on the Church, but they clearly revealed that antisemitism had been alive and well amongst the clergy. For some reason, these revelations did not lead to a serious debate on Christian antisemitism and its possible effect on the Church of Finland. The focus turned to interfaith dialogue, and a working group called *Kirkko ja juutalaiset* (The Church and the Jews, a Finnish branch of the *Lutherische Europäische Kommission für Kirche und Judentum*) was founded in 1977. This group of Lutheran priests and theologians is still active and continues to hold religious discussions with representatives of the Jewish community.[15]

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Luther-akatemia ja suomalaiset 1932–1940," in *Oppi ja maailmankuva: professori Eeva Martikaisen 60-vuotisjuhlakirja*, ed. Tomi Karttunen (Helsinki: STKS, 2009), 64–87.

**13** Silvennoinen, *Salaiset aseveljet*, 353–360.

**14** Eino Murtorinne, "Theodor Heckelin Suomen-vierailu ja Luther-Agricola -seuran synty – seitsemän vuosikymmentä sitten," in *Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran vuosikirja* 2010, ed. Mikko Ketola and Tuija Laine (Helsinki: SKHS, 2010), 169–79; Eino Murtorinne, "Kolmas valtakunta ja sen kirkko tutkimuskohteena," *Vartija* 5–6 (2011): 188–200.

**15** Marika Pulkkinen, *Kirkko ja juutalaisuus -työryhmän historia vuosilta 1977–2013* (Helsinki: Kirkkohallitus, 2013), 9–10. From the perspective of the study of antisemitism, the forty-year history of the "Kirkko ja juutalaiset" working committee indicates that it is unlikely to be a party to act on the matter. Representatives of the working committee were present when the Lutheran World Council rejected Martin Luther's antisemitic works in 1984. This means that the working committee was willing to reject such antisemitism without conducting any research on Luther's antisemitic books, their reception in or impact on the Church of Finland. The Lutheran World Council wanted to emphasize the religious character of Luther's ideas, and almost twenty years later, when Luther's antisemitism was raised in the Church Assembly of the Finnish Lutheran Church in 2000, the rejection of all of Luther's antisemitic works was blocked, by making a clear distinction between racial, national, or political antisemitism and Luther's religious views on the Jews. This is a good example of the unwillingness to deal with antisemitic ideas of the past, especially if we bear in mind that Luther encouraged such religious attacks on

A public wake-up call might have been provided by the investigative journalism television programme MOT and its findings on the Nazi connections of Finnish churchmen. The two-part episode *Isä, poika ja paha henki* (Father, Son, and Unholy Ghost) aired on the Finnish channel TV1 in 1999. Unfortunately, the episode automatically presented pro-German priests as National Socialists who accepted and even promoted racially motivated antisemitism; such simplistic allegations were easy to argue against, and so the chance was missed to address the issues at the core of this important topic.[16]

The first doctoral thesis on Finnish antisemitism, *Juutalaisvastaisuus suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä ja kirjallisuudessa 1918 – 1944* (Anti-Semitism in Finnish Journals and Literature, 1918 – 1944), was completed by Jari Hanski in 2006. Hanski dedicated a whole chapter of his book to religious antisemitism. Having read all the main ecclesiastical newspapers and magazines, he concludes that religious antisemitism "seems to be limited to only a few isolated statements," and that with one exception, writers who engaged in religious antisemitism "did not accuse Jews of abandoning God or murdering Jesus Christ." Coincidentally, Hanski's key conclusion on non-religious antisemitism was similar – a marginal phenomenon supported by a small number of right-wing radicals.[17]

Religious antisemitism in Finland – present, yet insignificant. This view is in line with the positive interpretations of Finnish wartime history and can also be found in the biographies of many important churchmen of the early twentieth century and in the histories of missionary societies. For example, the biography of Bishop Erkki Kaila (1867 – 1944) ignores a considerable amount of source material on Kaila's nearly obsessive views on the international conspiracies of the Jews after the First World War.[18] On the other hand, missionary workers and other enthusiasts believed that the negative events, ideas, and qualities that Jews were blamed for were a "natural" manifestation of the curse that Jewish people had been under for centuries.[19] Today, these events, ideas, and qualities

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the Jews, e. g. "to set fire to their synagogues or schools," and advised "that their houses also be razed and destroyed." See Myllykoski and Lundgren, *Murhatun Jumalan varjo*, 397 – 98.

**16** Heikki Leppä, "Suomen kirkko ja natsi-Saksa," *Vartija* 5 – 6 (1999): 163 – 70.

**17** Jari Hanski, "Juutalaisvastaisuus suomalaisissa aikakauslehdissä ja kirjallisuudessa 1918 – 1944" (PhD thesis, University of Helsinki, 2006), 106, 292 – 93, 321. One must emphasize, contrary to Hanski's findings, that probably every priest thought Jews had abandoned God and many considered them, partially or fully, guilty of killing Christ. See Paavo Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa 1917 – 1933* (Helsinki: SKHS, 2017), 284 – 89, 324.

**18** Kalevi Toiviainen, *Erkki Kaila – yliopistomies ja kirkonjohtaja* (Helsinki: STKS, 2007), 205; Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen*, 177, 187.

**19** Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen*, 300 – 23.

are simply called "antisemitic stereotypes," but people engaged in missionary work seem to be able to ignore this.

During the last ten years, there have been a growing number of studies on religious antisemitism in Finland, especially by three church historians: André Swanström, Teuvo Laitila, and Paavo Ahonen. Swanström has carried out research on Christian Zionism and intolerance towards Finnish Jews. His recently published *Hakaristin ritarit* started out as an investigation on Finnish priests in the Waffen SS, but led to a re-evaluation of both the history and the historiography of the Finnish SS volunteers. Laitila gathered together bits and pieces of knowledge, mainly found in the previous research and master's theses on Finnish antisemitism before the Second World War, in his 2014 book *Isänmaa, uskonto ja antisemitismi* (Fatherland, Religion, and Antisemitism).[20]

The first thorough research on religious antisemitism in Finland was the 2017 doctoral thesis by Paavo Ahonen, *Antisemitismi Suomen evankelis-luterilaisessa kirkossa 1917–1933* (Antisemitism in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, 1917–33). Ahonen shows that antisemitism within the Finnish Church was considerably more common and more varied than had been previously known. Antisemitism was present in all the key church groups, and five out of the six Finnish-speaking bishops presented antisemitic ideas.[21] With Ahonen's book, it is now clear that antisemitism in the Church of Finland was not a question of a few isolated statements or just an ideology of extremists without any broader significance.

## Case studies of latent antisemitism in the 1930s

Prior to the late 1990s, very few cases of antisemitism experienced by Finnish Jews themselves were known. The most famous incident, and more or less the only one discussed, was that concerning sprinter Abraham Tokazier, who was deprived of his gold medal in a 100-metre race at the first sports competition held at the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki in 1938. One reason for the case becoming so infamous was a photo that proved that he was the first to cross the finish line

**20** André Swanström, *From Failed Mission to Apocalyptic Admiration: Perpectives on Finnish Christian Zionism* (Åbo: Kyrkohistoriska Arkivet vid Åbo Akademi, 2007); Teuvo Laitila, *Uskonto, isänmaa ja antisemitismi: kiistely juutalaisista suomalaisessa julkisuudessa ennen talvisotaa* (Helsinki: Arator, 2014); André Swanström, *Judarna och toleransens psykohistoria i storfurstendömet Finland 1825–1917* (Åbo: Kyrkohistoriska Arkivet vid Åbo Akademi, 2016); Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*.

**21** Ahonen, *Antisemitismi* Suomen, 324.

(we will return to Tokazier below). But why is it that only one case of antisemitism was publicly discussed?

The reason for the silence surrounding the anti-Jewish resentment the indigenous Jewish population experienced in Finland can be found in the postwar politics of memory. After the Moscow Armistice in September 1944, when the Allied Control Commission entered Finland, the Jewish community wanted to put forth an explicitly positive image of wartime Finland, and therefore denied the existence of antisemitism or any misconduct against the Jewish population. This was done in the form of a memorandum that was widely published in Finland and abroad.[22] In many ways, Jews felt that they had finally earned their place in Finnish society (having received civil rights only in 1918), and focusing on discrimination did not serve or fit into this narrative. As one Finnish-Jewish woman interviewed in 2006 put it, it simply was not appropriate to talk publicly about antisemitism.[23] This silence upheld by the Jewish community corroborated the Finnish national narrative that Finland had fought a "separate war," and had not shared the racial ideology of its *de facto* ally. Or, going even further, that Finland was an exception, "one of the few European countries in which anti-Semitism simply did not exist."[24]

Bit by bit, the silence started to disappear. In 1997, in Taru Mäkelä's documentary film *Daavid: Tarinoita kunniasta ja häpeästä* (David – Stories of Honour and Shame), some Finnish-Jewish interviewees reflected on the antisemitism they had experienced, and on the increasingly anti-Jewish atmosphere of late 1930s Finland.[25] Two cases of academic antisemitism were brought up, in one of which a Jewish doctoral student, Moses Zewi, could not continue his research at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Helsinki, owing to his Jewish background. In 2006, Simo Muir published an article in a Finnish historical journal about yet another case of academic antisemitism at the University of Helsinki.[26]

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**22** Simo Muir, "The Plan to Rescue Finnish Jews in 1944," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 30, no. 1 (2016): 81–104.

**23** Simo Muir, *Ei enää kirjeitä Puolasta: Erään juutalaissuvun kohtalonvuodet* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2016), 14.

**24** This citation is from the back cover of Hannu Rautkallio's book *Finland and the Holocaust: The Rescue of Finland's Jews*, trans. Paul Sjöblom (New York: Holocaust Library, 1987). On Rautkallio and the denial of antisemitism, see Simo Muir, "Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism," in *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, 47, 58–61.

**25** Taru Mäkelä, *Daavid: Tarinoita kunniasta ja häpeästä* (Helsinki: Kinotar, 1997).

**26** Simo Muir, "Israel-Jakob Schurin väitöskirjan hylkääminen Helsingin yliopistossa: Antisemitismiä, kielikiistaa ja henkilöintrigejä," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 105, no. 4 (2007): 463–83. See also Simo Muir, "Anti-Semitism in the Finnish Academe: Rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur's

The article analysed the rejection of Israel-Jakob Schur's doctoral thesis about circumcision in 1937. The PhD had already passed the pre-examination by the famous social anthropologist Edward Westermarck, but in the subsequent public debate several right-wing professors expressed criticisms and suggested that the PhD should be rejected. The written statements by the professors representing theology and ethnology contained various antisemitic tropes (degeneration of Western/Christian culture, blasphemy, vulgar behaviour) and clear prejudice against Jews. Furthermore, the copy of the PhD belonging to Professor Albert Hämäläinen contained numerous marginal notes ridiculing the Jewish doctoral student and referring to him as a "Yid."[27] After a long debate, the thesis was finally rejected owing to faulty German. The work had been evaluated by two German lecturers, one of whom expressed antisemitic views in his statement.

After the publication of Muir's article there were demands that the University of Helsinki should grant Schur the doctoral title posthumously. The rector of the university, Ilkka Niiniluoto, established a committee of three scholars – none of whom had any expertise in antisemitism – to look into the case.[28] Ultimately, the rector declared that there were no signs of misconduct in Schur's case. The report by the committee claimed that the rejection was part of a general endeavour to elevate the standards of doctoral theses. The Central Council of Jewish Communities in Finland protested against the rector's decision to drop the case, to no avail, and internationally the rector's ruling was viewed as whitewashing.[29] In 2008, in a seminar dedicated to Schur's case, Professor Juha Sihvola, who condemned the rector's decision, explained that the university administration did not want to open a Pandora's box, as there were fears that other cases of misconduct and discrimination could turn up.[30]

In the wake of the Schur case, before the negative response from the University of Helsinki, the biggest daily in Finland, *Helsingin Sanomat*, published a long article by music critic Vesa Sirén about antisemitism in Finnish musical cir-

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PhD Dissertation at the University of Helsinki (1937) and Åbo Akademi University (1938)," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 34, no. 2 (2009): 135–61.

**27** See Ilona Salomaa, "1930-luvun asiantuntijuuden turhuus: Westermarckilainen koulukunta ja suomalaisen uskontotieteen rooli ja merkitys Israel-Jakob Schurin tapauksessa," in *Hyljättiin outouden vuoksi: Israel-Jakob Schur ja suomalainen tiedeyhteisö*, ed. Simo Muir and Ilona Salomaa (Helsinki: Suomen Itämainen Seura, 2009), 111–13.

**28** Muir, "Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism," 54–55.

**29** Muir, "Ignoring, Understating, and Denying Antisemitism," 57–58.

**30** Juha Sihvola, "Juutalaisuutta ja antisemitismiä koskevaa asiantuntemusta ei ollut edustettuna," in *Hyljättiin outouden vuoksi: Israel-Jakob Schur ja suomalainen tiedeyhteisö*, ed. Simo Muir and Ilona Salomaa (Helsinki: Suomen Itämainen Seura, 2009), 209.

cles and the case of conductor Simon Parmet (1897–1969).[31] Sirén had studied Parmet's career, and claimed that the internationally esteemed conductor had faced severe discrimination in Finland, and that in the 1930s he had found it practically impossible to get any work in the country. Sirén had also interviewed Finnish musicians and conductors who openly spoke of antisemitic abuse against Parmet, even long after the war. In this case, where there was no clear confrontation and Parmet's rivals remained unnamed, no one seems to have opposed (at least not publicly) Sirén's article and arguments.

The opposite was the case when American musicologist Timothy L. Jackson accused Finnish composer Jean Sibelius of antisemitism and unwillingness to help the German Jewish musician Günther Raphael after 1933.[32] The case was debated in a seminar at the Sibelius Academy in 2010, where Sibelius's early antisemitic diary entries were also discussed. It appeared to be impossible for many Finnish musicologists to accept that there was anything antisemitic in Sibelius's thoughts about Jews (world hegemony, control of the press, vulgar behaviour), especially when admitting to this could make Sibelius's position look even worse, in light of his close connections with the music industry in the Third Reich. The discussions around Sibelius and antisemitism demonstrated how difficult it has been in Finnish society to discuss antisemitism separately from National Socialist racial antisemitism and Nazi Germany. For many, it seems, admitting someone had or had had antisemitic thoughts in the past would make him or her automatically a "Nazi," which in a way was impossible because Finns had fought a "separate war" and were not associated with the racial ideology of the Third Reich.

In 2013, historians Malte Gasche and Simo Muir published a book chapter on antisemitic discrimination in Finnish sports, addressing amongst other examples the case of Abraham Tokazier referred to above.[33] Going through a wide selection of sports journals from the 1930s, they found that there were also other cases of antisemitism that contemporaries were aware of. In the 100-metre sprint, Tokazier, his chest straining at the cord, was immediately declared the winner (see

**31** Vesa Sirén, "Juutalaisvastaisuus eli myös musiikkielämässä," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 12 December 2008. On other cases of antisemitism in Finnish musical life, see Simo Muir, "Suomalainen antisemitismi ja 'juutalaiskysymys'," in *Säteitä 2010. Sävellyksen ja musiikkiteorian vuosikirja 2*, ed. Veijo Murtomäki and others (Helsinki: Sibelius Akatemia, 2010), 58–64.

**32** Timothy L. Jackson, "Sibelius the Political," in *Sibelius in the Old and New World: Aspects of His Music, Its Interpretation, and Reception,* ed. Timothy L. Jackson and others (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2010), 69–123.

**33** Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes in Finland: An Unwritten Chapter," in *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, 128–50.

cover image). However, minutes later, another announcement followed in which he was declared to have come in fourth, depriving him of any medal. The following day, several newspapers published press photos testifying to the misconduct. The Jewish sports association Makkabi, which Tokazier represented, appealed to the Finnish Sports Federation to correct the result, but received no reply. Besides the photos and some remarks in the press, there are very few documents available that would shed light on what actually happened. The Finnish Sports Archive does not have many documents from the competition. Also, the role of the chair of the Finnish Sports Federation, Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, who seems to have been the chair of the competition committee, remains unknown. That same year, acting as Minister of the Interior, Kekkonen was in charge of banning Austrian Jewish refugees from entering the country.

It is likely that the results were changed owing to the public relations value the event. Finland's preparations for the 1940 Olympic Games (postponed owing to the war) were followed most closely by the Third Reich.[34] One year later, in 1939, the dismissal of all Jewish members of a tennis club near Helsinki received a lot of attention in the press, causing some commentators to recall the Tokazier case and to question whether the Finnish sports elite was being "Aryanized" prior to the 1940 Olympic Games.[35] Photos of the Tokazier case have popped up in the press regularly since the 1960s, causing amazement and condemnation, but did not lead to any further action. However, in 2013, when the Finnish author Kjell Westö published his novel *Kangastus 38* (Mirage 38), in which he depicted Tokazier's mistreatment, the case received widespread public attention, and discussions about amending the results arose. The Jewish sports association Makkabi appealed for the correction of the results and the case started to receive international attention.[36] Initially, the Finnish Sports Federation issued an official apology but said that amending the results would not be possible as a matter of principle.[37] Finally, under pressure from the public, the Sports Federation gave in and Tokazier was posthumously declared the winner of the 100-metre sprint.[38] The federation admitted that a mistake had been made, but not that it was a case of antisemitism.

**34** Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes," 134.

**35** Malte Gasche and Simo Muir, "Discrimination against Jewish Athletes," 136–42.

**36** "Juutalaisseura toivoo oikaisua Olympiastadionin vääryyteen," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 August 2013.

**37** "SUL pyytää anteeksi 75 vuotta vanhaa tuomarointivirhettä," *Yle Urheilu*, 18 September 2013.

**38** Stefan Lundberg, "Hbl:s bild gav Tokazier segern," *Hufvudstadsbladet,* 4 October 2013.

## What lies ahead?

Today, the history of the interwar period and wartime far-right political movements, the development of Finnish-German relations, and subjects like Antisemitism or Holocaust Studies regarding Finland still constitute an understudied field. These subjects nevertheless continue to attract the attention of both scholars and the reading public. The writers of this survey are all carrying out new


**Figure 7.2:** Old imagery in modern times: *Sionismia vastaan – Against Zionism*. This poster appeared on a litter bin in the city of Kajaani in the beginning of February 2018. Photo by Helena Ahonen.

research related to antisemitism in Finland. A research project by Oula Silvennoinen is seeking to compile, for the first time, a general history of Finland's involvement in the Holocaust, including the postwar intellectual efforts to create a palatable narrative for domestic consumption in Finland. Paavo Ahonen is extending his research on the Church of Finland further back in history, as in early 2018 he started his study on ecclesiastical antisemitism during the Grand Duchy of Finland (1809 – 1917). Simo Muir is continuing to examine cases of latent antisemitism in Finland, most recently the experience of antisemitism among Jewish school children in Helsinki in the 1930s and during the Second

World War.[39] Muir is also doing research on the representation of antisemitism and Jewish stereotypes in Jewish cabaret in Helsinki during the same period.

Finnish Jews today are probably confronted with more threats than at any point since the Second World War. One future challenge will be to analyse the new antisemitism that has grown from the xenophobic seeds of populist politics and the neofascist movement.[40]Another, simultaneous, phenomenon is antisemitism spreading amongst immigrants, especially ones from Muslim backgrounds. The irrational nature of antisemitism is apparent yet again in this situation, where the same actor can blame the Jews for being Jews, while also being willing to restrict immigration because he sees immigrants as antisemites. As in the past, Finland is no exception when it comes to antisemitism today.

**39** Simo Muir, "Koulu sodan varjossa," in *Kyläkoulu keskellä kaupunkia – Helsingin Juutalainen Yhteiskoulu 100 vuotta*, ed. Dan Kantor and others (Helsinki: Helsingin Juutalainen Yhteiskoulu, 2018), 54 – 69.

**40** The first master's dissertation on contemporary antisemitic writings in Finland has already been written: Milla Toukola, "Kaiken takana on juutalainen: diskurssianalyysi Magneettimedian juutalaiskirjoituksista" (master's dissertation, University of Helsinki, 2017).