



For freedom and justice?

The Vasara circle as a conduit of conspiracist antisemitism in inter-war Finland

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ABSTRACT • This article analyses the Finnish circle of far-right activists around the publishing company Vasara (‘Hammer’), set up in 1931. The analysis consists of a comprehensive survey of the backgrounds of the group members, the range of their antisemitic publication activities throughout the inter-war era, the sources of their published material and the content and style of their antisemitism. The concept of conspiracist antisemitism runs as a central thread, as the individuals involved had by the late 1920s accepted a belief in a global Jewish conspiracy. Through Vasara’s output and a range of other publications they were active until the end of the Second World War in trying to disseminate this antisemitism within the wider Finnish far right. As most of the members of the group were native Swedish speakers, they were also active as transmitters of antisemitic material between Sweden and Finland. An analysis of the backgrounds of the group members reveals a significant exposure to German antisemitism of both the pre-world-war and war eras. The Hammer Verlag set up by Theodor Fritsch in Germany seems to have acted as the most important model on which the Vasara group and many other Nordic inter-war antisemites modelled their activities.

What is this supra-national, secret power capable of upsetting societies? What is the global revolutionary might, which in every country is threatening to throw down Christian state and culture? Is it Communism, Bolshevism, Socialism, Syndicalism, Anarchism, or some other subversive movement?¹

As the evening began to darken on the night of 2 September 1944 in Helsinki, the Finnish security police began to move. Later that night, the prime minister was scheduled to announce on radio Finland’s

armistice with the Soviet Union, alongside a simultaneous severance of diplomatic relations with Finland’s soon-to-be-former ally, Germany. There was no certainty as to the reaction of Hitler’s government to the news. It would be wise to take all known potential leaders of German countermoves into preventative custody before the prime minister went on air. Those to be arrested that night were all either known German operatives residing in Finland, or Finns with a conspicuous pro-Nazi background. And so, each in their own car, the security-police arrest detachments rolled into the night (Silvennoinen 2010: 243–7).

One of the people taken in that night was Gunnar Lindqvist, a 46-year-old Finn, who spoke Swedish as his native language. By the time he was brought to an interrogation room,

1 *Tapparamies*: Battle Magazine for the Native Country, the Fortune of the People and the Faith of the Fathers, 1/1931. All translations by the author of this article.

Lindqvist had behind him a formidable career as one of the far-right activists most committed to the national socialist cause, and one of the most consistent and prominent distributors of conspiracist antisemitism in Finland. He had come to be part of a circle of like-minded people, all engaged with national socialist organisations and antisemitism. To steer the development of the Finnish far right, and to imbue it with interpretations of antisemitism familiar from continental Europe, they had in 1931 founded a publishing house, *Vasara* ('Hammer') and a magazine, *Tapparamies* ('Battle-Axe Man').

In this article, I seek to outline the identities and background of the members of the group, the nature of their antisemitism, their primary sources of influences and the fate of their attempt to mainstream extreme, conspiracist antisemitism within the contemporary Finnish far right and a wider public. I will argue that the circle of people that by the early 1930s had coalesced around the publishing company *Vasara* followed a general European pattern, very much in evidence also in the other articles of this special issue. They were a group of 'entrepreneurs of ideology' as characterised by Gary D. Stark (1981), that we find also elsewhere from the contemporary Western cultural sphere. Their product they wished to mainstream was of a generic type, and as I show, mostly imported in the form of translations from other languages. Whatever traces of a local touch peculiar to the Finnish conditions there were, they were few – as if superimposed on an already ready-made structure.

None of this means that antisemitism as such was unknown, or without a sounding board in the contemporary Finnish culture. Historians cannot be said to have been overly interested in the history of the Finnish far right, often dismissing it as imported, marginal, unimportant and without influence in society at large (Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018:

18–9). It is characteristic that the most detailed study on Finnish inter-war national socialist groups is still Henrik Ekberg's pioneering Swedish-language work (Ekberg 1991), which nevertheless has never received a translation into Finnish.

Such dismissive approaches are very much misconceptions. Individuals and groups on the political periphery both strove to have, and in many cases probably did have, influence disproportionate to their actual numbers (Ahonen 2017: 240). As I show in this article, and as the other authors of this issue for their part make clear, there is a great need for more detailed studies, setting the individuals, groupuscules, movements and parties, and their ideological traits and aspirations, within the framework of a larger, trans-national and entangled picture. The national fascisms and national antisemitisms can only be understood in their European and Western contexts (Karcher & Lundström 2022: 1–2).

But on the night of 2 September 1944, Gunnar Lindqvist's interrogators were not interested in his antisemitism, but in his active connections to Nazi Germany. There was no denying of the broad outlines. Lindqvist, like many others in the circle around *Vasara*, was a man of long-standing, close relations to Germany and the German-speaking world. And this is one of the first leads in tracking the evolution of his and his co-activists' worldview.²

The *Tapparamies* circle

Born in 1898 in Helsinki, Lindqvist is likely to have picked up the first inklings of conspiracist antisemitism at home. His father, Rafael

2 Finnish National Archives (KA), Archive of the Finnish Security Police (Valpo II), personal dossier A 4408, Riekkö, Esko, sheet 4a2, 'Ote Gunnar Linbergin [*sic*, Lindqvist] ptk:sta' 192/44.

Lindqvist (1867–1952), was a notable Swedish-speaking journalist, author and translator in Finland. The elder Lindqvist was known as an independence activist, as a publisher and editor of the satirical journal *Fyren*, which he bought in 1904, and later a contributor to the Lapua movement’s magazine in its Swedish-language edition, *Aktivisten*. Before the Russian Revolution, Rafael Lindqvist spent extended periods of time in Russia, and would continue translating Russian literature and poetry into Swedish throughout his career (Uino 1997; Swanström 2021).

The list of Rafael Lindqvist’s literary publications gives no obvious answer as to when he accepted an extreme, conspiracist form of antisemitism. A long-time contributor to *Fyren*, he had displayed his antisemitism on the pages of the journal since the closing years of the nineteenth century (Forsgård 2002: 90–1). The Bolshevik coup in late 1917, if anything, had a further catalytic effect (Forsgård 2002: 97–8). Lindqvist was probably the first to publish an edition of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* outside Russia (Mattila 1990: 28–37, 98–9; Hanski 2006: 211–12), in Finland in the Swedish language, in 1919.³ The size of the first print run is not known, but demand appears to have been at least moderate, as by 1924 three expanded editions had been printed (Uino 1997; Hanski 2006: 190, 210). Lindqvist’s pioneering work was also quickly picked up elsewhere. Two Swedish editions of Lindqvist’s translation were published in 1920 in Stockholm. The first Finnish-language translation of *The Protocols* came out also in 1920, translated from Lindqvist’s Swedish version by Pertti Uotila,⁴

3 Crediting Rafael Lindqvist with the first translation is based on circumstantial evidence, first suggested by Markku Mattila (1990), and deemed likely by Jari Hanski (2006).

4 Orig. Bertil Oskar Lemmitty Favén, 1880–1943, Uotila would come to have a chequered career as an early enthusiast of socialism,

an eccentric publisher who by this time had drifted into the far-right register of politics. *The Protocols* had thus begun their notorious tour of the world. Gunnar Lindqvist would soon follow.⁵

It is difficult to say how much of the activities and ideas of the father influenced the young Gunnar. By the time of his father’s first signally antisemitic publication he was no longer around much. Gunnar Lindqvist had left – or fled – home as a teenager to join the merchant marines at the age of 15 in 1913. It was said he had rounded Cape Horn. Whatever the reality, by the time of the outbreak of war in Europe, Lindqvist was back in his home country. In 1915, still under age, he joined the Königlich-Preußisches Jägerbataillon 27, a unit of the Imperial German Army composed of Finns, who had all arrived clandestinely in Germany to receive military training (Ekberg 1991: 105–6).⁶

It is hard to over-emphasise the impact of this experience, for it would set many of

one of the first translators of the anthem *Internationale* into Finnish, a career officer of the Imperial Russian Army, a failed treasure-hunter in Palestine, a local ethnographer and a Lapua movement activist in Finland. He was an elder brother to the noted painter Antti Favén.

5 S. Nilus, *Förlåten faller... det tillkommande världssjälvbärskardömet enligt 'Sions vises protokoll'* (Helsingfors: Enskilt förlag, 1919); S. Nilus, *Förlåten faller ... det tillkommande världssjälvbärskardömet enligt 'Sions vises hemliga protokoll'* (Stockholm: Svenska Bokhandelscentralen A.-B., 1920), the edition was published in Sweden, but printed in Finland; S. Nilus, *Juutalaisten salainen ohjelma nykyisen siivistysmaailman häwitämiseksi: perustettawa itsewaltainen juutalaisten maailmanwalta 'Siionin Wiisaitten' salaisten pöytäkirjain mukaan*, translated by P[ertti] Uotila (Hämeenlinna: Hämeen Kustannustoimisto, 1920).

6 *Suomen jääkärien elämäkerrasto*, 1975, 'Lindqvist, Gunnar Isak', 379–80.

Lindqvist's comrades on equally radicalised paths. The Jägerbataillon was an environment where some two thousand young Finnish males, much more if one counts in those involved with the underground support organisation back in Finland, got a taste of covert action, military training, front-line combat in the ranks of the German Army, and the shattering of many an illusion.

In February 1918 Lindqvist returned with the main body of the battalion to Finland. Alongside his comrades he would participate in the Finnish Civil War, fought between the Reds – the radicalised section of the Finnish Social Democratic Party and its armed militias – and the Whites, a broad conglomeration of supporters of non-socialist parties. After the Whites had secured victory, Lindqvist immediately joined the Finnish volunteers going to fight in the Estonian War of Independence (1918–20), finally commanding a Finnish battalion in the vaunted armoured-train division of the Estonian Army. As the military situation in southern Estonia had stabilised by summer 1919, Lindqvist moved on to a new active front, that of the German Freikorps in the Baltics, and joined the Eiserne Division of General Count Rüdiger von der Goltz (Roselius & Silvennoinen 2021: 341).

He would stay with the division until the bitter end of the gruelling campaign, and retreat with it through Lithuanian territory back to Stettin, Germany, where the division was disbanded. By now thoroughly attuned to German culture and language, he remained, working as a shipping agent in Stettin until 1927, when he finally returned to Finland. By this time, he was also well acquainted with German ultra-nationalist movements, including the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP), whose street-fighting organisation, the Sturmabteilung (SA) he seems to have joined. After his return to Finland, he continued in diverse civilian

occupations, but also began his own career as a Finnish national-socialist activist (Ekberg 1991: 105–6; Roselius & Silvennoinen 2021: 341).

The timing of Lindqvist's return was opportune, as the late 1920s was a period of resurgence for the far right in Finland. One of the first signs had been the founding of the first Civil War White veterans' association, on an unyieldingly anti-Communist, anti-socialist and generally anti-left platform in 1927. By 1929, the organisation came to cover the whole country under the name of Liberation War Veterans' Union (Vapaussodan Rintamamiesten Liitto – Frihetskrigetets Frontmannaförbund). Together with its local member associations such as the Helsinki-based Liberation War's Field Greys (Vapaussodan Kenttäharmaat – Frihetskrigetets Fältgrå), the deliberately bilingual association gathered the most radical veterans and was implacable towards all inter-war initiatives at conciliation between the former Whites and Reds (Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018). More was to come, as by late 1929 the Lapua movement began to organise itself into a country-wide authoritarian campaign to end the political left's participation in politics through mass demonstrations, pressurising, threats, kidnappings, beatings and murder. The common fear was that the movement ultimately would settle for nothing less than a coup to do away with the Finnish republic entirely.⁷

In this frenetically ideological atmosphere Gunnar Lindqvist quickly found out he was not alone. By the late 1920s, a discernible circle of activists had been formed of people sharing

7 Renamed in 1940 as Rintamamiesliitto – Frontmannaförbundet, the association was banned as fascist under the terms of the Finnish–Soviet armistice in September 1944. A considerable number of its former members continued nevertheless to act as the ground organisation for the pro-German resistance movement in Finland, set up by Germany in late 1944.

similar background features with Lindqvist. These were clandestine, illegal operations, armed struggle, organised violence and war, all available in the experiences of the Finnish struggle for independence, the world war in the ranks of the Jägerbataillon, the Finnish Civil War in 1918 and the Russian Civil War from the Bolshevik coup into the 1920s. They were people like the pharmacist-antisemite Yrjö Jalander, the antisemitic pastor Matti Jaakkola, Erkki Räikkönen, by this time already a seasoned veteran of nationalist activism, or Lindqvist's closest partner, the independence activist and physician Gunnar von Hertzen.

Gunnar von Hertzen was born in 1893 in Halikko, a small town in south-western Finland. As a student of medicine, in 1915 he had been among the very first to join the Jägerbataillon and received his baptism of fire on the German–Russian front in 1916. With the battalion, Hertzen participated in the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Soon after the White army had been able to secure victory, Hertzen was restlessly planning new military undertakings. He was one of the initiators of the expedition to occupy and create the conditions for the annexation of the area of Aunus (Olonets) in Soviet Karelia in the winter and spring of 1919. Hertzen would command the southern operations group of the expedition, a column a few-hundred men strong.⁸

Despite early successes, the expedition turned out to be a roaring failure. Hertzen's group briefly managed to occupy the town of Aunus before being driven back by the now-alarmed Bolshevik troops. By midsummer it was all over, the surviving expedition members soon back across the border in Finland (Roselius & Silvennoinen 2021: 229–35).

Hertzen did not take up arms personally again, even though he continued to be active

in trying to arrange new military interventions into Soviet Karelia until 1922. The peace treaty between Finland and Soviet Russia in 1920 soon severely curtailed possibilities for extra-territorial armed adventures, and the victory of the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War robbed them of any chances of success. Hertzen settled down to complete his studies in medicine. In 1922 he joined the newly founded Academic Karelia Society (Akateeminen Karjala-Seura, AKS), an organisation meant to keep the flame of Greater Finland alive among the students. When that organisation split over an internal argument over the position of the Swedish language in 1924, the Swedish-speaking Hertzen joined the linguistically more tolerant Union of Independence (Itsenäisyyden Liitto), headed by another AKS-veteran, Erkki Räikkönen (Ekberg 1991: 36). In Räikkönen he found one of his most constant companions in the struggle.

Erkki Räikkönen was born in 1900 in St Petersburg. Experience of war was crucial to his early development as well. Just too young to have made it to the Jägerbataillon, Räikkönen, like so many youngsters of his generation, sought to emulate the Jägers by taking up arms at the earliest opportunity. He participated in the Aunus expedition in 1919 and came to know Hertzen as one of his commanding officers. In the East Karelian uprising from 1921 to 1922, Räikkönen served as a battalion vice-commander, joined the AKS after his return to Finland and then headed those disappointed at the linguistic policy of the organisation into the Union of Independence (Ekberg 1991: 107). Räikkönen would soon become known as a tireless, hyper-active organiser in ultra-nationalist circles, who seemed to have his finger in every possible bowl. His grand aim was to unite the right so that internal squabbling would no longer undermine its strength and Greater Finland could finally be realised. In his vision, instead of fighting against Swedish-speakers, all the non-socialists should join to crush

8 *Suomen jääkärien elämäkerrasto*, 1975, 'von Hertzen, Gunnar Emil', 172–3.

socialism, and ‘the Russian’. Herten appears not to have been more than a rank member in Rääkkönen’s Union of Independence, which is explicable through his graduating and taking up a position in 1928 as a physician in the parish of Viitasaari in central Finland. There, with the local Evangelical-Lutheran minister Matti Jaakkola, he quickly set up a new organisation, the Viitasaari Patriotic Citizens’ Club (Viitasaaren Isänmaallinen Kerho). Viitasaari appeared geographically peripheral, being located deep in the Finnish hinterland far from major towns, but spiritually it belonged to the heartland of the rising White reaction, which would soon become known as the Lapua movement. What was perhaps even more important in the Viitasaari Patriotic Club was that it brought together the key actors of the future Vasara circle: Herten, Lindqvist and the vicar Matti Jaakkola (Ekberg 1991: 109–10; Bak & Emberland 2022: 37–9; Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018: 292–3).

From the outset the club was meant to be a propaganda organ. The club had come into being by early 1930, with Herten, Jaakkola and a few dozen local prominent citizens as members. In the five years from its founding, the club produced in rapid succession six pamphlets, four of them in 1930 alone, advising their readers of the dangers inherent in Masonry and Jews. The titles leave little to be surmised: ‘The Part of Jews in World Events’, ‘Communism from behind the Scenes’, ‘World Masonry from behind the Scenes’, ‘Jewish–Marxist–Anti-Christian World Revolutionary Programme’, ‘The Two Faces of Masonry’ and ‘The Public and Secret Programmes of Masonry’.⁹

9 Matti Jaakkola, ‘Viitasaaren Isänmaallisen Kerhon synty ja toiminta’, *Sisä-Suomi*, 261/1935, 10 November 1935: ‘Juutalaisten osuus maailmantapahtumiin’, ‘Kommunismmin kulissien takaa’, ‘Maailmanvapaamuurariuden kulissien takaa’, ‘Juutalais-marxilais-antikristillinen maailmanvallankumousohjelma’, ‘Vapaamuurariuden

One of the pamphlets was a translation of Paul Timm’s *Das doppelte Gesicht der Freimaurerei*, which had come out in Danzig just a year before, pointing to the main source of material for the Viitasaari patriots, and telling something of the rapidity with which they could relay continental material to the Finnish audience. According to Jaakkola, 25,000 copies of the pamphlets were then distributed to targeted groups: active officers in the army, the Academic Karelia Society, the ‘leaders of the [1918] frontmen’¹⁰ and, lastly, to known socialists and Communists, apparently to make them realise the true nature of their undertaking.¹¹

The frantic publishing activity in 1930 had an organic connection to the fortunes of the Lapua movement, at its high-water mark just then. The movement essentially was an attempt to bring the revolution begun in the Civil War in 1918 to its logical conclusion, to supersede the Finnish republic with an authoritarian national state capable of suppressing the political left and ultimately realising the territorially aggrandised vision of Greater Finland. Herten seems initially to have seen the rise of the movement as an unparalleled opportunity and harboured almost boundless

kaksoiskasvot’ and ‘Vapaamuurariuden julkinen ja salainen ohjelma’. In this article Jaakkola gives 1928 as the founding year of the club. As he later gave, in another article, a further misdated year, 1929, as the year of founding, there is considerable confusion in the research literature as to the actual date, which most likely is no earlier than late winter/early spring 1930; see Ahonen 2017: 228, footnote 54.

10 Reference to ‘frontmen’ was an example of the adoption of the concept of *Frontkämpfertum* into Finnish discourse, and an appeal to the front fighters of the Civil War as the ultimate guardians of Finland’s liberty and independence; see Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018: 116–21, 327–37.

11 Matti Jaakkola, ‘Viitasaaren Isänmaallisen Kerhon synty ja toiminta’, *Sisä-Suomi*, 261/1935, 10 November 1935.

ambition within it. As a high-ranking Jäger, his path into the leadership of the movement was smooth. He continued to be active within the movement until its ban and reshaping into a political party, representing the hardliners most committed to crushing the trade unions and socialism (Bak & Emberland 2022: 38–9).

Both Herten and Jaakkola were present in the second constitutive meeting of the movement in Lapua (Sw. Lappo) in March 1930, and gave speeches warning the participants of the danger presented by international Jewry. Their simultaneous publication and dissemination efforts represented their most serious bid to endow the Lapua movement – and with it not only the mainstream of the Finnish far right, but also wider segments of non-socialist citizens backing the movement – with an expressly conspiracist interpretation of antisemitism (Ahonen 2017: 238–9; Bak & Emberland 2022: 38–9).

Initially, they failed. Their influence nevertheless can be perceived in the later development of the Patriotic Movement (Isänmaallinen Kansanliike), the political party founded to replace the banned Lapua movement in 1932. The Viitasaari Patriotic Club was incorporated into the new party as a local branch and was able to continue their propaganda efforts within the party organisation (Swanström 2022: 193). From around this time on, a clear thread of conspiracist antisemitism appeared in the speeches given by Vihtori Kosola, the former leader of the Lapua movement and member of the party leadership (Pietiäinen 2023: 411–12). In the same vein, the party programme would state that only those would be entitled to Finnish citizenship who ‘recognise their belonging to the people through common bonds of blood, fate and culture’.¹²

12 ‘Lapuan liikkeen yleiset ohjelmaperusteet’, Hämeenlinna, 5 June 1932: ‘Suomen

Raising the Vasara

Another step in the information warfare of the Viitasaari patriots was the establishment of the publishing company Vasara in Helsinki in the summer of 1931, together with the first issue of *Tapparamies*. The name of the company was a direct translation of Theodor Fritsch’s Hammer-Verlag, originally set up in Leipzig in 1902 to publish the pamphlet series *Hammer: Blätter für deutschen Sinn* (see also Karcher & Simonsen, and Andersson in this special issue). It would later also issue German translations of standard antisemitic works, such as *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Henry Ford’s *The International Jew* (Puschner et al. 1996: 34–50, 360–4). From the outset, Vasara looked very much alike its German counterpart. It was likewise apparently intended to function as the publishing platform for several literary projects of its founders. Herten was the leading stockholder with seven of the original twenty shares (Ekberg 1991: 110).

The second-largest owner was another former member of Königlich-Preußisches Jägerbataillon 27, Captain Toivo Karanko. Born in 1891, Karanko had been intending to take up farming after his father but joined the battalion in 1915, thereafter following a military path like Herten’s and Lindqvist’s. After the successful conclusion of the Civil War, he stayed as an officer in the nascent Finnish Army until 1924, when he resigned and took on a civilian job as a schoolteacher. By 1929 he had nevertheless gravitated back to the capital, and worked as a journalist on *Helsingin Sanomat*, a major Finnish daily newspaper. From there it was but

kansalainen on vain se kansakunnan jäsen, joka tunnustaa kuuluvansa kansamme yhteisin veri-, kohtalo- ja kulttuurisitein’. Pohtiva – poliittisten ohjelmien tietovaranto – online-resource (<https://www.fsd.tuni.fi/pohtiva/ohjelmalistat/TKL/291>), accessed 16 December 2023.

a step into Ajan Sana, a publishing company and newspaper set up in support of the Lapua movement, and, after the ban of the movement in 1932, to Vasara, for which he had already worked as a translator.¹³

The other minor shareholders were all names within the budding Finnish national socialist circle: Olavi Linnove was a Master of Laws and a civil servant who would later follow Herten and Lindqvist in their final attempt at a national-socialist kernel of a political party. Rafael Engelberg became the secretary of Erkki Räikkönen's Union of Independence. Viljo Mäkipuro was a journalist close to the Lapua movement and later active in the abortive attempt to create White workers' unions to rival the socialist ones. Ragnar Gröning and Thorvald Oljemark were two further names with experience of the world war under German armed forces. Gröning had received his officer training in Germany and completed the Fahnenjunkerschule in 1918. He served later as an active officer in the Finnish Army and was from 1931 the chair of one of the most radical Civil War veterans' organisations, the Liberation War's Field Greys (Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018: 170–2). Oljemark was a veteran of the Finnish Civil War who had ultimately joined the German intervention force to Finland in April 1918, and became an acting CEO for Vasara in 1934. By this time, he was a committed national-socialist activist in the Finnish movement most closely attempting to emulate the NSDAP, the Finnish People's Organisation (Suomen Kansan Järjestö, Sw. Finlands Folkorganisation) of another Jäger-officer, Arvi Kalsta (Ekberg 1991: 110).¹⁴

13 *Suomen jääkärien elämäkerrasto*, 1975, 'Karanko, Toivo Tuomas', 252.

14 'Gröning, Martti Ragnar' in *Aikalaiskirja 1934* (Helsinki: Tietosanakirja, 1933), 152. Kalsta's movement was given a prominent treatment by Werner Haas in his 1936 review of European 'national movements of reform', see

Vasara's list of publications gives a clear picture of the line of the company. One of the first was Erich Ludendorff's new book *Weltkrieg droht auf deutschem Boden*, followed by a Finnish summary of Theodor Fritsch's publication *Handbuch der Judenfrage* (Bönisch 1996: 342–3) published in several incarnations from 1887, first as *Antisemiten-Katechismus*, then as an abbreviated *Tatsachen der Judenfrage (ABC der Antisemiten)* and from 1907 on as *Handbuch der Judenfrage*. The publication enjoyed a continuous print run of new editions under National Socialism. Vasara also gave out the first Finnish translation of Martin Luther's antisemitic 1543 pamphlet *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* in Karanko's translation. Under the pseudonym Kimmo Saras, Karanko published a further two translations from German: in 1934 the Turkish antisemite Cevat Rifat Atilhan's *Die schöne Simi Simon* and in 1936 Hans Hauptmann's *Memoiren des Satans*.¹⁵

Werner Haas, *Europa will leben: Die nationalen Erneuerungsbewegungen in Wort und Bild* (Berlin: Batschari-Verlag, 1936), 149–54.

15 Erich Ludendorff, *Weltkrieg droht auf deutschem Boden* (München: Ludendorff Volkswarte, 1930). The pamphlet received its first translation into Swedish immediately after publication in Sweden in 1930. The Finnish translation was Erich Ludendorff, *Maailmansota uhkaa Saksan maaperällä* (Helsinki: Vasara, 1931), translated by T. T. Karanko; Theodor Fritsch, *Rahavaltiaiden synnit: Eräs tilinteko* (Helsinki: Vasara, 1935), German original: Theodor Fritsch, *Handbuch der Judenfrage: Die wichtigsten Tatsachen zur Beurteilung des jüdischen Volkes* (Leipzig: Hammer-Verlag, 1893); Martti Luther, *Juutalaisista ja heidän valheistaan* (Vasara: Helsinki, 1939), translated by T. T. Karanko; German original: Martin Luther, *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen* (Wittenberg: Hans Lufft, 1543); Cevat Rifat Bey (Atilhan), *Kaunis Simi Simon. Syyrian rintaman Mata Hari: Nuoren, kauniin juutalaisen vakoilijattaren virallisten lähteiden mukaan kerrottu elämäkerta* (Helsinki: Vasara, 1935),

The sources for Vasara's translated titles were clear, and the publishing line followed conspicuously close to that of its contemporary German model, Hammer-Verlag. Hans Hauptmann was by this time in the service of the antisemitic publishing house Deutscher Volksverlag in Munich, which had also functioned as an outlet for Rosenberg's publications before the Nazi take-over of power. Later Hauptmann became a lecturer for the Office of Racial Policy of the Nazi Party (Rassenpolitisches Amt der NSDAP) (Forsgård 2002: 122–4; Klee 2007: 223).

Cevat Atilhan, who published under the title Cevat Rifat Bey, had served as a general in the Ottoman Army during the world war, and later turned into an antisemitic author and publisher. His works had been picked for the title range of Welt-Dienst, a German antisemitic 'news agency' and journal of the same name, established in 1933. As Karcher and Simonsen write in this special issue, Welt-Dienst was intended to function as an antisemitic information service that would also spread its influence outside Germany, particularly after Alfred Rosenberg in 1937 took over the agency and expanded the languages in which its main organ came out to twenty-one. Finnish was not among the languages promoted by Welt-Dienst (even if Swedish was), and the influence of its publication activities seems not to have been extensive in the country. Nevertheless, as Welt-Dienst itself was very much modelled

German original: *Die schöne Simi Simon: Die Mata Hari der syrischen Front. Nach amtlichen Aufzeichnungen über die jüdische Spionage bearbeitet.* Welt-Dienst-Bücherei, Heft 1 (Erfurt: U. Bodung-Verlag, 1934); Hans Hauptmann, *Saatanan muistelmat: Historiallinen satiri XIX:n neljä ja XX:n neljä vuosisadalta* (Helsinki: Vasara, 1936), German original: *Memoiren des Satans: Die Menschheitstragödie im XIX. und XX. Jahrhundert. Ein satirischer Roman* (München: Deutscher Volksverlag, 1929).

on Theodor Fritsch's publishing company and publication, Hammer, it can be said to have been represented in Finland by proxy.

The rate of publications of books hints that Karanko was working alone on the translations. As a business this was hardly especially lucrative, and Vasara probably needed constant transfusions of cash from outside sources to stay afloat.¹⁶ These were provided by Yrjö Wilhelm Jalander, a wealthy pharmacist, who continued to support Vasara financially throughout its existence. Jalander was born in 1874 in Helsinki as a son to Fredrik Wilhelm Jalander, a Swedish-speaking journalist who nevertheless became an ardent supporter of the prominence of Finnish in Finland, and a founder of two major Finnish-language newspapers. Yrjö's elder brother, Bruno Jalander, became an officer in the Imperial Russian Army during the world war, a multiple government minister in the Republic of Finland, and a long-term county governor of Uusimaa, in which role he earned the ire of the far right for his role in suppressing the Lapua movement's transgressions.

Yet Yrjö set off on a different path. There is again the question of family influence, as Fredrik Jalander was known to have put forward antisemitic opinions in the newspapers he founded. Yrjö went on to study chemistry in Germany before the world war and would also later spend extended periods of time in the country. He became a pharmacist in Helsinki, and had by 1922 started two successful companies, the chemical plant Merijal and the pharmaceutical factory Leo (Ekberg 1991: III–12).

16 *Siniristi*, 10/1939, 15 October 1939: The economic viability of the journal without outside help remained questionable throughout its run under different names and editors. The successor of *Tapparamies*, the monthly journal *Siniristi*, celebrated its eighth volume in October 1939, and gave out the number of subscribers as 'more than one thousand'.

By the early 1930s, however, Yrjö Jalander had discovered National Socialism. As an already wealthy businessman he became one of the most solvent backers of Finnish national-socialist movements, organisations and publications. In 1934 he came to the rescue of Hertzén's, Lindqvist's and Jaakkola's publishing company, took on the majority of the shares, and from May 1935 onwards acted as the sole member of the board (Ekberg 1991: 112). His economic control complete, Jalander also published through the company two editions of an antisemitic pamphlet, *Den evige juden*, in 1938 and 1939 (Forsgård 2002: 135–6). The publication was basically a summary of the exhibition 'The Eternal Jew' ('Der ewige Jude'), which had opened in Munich in November 1937. The exhibition, and consequently Jalander's pamphlet, sought to display the continuous 'political, economic, scientific and cultural undermining' the Jews would engage themselves in, to finally 'bolshewisé' Germany. In another article included in the pamphlet, Jalander gave his disapproving view of painters like Piet Mondrian and Otto Dix for their 'degenerate art' ('entartete Kunst'), displayed in another exhibition in Munich in the summer of 1937.¹⁷

Jalander was an example of a Finnish national socialist who effortlessly straddled the Gulf of Bothnia through his native language. A prolific writer, he would also publish his pieces in Elof Eriksson's Swedish antisemitic magazine *Nationen*, alongside other similar Swedish publications. Jalander also lent his hand to Eriksson to spread *Nationen* into the hands of readers in Finland (Wärenstam 1970: 51; Ekberg 1991: 112–13; Forsgård 2002: 137).

The new publishing house's prime project

17 Yrjö Wilhelm Jalander, *Den evige juden: en orientering i den aktuella judefrågan* (Helsingfors: Vasara, 1938). An updated edition of the pamphlet was published in 1939.

nevertheless was to give out a new journal, *Tapparamies*. The outlook of both the journal and its publishing house were conspicuously single-minded affairs, with no other apparent purpose than to function as propaganda efforts. The very first issue, a specimen copy in December 1931, spelt out the line. The lead articles dealt with 'The Growing Power of Judaism – Ruin of Nations', 'Marxism = Judaism', and the 'Spread of Masonry'.¹⁸

The humourless agenda and content of *Tapparamies* would remain henceforth unchanged, and consist solely of anti-Semitism, anti-Masonism, anti-Socialism and anti-Communism. The journal declared its conspiracist convictions in the lead editorial of the first issue: 'The immense revolutionary movement after the world war has shaken Christian social order to the core and threatened to bring the entire Western culture to ruin.' Behind the political developments of the world, such as the recent declaration of the Spanish Second Republic in April 1931, there were 'international, secret powers above the states, whose purpose has been and continues to be the programmatic destruction of the entire Christian state and cultural life'. As Toni Morant stresses in this issue, the declaration of the republic caused a surge of conspiracist antisemitism among the republic's opponents in Spain – a surge that rapidly made itself felt within the supra-national community of European antisemites. The publishers of *Tapparamies* were well attuned to their times – and intellectual environment.¹⁹

18 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931: 'Juutalaisuuden kasvava valta – kansojen turmio'; 'Marxilaisuus = juutalaisuus'; 'Vapaamuurariuden leviäminen'; 'Kansallinen vaara'.

19 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931: 'Maa-ilmansodan jälkeinen valtava kumousliike on perinpohjin järkyttänyt kristillistä yhteiskuntajärjestystä Euroopassa ja uhannut

Tapparamies was a journal by conspiracist antisemites for conspiracist antisemites. Behind every subversive movement was the 'Jewish anti-Christian world-revolutionary movement', now enclosing the globe in its 'iron embrace'. This Jewish 'Internationale' would use as its tools a breath-taking array of ideas: 'anti-Christianity, liberalism, socialism, Communism, the main newspapers, big business, closet-Masonry, Russelism,²⁰ film, nudity art, women's frivolous dress, purposeful unemployment, etc.'. It would 'poison and putrefy' all nations to pave the way for a 'final great collapse and the establishment of a Jewish anti-Christian world dominance over the ruins of Christendom'. As Karcher and Simonsen note in the introduction to this issue, such coupling of illiberal attitudes with the idea of community decay and antisemitism is discernible in modern antisemitism by the late nineteenth century. It can be read as a reaction, or as an alternative, to liberal visions of modernity, but it is also a core feature of conspiracist antisemitism and partially explains why antisemitism assumed such a pronounced place in the worldview of particularly the far right.²¹

The editorial was penned by Matti Jaakkola of the Viitasaari Patriotic Club. For Jaakkola, the Jews were a 'stateless, international, proud race of men'. Inspired by their religion suggesting the Jews were a superior race, they would seek dominion over the world,

[the Jew] in a ruthless and rapid pace with frightening consistency aims for an

saattaa koko länsimaisen kulttuurin häviöön. ... kansainvälisiä, valtiottien yläpuolella olevia salaisia voimia, joiitten tarkoituksena on ollut ja on ohjelmallisesti hävittää koko kristillinen valtio- ja kulttuurielämä.'

20 Referring to the British philosopher Bertrand Russell.

21 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931.

unprecedented world dictatorship over the bodies of the Christian nations, with the help of enormous masses of workers, who, blindfolded and enthralled, are rushing to their own doom as tools of the Jews, should their eyes not be opened in time.²²

Jaakkola's journal, *Tapparamies*, 'the only one of its kind', was supposed to act as the eye-opener in Finland. He saw the country as being equally gravely threatened by the Jews:

The Jewish question of world conquest is already turning real in this country as well, after the Jews have received full *citizenship rights* after [Finland's] independence [citizenship was extended to Jews in 1918] and after their number and influence thereafter has rapidly increased.²³

This was quite a hyperbole, as the Jewish community in Finland remained diminutive throughout the inter-war period – some two thousand individuals, concentrated almost entirely in Finland's three major cities, Helsinki, Turku and Viipuri (Muir 2015: 3–7). Jaakkola's treatment of the Jews appears to be copied from antisemitic rhetoric elsewhere in Europe, echoing similar themes of community decay and loss of entitlement through a takeover of society's commanding heights by an alien group:

After acquiring a university education, their children dedicate themselves to taking up careers as barristers, physicians, judges and bankers etc., and other leading positions – a phenomenon that has been witnessed in every other European country.²⁴

22 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931.

23 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931.

24 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931.

Jaakkola's vision of the Jews in Finland as instigators of revolution was even more strained:

It needs to be borne in mind that the Jew Trotsky was the man who gave the order to begin a rebellion in Finland in 1917, as he wished to use this country as a window through which the Jewish world-revolution would spread into Europe.²⁵

This was a reference to the supposedly decisive role of the Bolsheviks in inciting the Social Democratic Party in Finland into insurrection, first in a general strike that turned violent in November 1917, and then in the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Here, Jaakkola could paint the victory of Whites over the Reds as stemming the tide of Jewish world mastery. As Paavo Ahonen demonstrates in this issue, Jaakkola's interpretation was anyway retroactive: there are no contemporary 1918 examples of ideas of Jews as fomenters of the Finnish Civil War.

The logic, however tortuous, reveals a consistent attempt to fit recent history into the mould of an antisemitic saga of global patterns that would be universally applicable. It was nevertheless doubly inaccurate, as the inter-war Finnish Jews were a community characterised by a relative lack of leftist orientation and a dominant attachment to centre-right positions, both in Finnish politics and the politics of the Jewish diaspora (Muir 2015: 32–5).

The foundering of the White Front

The story of *Tapparamies* was over in a couple of years, but the journal reinvented itself in 1933 as *Siniristi* ('Blue Cross'). The post of chief editor fell to Toivo Karanko from 1934 onwards. The name of the journal was a reference to the Finnish flag, a blue cross on a white background. To stress the continuity

25 *Tapparamies*, 1/1931, 1 December 1931.



Cover of Christmas special issue of *Tapparamies* (Battle-Axe Man) in December 1933, after which the name of the publication was changed to *Siniristi* (Blue Cross). Bolsheviks, Masons, Catholics and Jews as representations of the enemy.

with *Tapparamies*, it sported almost the same subtitle: 'Battle Magazine for the Fatherland, the Fortune of the People and the Faith of the Fathers'. *Siniristi* also used a variety of other sub-headings to declare its political outlook, such as 'National-Political Journal' or 'Battle Magazine against Jewish Imperialism'.²⁶

Tapparamies had been an outgrowth of the activities of the Viitasaari Patriotic Club, and *Siniristi* had originally been a side project of *Tapparamies*, a name given to special issues of the journal. Throughout these different associations and publications, conspiracist antisemitism ran as a guiding light, and the motivation for this kind of activism among the members of the circle was a sense of the urgency with which the world outside needed to be warned

26 *Siniristi: Taistelulehti isänmaan, kansan onnen ja isien uskon puolesta*, 1933–9.

of the power of Masons and Jews.

All the members of the circle had other projects as well. Gunnar Lindqvist became a key actor in Swedish-speaking Finnish fascism, setting up by 1934 a magazine *För Frihet och Rätt* ('For Freedom and Justice') and by 1940 a national-socialist organisation Community of the Nation (Samfundet Folkgemenskap). He was another native Swedish-speaker, who also published in Sweden (see Lars M. Andersson's article in this issue). Another characteristic feature in Lindqvist's publishing and organisational career was that, despite being a Swedish-speaker, he also actively tried to reach out across the Finnish-Swedish linguistic divide which separated contemporary Finns, the far right included (Roselius & Silvennoinen 2021: 341–2).

In 1939, Gunnar von Hertzen and Erkki Räikkönen became involved with yet another publishing project. The journal *Kustaa Vaasa* (named after Gustav Vasa, king of Sweden from 1523 to 1560) was intended as an organ for a great unification movement among all non-socialists. Each issue bore on its cover an image of a mounted spearman in the shape of the current borders of Finland, aiming its spear to St Petersburg/Leningrad. Hertzen and Räikkönen were both the founders and editors of the journal. Räikkönen would take care of the practical running of the journal as the editor-in-chief, while Hertzen would stay in the background, disconnected from the everyday chores of editing. In a compilation of *Kustaa Vaasa's* articles Räikkönen translated for German consumption, he did not hesitate to call his journal national socialist.²⁷

27 *Kustaa Vaasa*, 1/1939; Erkki Räikkönen, *Kustaa Vaasa: Nationalsozialistische politische Zeitschrift in Finnland: Auszüge aus den Artikeln erschienen in der Zeitschrift Kustaa Vaasa 1939–1941 wie auch der Briefwechsel Doktor Sven Hedins und Präsident P. E. Svinhufvuds im Sommer 1940* (Helsinki: Erkki

Kustaa Vaasa was nevertheless characterised by its relatively civil tone, with its chief aim a reconciliation across a wide political front. Therefore, antisemitic rhetoric of the style of *Tapparamies* took a back seat, despite the convictions of the editors and publishers. From its first issue, *Kustaa Vaasa* strove to foster agreement between non-socialist parties. It called for a 'White Front' across party lines to finally defeat the left, socialism and the trade unions. This was another reformulation of one of the main themes of the Finnish far right since 1918: the fulfilment of what they thought the Civil War had been fought for, the achievement of 'White Finland' – a harmonious, internally strong and politically unified nation that could finally realise the great goal of Finnish nationalism, Greater Finland.²⁸

This would be an antidote to the feelings common among the most committed White activists since the foundation of the Finnish Republic in 1919. Matti Jaakkola described this sense of a betrayed national revolution in 1935: 'patriotic citizens' who in 1918 'with heavy sacrifice and a price paid in blood had saved the country from Communist ruin had been forced, with grave concern and feelings of bitterness, to see their great patriotic achievement come to naught in the reinvigoration of Communism'.²⁹ The government had proved itself powerless to prevent the new rising of the left, and therefore 'The independence and liberty of the country were once more on the way towards their destruction'. Patriotic citizens had to act.³⁰

Räikkönen, 1941).

28 *Kustaa Vaasa*, 1/1939.

29 Matti Jaakkola, 'Viitasaaren Isänmaallisen Kerhon synty ja toiminta', *Sisä-Suomi*, 261/1935, 10 November 1935.

30 Matti Jaakkola, 'Viitasaaren Isänmaallisen Kerhon synty ja toiminta', *Sisä-Suomi*, 261/1935, 10 November 1935.

In the final phase of development of *Siniristi*, Yrjö Jalander took on the editorship. He continued in the post until 1939, when editorship was passed to Björn Smeds. Born in 1915, Smeds already represented a new generation. He had been active in the 1930s in several national-socialist organisations, and after the outbreak of war was employed by German intelligence in Finland. Content-wise, the journal drifted from earlier general anti-semitism towards the role of a mouthpiece for German propaganda. In January 1939, the social-democratic journal *Soihtu* lambasted *Siniristi* alongside its Swedish-language cousins, particularly Gunnar Lindqvist's *För Frihet och Rätt*, as 'imitators of [Der] Stürmer' (see also Andersson's article in this issue on the journal *Hammarén*, considered a Swedish version of *Der Stürmer*).³¹

Towards the end of the 1930s, the publishing company Vasara too assumed more clearly the role of a German propaganda outlet in Finland. The company published a range of Hitler's speeches and other National Socialist regime texts in pamphlet form. The main source of the material seems to have been the press section of the German legation in Helsinki, which disseminated translations of similar material in Finland both on its own and in tandem with Vasara. As Toni Morant notes in the case of Spain in this issue, such efforts to distribute German antisemitic material through the German diplomatic corps in their respective host states was quite standard practice.³²

31 *Soihtu: Sosialidemokraattinen aikakauslehti*, 2/1939, 1 January 1939; *Siniristi*, 10/1939, 15 October 1939.

32 Adolf Hitler, 'Uudistuneen kansakunnan voima ja mahti: Adolf Hitlerin Sudeettimaan Saksaan liittämisen vaatimusta koskevat puheet Nürnbergissä 12/9 ja Berliinissä 26/9 1938 sekä presidentti Rooseveltin ja Hitlerin välinen sähkösanomanvaihto' (Helsinki: Vasara, 1938); Adolf Hitler, 'Hitler vastaa Rooseveltille:

Ultimately, *Siniristi* matured from a journal into a 'political association' in April 1942. With a programme including discernibly anti-semitic and anti-Masonic planks, the association seems to have been intended to function as a kernel for a future political party, or an action committee to influence the existing ones. Among the founding members were Gunnar von Hertzen, Gunnar Lindqvist and Erkki Räikkönen. The presence of Räikkönen among the founding members was not a surprise, given the wide range of his activities, but also perhaps a signal of a sharpening in his attitudes (Silvennoinen, Tikka & Roselius 2018: 312–13).³³

The chair, Martti Joeli Mustakallio, was not a newcomer. Born in 1891, he had served as a commander of an evacuation ambulance on the front in the Finnish Civil War. After the war, he had worked as a physician in the Helsinki General Hospital, and from 1932 as a chief physician in the spa of Lappeenranta. Apart from his medical interests, he was also a founding member of Räikkönen's Union of Independence and had served as its head from the year 1933. He would continue to do so until 1942, when he took up the leadership position in *Siniristi*.³⁴

The programme of the *Siniristi* political association was brief. Politically the association stood for close cooperation with Germany and called for 'Finland's active participation in the construction of New Europe as its full-fledged member'. As a close companion of

Saksan johtajan ja valtakunnankanslerin Adolf Hitlerin 28.4.1939 valtiopäivillä pitämän puheen suomennos (Helsinki: Vasara, 1939).

33 N. N., 'Siionin viisaitten pöytäkirjat: Juutalaisten salainen ohjelma maailmanvaltiuspöytäkirjaksi toteuttamiseksi' (Helsinki: Siniristi, 1943). The programme of *Siniristi* was printed on the back cover.

34 *Suomen Kansallisbiografia*, 'Mustakallio-suku', 772.

Germany, Finland should also recognise its membership of the 'Germanic community of fate'. Another notable feature was conspiracist antisemitism and anti-Masonism. The final programme point demanded 'The eradication of international forces and the influence of the conspiracism represented by them from Finnish society, and the elevation of national forces to the leadership of the country'.³⁵

The *Siniristi* political association published yet another Finnish translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1943. Two other publications given out by *Siniristi* were a 1942 pro-German pamphlet 'Europe's Outpost' by Olavi Linnove, a former Vasara stockholder, and an anonymous propaganda pamphlet 'For Finland with Germany'. The organ of the association, also named *Siniristi*, was a direct descendant of the old *Tapparamies*. Throughout the rest of the war, it continued a similar, vocally pro-German and pro-Axis line, with a subheading on each issue exhorting Finland to march 'On Germany's side until Victory'. War-time rationing of newsprint affected it greatly, and by 1944 forced the publication of issues as single broadsheets, with a spread of four pages.³⁶

The publishers of *Siniristi* had nailed their flag to the mast at a moment when German fortunes in the war still appeared to be on an upswing. Early 1942 was also a period of keen speculation in Finland. The renewed offensive in the East was widely expected to bring the war to a successful close. Spring and summer

of that year proved to be the final blooming of consistently pro-German associations. By early 1943, the mood in the country had soured. A new government took office with the prime aim of getting Finland out of the war. Yet, the opinion that Finland should fight alongside Hitler until either victory or defeat remained surprisingly influential among some segments of the population, right up to the Finnish-Soviet armistice in 1944. Part of this phenomenon were of course the committed activists, such as the circle around *Siniristi*, who had little to lose and no way to credibly reinvent themselves.

Despite rationing, and the worsening political climate, Herten, Lindqvist and Jaakkola continued to publish right to the end of hostilities between Finland and the Soviet Union. A range of pamphlets flowed from mainly Jaakkola's productive pen. *Siniristi* was not the only publishing channel available, and Jaakkola also utilised the far-right Front Fighter's Union (Rintamamiesliitto/Frontmannaförbundet) as a platform. 'Will Bolshevism spread all over the world' asked the headline of one of his pamphlets in 1944, with an exclamation mark, directly in line with the current main theme in German propaganda seeking to mobilise the last reserves by appealing to the horrors of a Soviet victory.³⁷

End with a whimper

Kustaa Vaasa had been discontinued in 1943, but *Siniristi* continued to be published until the end of the war. For Finland this meant September 1944, when the Finnish-Soviet armistice came into force. Organisations and newspapers like *Siniristi* were thereafter quickly banned as fascist under the terms of the Finnish-Soviet armistice treaty. Virtually

35 N. N., 'Siionin viisaitten pöytäkirjat': *Juutalaisten salainen ohjelma maailmanvaltiuspäykimystensä toteuttamiseksi* (Helsinki: *Siniristi*, 1943), back cover.

36 Olavi Linnove, *Euroopan etuvaratio* (Helsinki: *Siniristi*, 1942); N. N., 'Siionin viisaitten pöytäkirjat': *Juutalaisten salainen ohjelma maailmanvaltiuspäykimystensä toteuttamiseksi* (Helsinki: *Siniristi*, 1943); N. N., *Suomen puolesta Saksan kanssa* (Helsinki: *Siniristi*, 1944); *Siniristi*, 12/1944.

37 Matti Jaakkola, *Leviääkö bolshevismi yli maailman!* (Helsinki: Rintamamiesliitto, 1944).

overnight it was all over for all the publications and organisations stemming from the circle that had originally formed around the Viitasaari Patriotic Club and Vasara.

Of the key people, Lindqvist was one of those who in late 1944 grew concerned for his safety in Finland in the event of a Soviet occupation. After he was released from custody in September 1944, his ideological commitment was once more displayed in an attempt to flee to Germany via Sweden. He was caught and interned by the Swedish authorities. After his release, he stayed in the country, working as a journalist. He never returned to the Finnish mainland but settled in 1956 on the exclusively Swedish-speaking Åland islands, continuing as a local journalist until his death in 1973.³⁸ Rääkkönen also left Finland in late 1944. He crossed the Gulf of Bothnia to Sweden clandestinely and was likewise interned by Swedish authorities. In internment, he was able to join with Lindqvist for a celebration of Hitler's birthday on 20 April 1945 (Swanström 2022: 451–2).

Toivo Karanko had been released from military duty and the post of a prison-camp commander already in 1942. He took on civilian jobs, and continued to publish in the post-war decades, but on politically harmless topics like Civil War reminiscences. Jaakkola stayed on and continued as a minister in Viitasaari until the end of his life in 1955. Mustakallio built a post-war career as an assistant professor of anatomy in the University of Helsinki, and died at Tenerife, Spain, in 1968. Herten continued unperturbed as a municipal physician in the parish of Pihtipudas. He died in 1973.³⁹

Thus ended an era in which it was possible to issue publications like *Tapparamies*

and *Siniristi*. It ended not with a bang, but with a whimper. People like Herten, Jaakkola and Mustakallio went on with their careers, and while Lindqvist and Rääkkönen stayed in their self-imposed exile, there was little question of them facing adverse consequences for their inter-war activities in Finland. But their antisemitic publication activities did cease, once and for all. Post-war publications from members of the group were either politically harmless reminiscences, historical articles, or, as in the case of Yrjö Jalander in 1951, self-published memoirs, which skirted over the less savoury parts of his past.⁴⁰ It was clear that in the post-war reality they could not openly express the same sort of antisemitism as before. Yet it is doubtful if any on them significantly revised their thinking or worldview.

The circle around Vasara had brought to the fore a few consistent features which apply to inter-war conspiracist antisemitism and its proponents in Finland. The feature to note is the absolute dominance of antisemitic material published in contemporary Germany, and in German, as the source from which the circle drew their material. The only translated work published by Vasara which was not received through, or did not originate in the German-speaking world, was *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. And even that was retranslated by Karanko from German, despite both Swedish and Finnish translations being available for more than a decade.⁴¹

The other notable feature is the rapidity with which the circle could produce translations for a Finnish-speaking audience. For example, Paul Timm's work on Masonry was immediately seized upon by Jaakkola and given

38 Gunnar Lindqvist's obituaries were published in the newspapers *Åland* on 9 January 1973 and *Hufvudstadsbladet* on 10 January 1973.

39 *Suomen jääkärien elämäkerrasto*, 1975, 'Karanko, Toivo Tuomas', 252; *Suomen Kansallisbiografia*, 'Mustakallio-suku', 772.

40 Yrjö Wilhelm Jalander, *60 vuotta farmaseuttisella alalla* (Helsinki: Y. W. Jalander, 1951).

41 N. N., 'Siionin viisaitten pöytäkirjat': *Juutalaisten salainen ohjelma maailmanvaltiuspöytäkirjaksi* (Helsinki: Siniristi, 1943).

a Finnish translation. Once the group had discovered Ludendorff as an author, his book on the coming world war was likewise rapidly translated into Finnish. This was a feature not entirely limited to the circle around Vasara. From the first translation of *The Protocols* from 1919 onwards, Finnish actors keenly followed developments elsewhere, particularly in the German-speaking sphere.

Once Hitler and his movement gained visibility in Finland, major publishing houses took on Nazi literature, based on not necessarily more than an economical calculation. Thus, works like Hanns Ewers's *Horst Wessel*, which came out in 1932, was immediately taken up by the major publishing company Werner Söderström, and given a quick Finnish translation by one of the rising stars in Finnish literature, the novelist Mika Waltari. Another major publishing house, Otava, eagerly printed a collection of texts by regime notables in cooperation with the German legation in Finland in 1941. Curiously, though, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* had to wait for a Finnish version until 1941. Before that it was known in Finland mainly through second-hand references by Finnish national socialists with access to the work in German.⁴²

Another feature of note is the distinctive similarity between the activities of the circle around Vasara and their ostensible model, Theodor Fritsch and the Hammer-Verlag, in content and style, and modes of action. Not surprisingly as Lars M. Andersson notes in this issue, a very similar *modus operandi* can be detected in the war-time Swedish antisemitic publication *Hammaren*, as a 'blend of Streicher's *Der Stürmer*, Fritsch's *Der Hammer* and local Swedish publications'. There was

anyway ample opportunity for the members of the circle to draw influences from the developments in early-twentieth-century German antisemitism. Lindqvist had lived most of the 1920s in Germany, while Jalander had spent extended periods in the country, and Herten and Karanko knew Germany and probably German antisemitism through their time with the Jägerbataillon. Rääkkönen would maintain close contacts with Germany, in German, through the 1930s, including the National Socialist leadership. The only outlier here is Jaakkola, whose studies and career never seem to have taken him outside Finland. But even he at least had a knowledge of German, as he continued to teach the language in Viitasaari from 1948 to 1951.⁴³

The results presented here are not statistically representative, but they point towards a question to be settled by further research: the experience of the world war in the German Army, either in the ranks of the Jägerbataillon or in some other capacity (such as the Freikorps), may have provided an environment where these young Finns at an impressionable age were introduced to strains of radical, paranoid antisemitism. As Paavo Ahonen notes in his article in this issue, war-time Germany was certainly rife with antisemitic rumour and insinuation, which the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution in late 1917 did nothing to alleviate. With the generally radicalising experience of organised mass violence, they were also exposed to radicalising thoughts, and carried both back to Finland in February 1918.

A final feature of note regarding the Vasara circle is language. Most of the circle's members were native Swedish-speakers. A characteristic fitting them all is their line regarding the issue of language, otherwise especially inflammatory in inter-war Finland. There were other

42 Hanns Ewers, *Horst Wessel* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1933); N. N., *Saksan tie* (Helsinki: Otava, 1941); Adolf Hitler, *Taisteluni 1–2* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1941).

43 *Suomen papisto 1800–1920*, 'Jaakkola, Matti Mikael'.

far-right activists, antisemites and national socialists in Finland, but the Vasara men were characterised by a shared conciliatory line on the issue of language. Some of them, like Gunnar Lindqvist, were exclusively Swedish-speakers and active in the circles of Swedish-language Finnish national socialism. Others, like Yrjö Jalander, had a foot in both camps and would disseminate the Swedish antisemitism of Elof Eriksson for Swedish-speakers, while also supporting Finnish-language efforts to reach out with his message. Still others, like Herten, were Swedish-speakers plying their trade in entirely Finnish-speaking localities like Viitasaari, or were native Finnish-speakers, like Matti Jaakkola.

So, language was not the issue. Conspiracist ideation quite fulfilling the characteristics of redemptive antisemitism, in Saul Friedländer's terms (1997: 84–7; see also Karcher & Simonsen 2023), was. For the men in the Vasara circle, their brand of antisemitism would explain away the complexities of contemporary politics and society through an appeal to a seemingly time-honoured conspiracy belief. They would not spare their labours, nor their money, in bringing their gospel of hate to all their compatriots, Finnish- and Swedish-speakers alike. They seem to have been driven by a particular sense of urgency, as the perceived relentless community decay, and the looming revolution of the working masses misled by Jewish instigators and agitators, could only be staved off by swiftly disabusing enough key people of their illusions. It was essential that the cabal threatening the Christian West with downfall be exposed for everyone to see. Thus, redemption, freedom and justice could only come through stoking of mistrust and stirring up hatred, and by instigating discrimination and violence. ■

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