

LANGUAGE CONFLICT, NATIONALISM, AND ETHNIC SEPARATISM IN FINLAND

Jess B. Unger

Introduction

This paper is an examination of the development of a language conflict and language shift in a bilingual country. At no time in Finland's history did more than 18% of the population speak Swedish as a mother tongue, yet for centuries Swedish was the only official language of the area. Today, when less than 6.3% of the population are native Swedish speakers, the language maintains equality with Finnish as one of the nation's two official languages. This paper will focus on the social and institutional developments which accompanied language shift in Finland; the processes—political, educational, socio-economic and constitutional—by which the Finnish-speaking cause challenged the dominance of Swedish; and the ways in which the Swedish-speaking cause sought to maintain at first the dominance, and later, the equal status of their language in Finland. The examination of the Finnish case can perhaps lead to useful conclusions regarding the relationship between political power, socio-economic strength and the language shift-language maintenance continuum.

Since language shift is by definition a diachronic phenomenon, this paper will approach the subject chronologically, beginning with an overview of Finland's long history as a part of Sweden, continuing through the period of nationalism and language-centered conflict in the

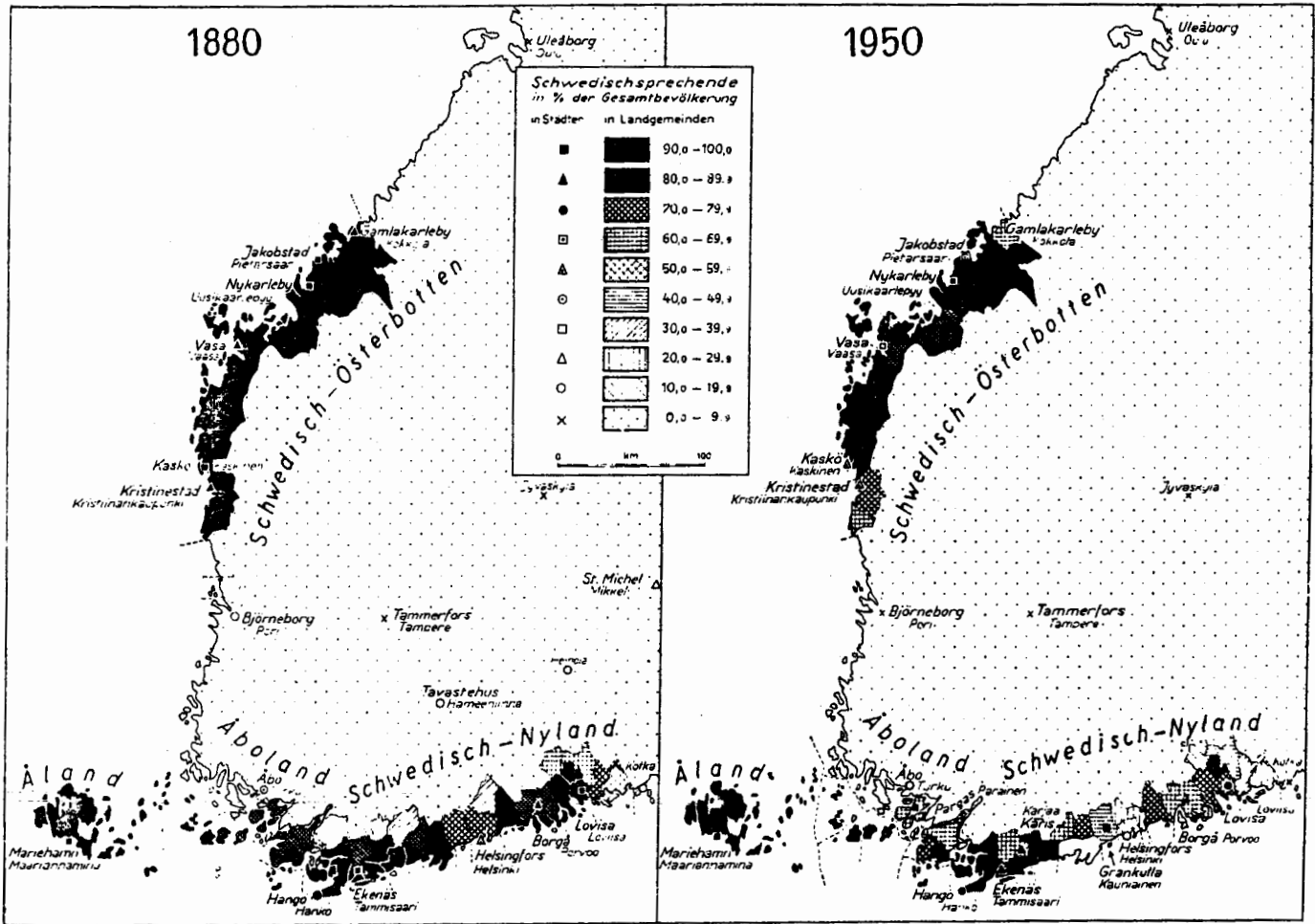


Abb. 1. Die schwedische Bevölkerung in Finnland 1880 und 1950

From Kivimäki 1960: 103

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19th century, and concluding with the political resolution of the conflict in the present century.

Early Relations between Swedes and Finns in Finland

Finland and Sweden share a long history. Archaeological evidence indicates that the region now known as Finland has supported two distinct ethnolinguistic groups since approximately the 6th century A.D. (Törnudd 1966: 7).¹ During that period speakers of a Scandinavian dialect began to settle among the islands and inlets of Finland's southwestern coast, displacing the Finnish-speaking clans who had migrated to southwestern Finland from across the Gulf of Finland in previous centuries. Constant contact between these groups was maintained by commerce and expanding settlement, but the communities developed in a linguistically segregated, rather than bilingual, fashion.

Swedish political hegemony was extended during the 12th century to encompass not only the Swedish settlers of the coasts but also the Finnish-speaking agriculturists and hunters of the interior. By the middle of the 13th century the bulk of the Finnish population had come under the domination of Swedish noblemen. During the same period English missionaries operating from Uppsala evangelized among the Finns, and by 1216 the bishopric of Turku (Åbo) was founded; this bishopric was subordinate to the archbishops of Lund. Legends of the "Crusade of 1157" notwithstanding, the expansion of Swedish suzerainty appears to have occurred in a comparatively peaceful fashion.

the fate of the Baltic clans in Livonia and Estonia, conquered during the same period by the crusading order of the Knights of the Sword, the Finnish peasantry was not reduced to serfdom or slavery. While the Swedish earls managed to acquire large estates in Finland, the Finns as a whole did not suffer widespread expropriation or displacement. In general, "gradual, peaceful penetration rather than invasion, war, and plunder characterized the process" of incorporation of the territory into Sweden (Wuorinen 1965: 49).

Sweden at this time was not a unified kingdom, but rather a loose collection of autonomous provinces with an elective, non-hereditary kingship. By the close of the 14th century Finland came to occupy a political position equivalent to the provinces of Sweden proper. Finns enjoyed the same rights and responsibilities as the Swedish-speaking subjects, participating in the royal election, eligible for all offices and public appointments, and obtaining representation in the Swedish Riksdag "from the earliest days of that parliamentary body" (Wuorinen 1965: 47-48). Throughout the Middle Ages and down to their partition in 1809, Finland and Sweden were thought of as a single kingdom by nobleman and commoner alike (Mead 1968: 96). Swedish was of course the language of the aristocracy and hence the language of higher government, but the Finnish gentry and peasantry, and the tiny bourgeoisie of the time, went about their daily commercial and administrative activities employing Finnish. Under the centralizing policies of the Vasa kings of the 16th century, and during the "Great Power" time of the 17th century, Sweden came to resemble other polyglot

kingdoms which incorporated multilingual peasantries, such as England and France.

The "Swedization" of Finnish Society

Gustavus Vasa (reigned 1523-1560) transformed the Swedish monarchy from an elective office dependent on the provincial nobility, into an hereditary and more independent kingship. Over the course of the following two centuries his successors engaged in a seesaw battle to wrest further concessions from the aristocracy. Their goal of a centralized kingdom controlled from Stockholm was realized in the late 18th century by Gustavus III, who aspired to rule in the absolutist fashion of the French monarchs.

The political changes of this period had a great impact on the social and linguistic structure of Finnish society. A centralized monarchy of the kind envisioned by the crown required a large administrative apparatus staffed by trained personnel. Coupled with an increase in trade and the growth of towns in Finland, this led to the rise of a small but powerful middle class² engaged in business, trade, administration, law and education.

With the exception of the lower clergy, the emerging institutional and professional structure was exclusively Swedish-speaking. Professionals and bureaucrats were recruited from both the Swedish-speaking and the Finnish-speaking populations, and there is evidence that there was significant social mobility between classes (or at least into the middle classes) and between language groups (i.e. into the

Swedish group) (Fägerlind and Saha 1983: 144-145). Essentially, the process of upward mobility entailed a shift of ethnic identity; to become middle class was to become Swedish (Wuorinen 1965: 101).

Education played a crucial role in the Swedization of the Finnish middle classes. With the exception of the limited religious and literacy instruction offered in Finnish in Finnish-speaking parishes,³ all instruction in Finland was carried on exclusively in Swedish. In higher education⁴ Swedish replaced Latin in the latter half of the 17th century, and Swedish became a prerequisite for entry into secondary and higher education. This meant that without knowledge of Swedish "a Finn could not hope to enter the professions or aspire to posts in the service of the state or church" (Wuorinen 1965: 101).

According to Wuorinen, the upward progress through the educational system and success in business or professions entailed a thorough change of ethnicity:

A generation usually sufficed to transform the Finnish-speaking artisan or shopkeeper into a Swedish-speaking burgher, and his son...into a Swedish-speaking official or member of the professions. The taking of a Swedish name was usually part of the metamorphosis...The changing of family names into Swedish was by no means uncommon among the lower classes, especially, in urban communities (Wuorinen 1965: 103).

In effect the monolingual Finnish-speaking middle class ceased to exist as a significant group in Finnish society. The single exception was the clergy that served Finnish-speaking parishes, who even during the pre-Reformation period had employed Finnish in religious services and had developed a written form of the vernacular. Nevertheless,

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clergy who wished to rise in the church hierarchy had to be Swedish-speaking or bilingual. This overall language shift among the middle classes was therefore complete and thorough-going, as documented by a professor at Turku writing in 1793:

As recently as the beginning of the present century, the clergy, most of the gentry out in the country, and a great number of the merchants and burghers of the cities spoke Finnish among themselves. How great has been the change since then, and the change has come without any coercion or compulsion. All who have received the education and training of civil servants or attend public schools learn to understand and speak Swedish, and nobody considers this a cause for complaint, any more than those who intend to enter the field of scholarship object to learning Latin. The advantage which they hope to gain makes it worth the trouble (Quoted in Wourinen 1931: 42-43).

The professor's testimony notwithstanding, many Finns (and some Swedes) encountered considerable difficulty in the educational system. In 1754 the cathedral chapter at Turku documented the difficulties experienced by the majority of Finnish-speaking students, who, "not know[ing] a single word of Swedish are compelled to read a Swedish Catechism and a Latin grammar" (Wuorinen 1931: 43-44). In the latter half of the century several schools suggested that instructional problems could be solved by banning the use of Finnish on school grounds or by barring non-Swedes from school altogether:

Whereas Finnish has come into general use among the students, and considering the harm which lies therein, it has been decided that every instructor should see to it that this deep-rooted harmful habit be eradicated (Quoted by Wuorinen 1931: 43-44).

Language conflicts were evident in other areas as well. The Great Northern War with Russia (ended 1721) had decimated the ranks of the

governmental apparatus in Finland. In posting officials to fill the vacancies, Stockholm appointed many native Swedes and monolingual Swede-Finns. In the decades which followed, scores of protests were registered with the authorities in Stockholm, denouncing judges and customs officials who spoke no Finnish or who held their appointments on an absentee basis. In 1739, a royal decree recognized the justice of these complaints, but as it was not enforced, it did little to alter conditions. In mid-century, dissent grew among ethnic Finns at the University of Turku, and the chancellor was forced to publish a letter denying "that discrimination or favoritism (in favor of Swedes) determined university or other appointments". Some measure of relief was finally obtained in 1760 when the crown prohibited the practice of holding absentee offices, ecclesiastical pluralities, and other sinecures in Finland. By removing the structural cause of much of the abuse by Swedish office-seekers, this act appears to have improved the situation appreciably (Wourinen 1965: 99-101).

Such remedies, however, were piecemeal at best, and did little to ease the structural bind in which many Finns found themselves. During the latter half of the 18th century an idea of a Finnish cultural heritage, separate from that of the Swedish, had been forming among certain intellectuals in the universities. This idea was to blossom in the next century after the partition from Sweden, under threat of Russian domination and the influence of nationalist ideology.

The Rise of Finnish Nationalism

Russia invaded Sweden in 1808 as part of the effort to enforce the blockade of Napoleon's Continental System against England. The partition of Sweden was effected the following year, and Finland became an autonomous duchy within the Russian Empire. The Tsar himself took the title of Grand Duke of Finland. For the most part, Finland was left to manage its own internal affairs under its own constitution, with a Russian governor and small garrisons of Russian troops. Distasteful as Russian occupation was for many patriotic Finns, the partition actually represented little disruption of the Finnish way of life. For some, in fact, separation from Sweden came as a much-needed respite from the periodic and senseless warfare between Russia and Sweden. No longer, it seemed, would Finland be the battlefield for Sweden's futile forays against the Russian giant, nor would it suffer from Russian counter-offensives and blockades (Wuorinen 1931: 35). For many, however, the partition proved to be a crucial catalyst of the rise of Finnish nationalism. The feeling grew through the 19th century that in the words of an anonymous patriot, "we are no longer Swedes, we cannot become Russians, therefore let us become Finns" (Wuorinen 1969: 139).

The growth of nationalism in Finland paralleled that of other European nations at the time, especially the Danish, Italian, and German national movements. The movement in Finland was essentially a movement among intellectuals, professors, and students at the

university. The Romantic philosophy of Johann Herder was the intellectual inspiration for almost all the Finnish ideologues. According to this philosophy, nationality is the main vehicle by means of which humanity as a whole advances; it is the duty of a nationality to express and to develop to the fullest its Volksgeist, its particular national character, as the unique contribution of that nationality to historical progress. The main determinant of nationality, in this philosophy, is language; a nation is first and foremost a people who share a single common tongue. In order for the Volksgeist to develop and to express itself fully, the government of the nation must reflect the ethnic composition and spirit of the people, especially their language. The absolutist empires of the 18th century, including the empire of the Tsar, were anathema to the Herderian nationalists, insofar as these empires subjugated many linguistic groups (nations) under the rule of a governing class or king who spoke an "alien" language, and thus ruled in an "alien spirit" (Kohn 1968: 65).

The mission of the Finnish nationalists was straightforward. Eighty-five percent of the Finnish population in the early 19th century spoke Finnish; the governmental and economic elites of the country, however, were almost wholly Swedish-speaking. In order to close this unconscionable gulf which split the nation, the nationalist program intended to make Finnish "the language of all Finns regardless of class or station. Fixing their attention especially upon the middle and upper classes (the nationalists) claimed that these classes must become fully Finnish in speech" (Wuorinen 1965: 139).

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The political activity of the nationalists, who came to be called "Fennomen", centered around the University of Helsinki, (relocated from Turku in 1828). The Fennomen were all Swedized Finns, members of the Swedish-speaking elite. Their initial work during the early 1800's in the cause of the Finnish language was carried out primarily in Swedish. Tracts, treatises, and newspapers espousing Fennicism were printed only in Swedish--an indicator of the middle- and upper-class nature of the movement and its intended audience. As Wuorinen states:

Probably the best illustration of the situation is the fact that nearly all the important nationalist argument down to past the middle of the century was written in Swedish by men who knew Finnish only poorly but who nevertheless considered it their mother tongue (Wuorinen 1931: 64-65).

In other words, the Finnish nationalist movement represented a language controversy within the ranks of the tiny Swede-Finn middle classes, in particular within the university. As yet, the farming and laboring classes of Swedes and Finns were uninvolved.

It is not surprising, then, that this academically-oriented middle class movement turned its attention first toward developing the Finnish cultural and linguistic corpus. Paralleling nationalist movements elsewhere, their first efforts focused on the development of the Finnish cultural heritage. The works of Henrik Porthan on the history of Finnish poetry (published 1776-1778) were disseminated; the linguistic investigations of M.A. Castrén (1813-1852) established on philological grounds a now-discredited racial history of the Finns, accentuating their separation from Scandinavian heritage. Most importantly, Elias Lönnrot published the Kalevala in 1835. This

compilation of Finnish mythic poetry became the Finnish national epic, standardized the written Finnish language, and established it as a vehicle for literary expression. In addition to these individual scholarly achievements, efforts were made to extend the study of Finnish as a subject at the university. The first lectureship was instituted in 1828 and expanded in 1851 to a professorship. Seven years later, in 1858, the university agreed to accept for the first time dissertations written in Finnish.

Other institutions were also targeted for change. Within the church, a law passed in 1824 mandated that all clergy appointed to serve in Finnish-speaking parishes give evidence of proficiency in Finnish. In the judicial system, it was not until the late 1850's that judges administering Finnish-speaking jurisdictions had to be able to command Finnish, and council minutes be recorded in that language.

Important as these step-wise successes were to the Fennoman cause, their main effort was devoted to changing the educational system. The goal of the Fennomen at that time was to recreate a Finnish-speaking middle and upper class to replace the Swedish-speaking middle class. Access to education and educational success were chief status variables in Finland at the time, so control of education naturally became a Fennoman goal. An initial success was achieved in 1843 when Finnish was introduced as a subject of study in secondary schools.

The real goal of the Fennomen, however, was the nationwide establishment of Finnish as the language of instruction at all levels

and in the university. As we have noted, before the 1850's Finnish was used only at the lowest level in Finnish-speaking parishes, and then only for purposes of the most rudimentary religious instruction. Otherwise all instruction was in Swedish. In 1858 the first Finnish-language secondary school was established in the central town of Jyväskylä. Many of the problems attendant to new bilingual programs were evident there:

That instruction in the school was at first given partly in Finnish and partly in Swedish, that several members of the teaching staff mastered Finnish only in the process of teaching, and that some of the students of the new school were at the outset poorly prepared to study in Finnish, suggests something of the difficulties under which Finnish-language secondary schools began to contribute to the process of "nationalizing" the educated classes (Wuorinen 1965: 143-144).

Difficulties notwithstanding, the creation of the Jyväskylä lycee marked the beginning of a twenty-five year struggle to "Finnicize" the school system. Under the relatively progressive regime of Tsar Alexander II, and often by means of ducal decrees, which bypassed the Swedish-dominated Estates General (the Finnish parliamentary body), Finnicization made steady progress. The Language Act of 1863 put Finnish on an equal footing as the language of justice and administration in all Finnish-dominant communities. Enforcement by the conservative authorities was lax and reluctant, and it was not until after the turn of the century that Finnish was fully established in law, administration, and education (Modeen 1977: 25-27; Törnudd 1966: 10-11). The number of Finnish-speaking schools grew steadily but slowly in the face of foot-dragging and outright obstruction by conservative

Swedish administrators. The conflict was resolved by 1880, "largely in accordance with the principle that the effective demand in the form of pupils...from each language group [would] determine the State's support of Finnish [-speaking] and Swedish [-speaking] schools" (Myhrman: 1937: 60). This is reflected in the growth in numbers of Finnish-speaking enrollments. In 1880 there were 3500 secondary school students in Finland; of this number, 1300 were Finnish-speaking. In 1890, the figures were 4850 and 2150 respectively, and by 1900 5222 Finnish-speaking students attended Finnish-speaking lycees out of a total secondary student population of 8600. These changes in the secondary school population effectively ended Swedish domination in the university as well; Finnish-speaking students increased from 10% of the student body in 1870 to over 67% in 1910-1912. (All figures from Wuorinen 1965: 176). Graduation of this cohort ensured a significant change in the composition of the political elite as well; no longer would Swedish-speaking statesmen set the political tenor of the nation.

Buttressing this change in the composition of the political elite, a structural change took place in 1906 which would permanently alter Finnish politics and society. In that year a parliamentary reform was instituted which democratized the Finnish legislative body. The Four Estates, whose form had remained essentially unchanged since the Middle Ages, consisted of bodies representing the peerage, the bourgeoisie, the clergy and the peasantry. The former two bodies represented the interests of the Swedish-speaking elite and dominated the activity of

the Estates; the latter two had become increasingly Finnicized over the course of the 19th century. The 1906 reform replaced this antique legislature with a modern system of proportional representation and party organization, and instituted universal and equal suffrage for the first time. In one stroke the political fortunes of the Fennomen and the Swecomen (Swede-Finn nationalists) were reversed. Swedish-speaking interests fell from a position of political dominance to become one competing interest among several others, as indicated by the immediate organization of a Swedish People's party (SFP) in May 1906. In language policy as well, the Swede-Finns found their centuries-long dominance at an end; from a position of dominance and grudging tolerance of Finnish demands, the Swecomen found themselves forced on the defensive, seeking ways to defend and maintain their language.

The Swede-Finn Reaction

The Swede-Finn reaction to the Finnish nationalist movement in the 19th century was, to use the Swedish term, kulturaristokratisk (Paulston 1980: 144). The Swede-Finn, or Swecoman, movement began, like the Finnish, within the university and remained an exclusive movement of the middle and upper classes until 1906. It accepted the Finnish definition of "nationality" as "language group", and claimed that there were indeed two nationalities on Finnish soil. The Swedish nationality, it was claimed, was clearly the superior, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically, and it would be foolish to renounce this heritage. Any cultural advance which the Finnish nationality had managed was due to their association with and proper government by the

Swedish elite.

The political aspirations of the Swede-Finns were expressed both positively and negatively. Some Swede-Finns, like the Finnish nationalists, feared the eventual absorption by the Russian Empire and urged independence, while working to maintain Swede-Finn dominance and privilege. Others, thinking independence an impractical goal, advocated reunion with Sweden in an expanded pan-Nordic Scandinavianism. On the negative side, the Swede-Finns were united in their fear of Finnish domination. This is exemplified in a Swecoman pamphlet published in 1887:

All [Swedes] agreed on this, that the welfare of the country demands the preservation of the Swedish nationality...They fear with reason as a result of Fennomanism a social revolution that would be disastrous for the whole country...Let us consider for a moment a Finnish Finland of the Young Fennoman brand: Finnish laws and their preparation in Finnish; the whole administration and its personnel Finnish...; the university Finnish and only "national" scientists; all higher schools, literature, the theater, and the press, Finnish, and no translations; polite society Finnish, and for Swedish no other public place than in town meetings and religious services in a few places, and all connections with Sweden severed. Could one even in his dimmest moments be blind to the suicide that an exclusively Finnish Finland at the present time would mean? (Myhrman 1937: 58).

These policies concerned only the urban elite and neglected the great majority of Swedish-speakers in Finland, the fishermen and farmers of the islands and coasts. Finland in the last quarter of the 19th century was a highly stratified society, and the upper and middle classes within which the language struggles went on represented only a tiny minority of the Swede-Finn population or that of Finland as a

whole. An examination of the occupational structure of the four Swedish-speaking provinces⁵ in 1901 reveals that 65% of the work force was engaged in agriculture, forestry, and fishing, and 15.2% in industry and crafts, while only 1.2% were engaged in commerce and 1.3% worked in government (Klöverkorn 1960: 167).⁶ The Swede-Finn masses remained largely unconcerned with the strife over language policy (Wuorinen 1931: 116-117).

This paternalistic neglect could not survive, however, under the pressure of the social, economic and political changes of the early 20th century. The democratization of the parliament has already received mention. The same period saw the organization of Finnish-speaking labor unions and Finnish-speaking political parties, including a strong and activist socialist party. This general mobilization of the Finnish masses appeared as a substantial threat to the structure of the society at whose top sat the Swede-Finn elite. The Finnish nationalist movement had broken Swedish dominance in education, scholarship, and the professions; now the political and economic bases of their privilege were attacked as well.⁷ The Swedish-speaking elite found itself after 1906 faced with the urgent need to mobilize the entire Swede-Finn population in the defense of their cultural, linguistic and economic heritage. The terms of the language conflict were altered completely. Finnish language goals were practically guaranteed by the Finnish-speaking majority in parliament. Swede-Finn language policy would be limited to defensive strategies. The next section will examine the political and institutional measures employed

Figure 1: Relative Changes in income distribution and Ethnic/linguistic Structure 1850-1950 (after Klöveborn 1979)

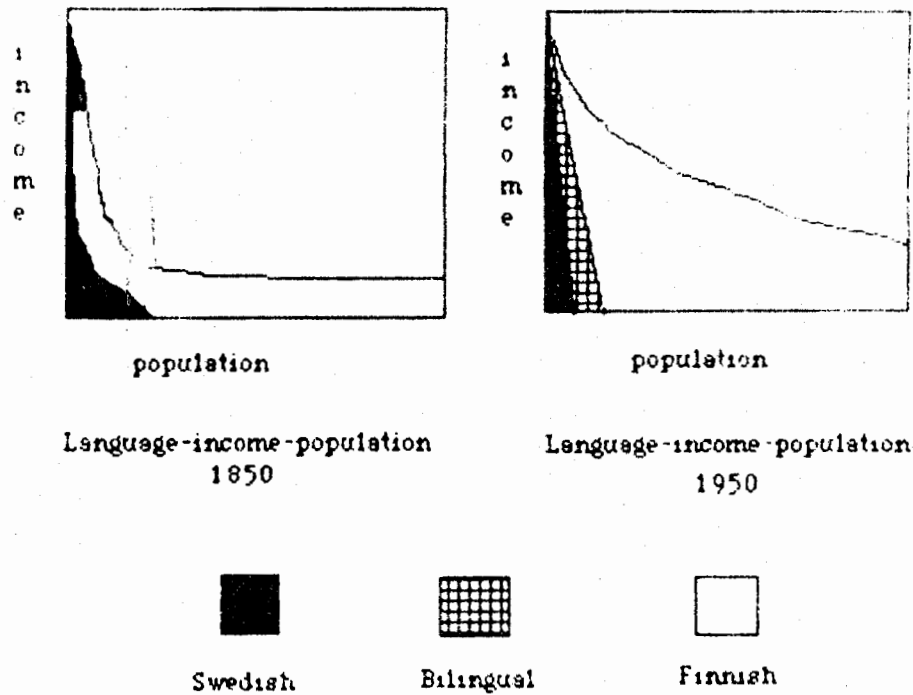
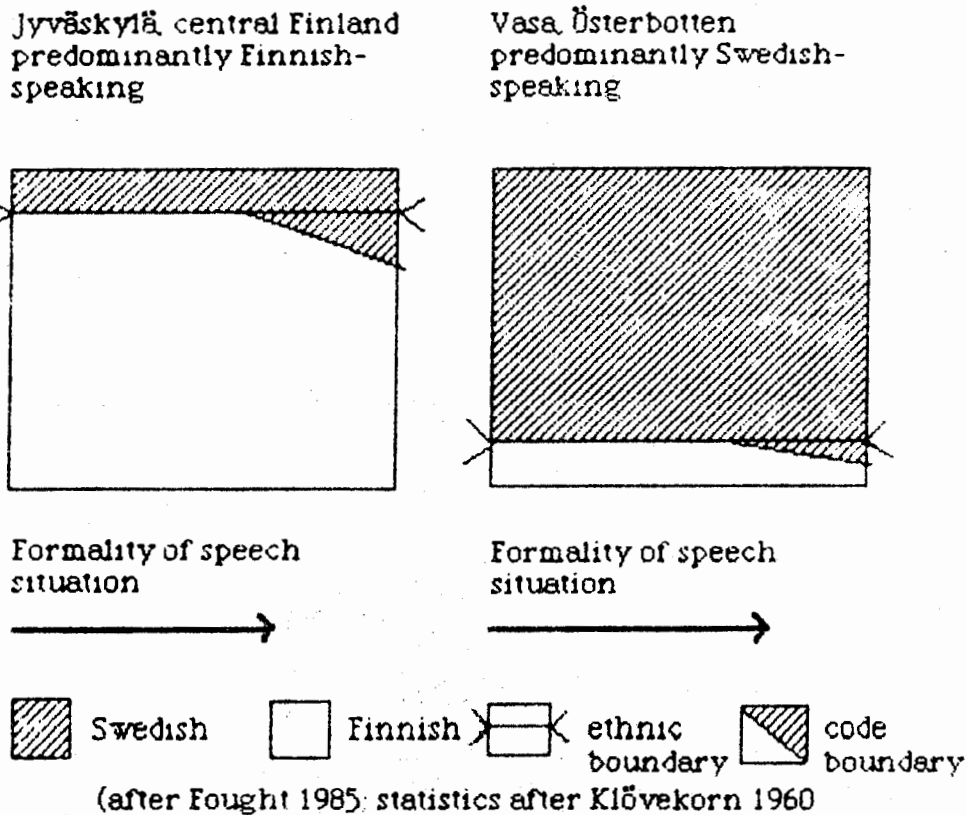


Figure 2: Two Finnish Speech Communities, ca. 1880



by the Swede-Finn nationalists in defense of their language and culture.

The Swede-Finn Popular Movement and the
Defense of Swedish Ethnicity After 1906

The growth of democracy in the Scandinavian states was marked by organizational pluralism. That is, as democratic procedures developed, the articulation of power and the process of decision making came to be marked by negotiation among a plurality of competing interests. What typified the Scandinavian systems is that each competing interest came to be represented by one or more formal mass-membership organizations. Often these organizations were ostensibly non-political voluntary associations which nonetheless took political positions on various issues. Scandinavian democracy can be characterized in part as a democracy of groups, rather than of individual interests.

The Swede-Finn ethnic movement as it developed in this century was no exception to this rule. The principal means by which the movement sought to mobilize the Swedish masses around the issue of ethnic survival was the organization of large numbers of exclusively Swedish voluntary associations. Among them, these associations covered almost all aspects of life in the Swedish-speaking communities. In effect, the goal of the leadership of the Swede-Finns was the creation of a full-blown separatist movement--the establishment of a nation-within-a-nation, secure culturally, linguistically, and economically from further encroachment by the Finns. Although political secession was

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never a goal of the movement,⁸ in most other respects the goal was complete ethnic separation: the maintenance of valued cultural behaviors, including a separate language, the preservation of ethnic boundaries, including geographical boundaries, and the resistance to assimilation into the mainstream (Paulston 1976: 141-142).

In this section we will survey the range of formal organizations created by the movement in its institutional struggle against Finnish nationalism.

Education

Along with political organizations, organizations created to support the education of the Swede-Finns have proven to be of immense value (Myhrman 1937: 97). The first among these organizations, the "Friends of the Swedish Public School", was started in 1882 to provide support for primary and grammar schools in Swedish-speaking areas. At that time, schools were only partially supported by the state, and the Friends helped establish and finance schools and scholarships, particularly in bilingual areas where the Finnish movement had succeeded in forming Finnish-speaking schools of their own. The existence of a school in a rural community often played a decisive role in the ethnic makeup of the community; Finnish "colonies" established in Swedish areas tended to become permanent upon the opening of a Finnish-speaking school; for Swedes, the presence of a Swedish-speaking school in their community provided a stability and cultural focus missing from school-less settlements (Myhrman 1937: 112).

When state-supported compulsory schooling was instituted, the Friends Society shifted its support to nonformal and informal educational endeavors. Chief among these were the Swedish-speaking folk high schools, of which there were fourteen schools with over 400 students in 1910. The folk high school concept, invented by the Danish nationalist N.S. Grundtvig, proved crucial in uniting the Danish peasantry in the 19th century struggles against German aggression in Schleswig-Holstein. The folk high school offered residential continuing education for rural adults, combining practical concerns such as agriculture and animal husbandry with liberal studies, especially ethnic Swedish literature and folk studies, in an environment permeated by intense nationalist ideology and ethnic pride. In the Swede-Finn context, the folk high schools have served "as sources and centers of the Swedish nationality movement" while significantly advancing intellectual education among rural people (Myhrman 1937: 100). The folk high schools developed in addition a widespread "Young People's Movement" which sponsored sports, folk-cultural events, lectures, dances and other social events for Swedish-speaking youth. By 1923 the membership in the 200 societies of the movement numbered close to 20,000.

Lastly, in the field of education, the Swede-Finns managed to push through enough state support and private funding to reopen Åbo Academy in Turku as a second Swedish-speaking university. With its opening in 1919, the Swede-Finns secured for themselves a stable source of higher education and scientific research in the face of increased efforts to

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Fundelize the state university of Helsinki.

Social relations

Several associations supportive of social work and public health were created to serve the Swedish-speaking population exclusively. In addition to child-welfare and temperance bodies, an organization called Folkhälsan (Popular Health) worked to improve public health in Swedish areas, but it also "attempted to promote positive eugenics" by paying premiums to Swedish families of sound mental and physical background who increased the Swede-Finn population by bearing four or more healthy children. Their motto was: "There must be no (biologically) poor Swedes in Finland" (Myhrman 1937: 119).

Cultural associations

When bilingual folk-singing societies came to be dominated by Finns, Swedish song societies were formed in 1891. These proved to be perhaps the most popular expression of Swede-Finn nationalism, attracting literally thousands of youth to the yearly folksong festivals, which became occasions for intense ethnic feeling (Paulston 1976: 147-148). Other Swede-Finn cultural associations included a society for ethnographic and folkloric research, a Swedish literature society, and the Foundation for Swedish Culture, the Svenska Kulturfonden, which developed into an umbrella funding organization for all Swede-Finn cultural societies.

Economic measures

About the turn of the century, the advancing industrialization of traditionally Swedish-speaking areas, particularly the Swedish Nyland around Helsinki, gave rise to extensive demographic changes which continue to this day. Finnish migration from the interior southward in search of jobs put considerable economic pressure on Swedish farmers to sell their properties to Finns for purposes of agriculture and settlement. This led to the increasing penetration of previously monolingual Swedish enclaves and threatened to overwhelm them by sheer weight of numbers (Myhrman 1937: 111-115). To prevent this loss of "Swedish land" a private corporation, part land bank, part real estate trust, was founded to buy the farms of Swedish-speaking farmers in financial difficulty. The corporation then sold these farms to younger Swede-Finn farmers at very favorable long-term rates. Between 1909, the year of its foundation, and 1930, the corporation had established over 1200 small farms in this fashion, and with the profits had set up a fund for rural education. An intense propaganda campaign was carried out in connection with these activities, which sought to convince Swede-Finn farmers that sale of their land to a Finn constituted treason against their own race (Myhrman 1937: 114).

Other economic organizations established by the Swede-Finn movement to serve the Swedish population included several banks, insurance companies, and agricultural and consumer cooperatives. Two of the banking concerns were so successful that by the 1930's they had

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become the second and third strongest banks in the country.

Clearly, the creation of so many educational, cultural, economic and financial institutions within a relatively short period of time required a tremendous amount of capital. Much of this capital was channeled through cultural foundations such as the Svenska Kulturfonden by Swede-Finn industrialists and aristocrats. It must be remembered that the nationalist movements in Finland coincided with the rise of industrialization and a great many fortunes were made in the period preceding the First World War. Most of the fortunes were made by upper-class Swede-Finns who felt strong allegiance, in a paternalistic fashion, to the Swede-Finn ethnic movement. Perhaps no minority movement for ethnic separation has been bankrolled so well by upper-class donors within its own leadership.⁹ This may account for much of the success of the movement in the early years.

Political bodies

Two organizations represented the combined interests of all the Swede-Finn ethnic organizations in the public arena. They are the Swedish Finland's Folkting and the Swedish People's Party (SFP). The Folkting is a people's congress which meets biannually, and supports standing committees on cultural, social, and economic policy and constitutional matters. The Folkting is the most forceful spokesman for Swede-Finn policy, and the central coordinator of the other Swede-Finn associations (Paulston 1976: 147). The Swedish People's Party, as we have seen, was founded in May 1906, in the face of the imminent

enactment of the democratizing reform of parliament. Conscious that the traditional Swede-Finn power base in parliament was about to be swept away, the founders of the SFP sought to build a political party centered around common ethnic issues, which cut across class lines, to muster the Swede-Finn workers and farmers behind the nationalistic program of the Swedish elite (Wennerström 1934: 94-95). Maintaining the idea that two separate national groups existed in Finland, the SFP political ideology promoted the idea that Finland was a culturally pluralistic state like Switzerland or Belgium, "a state of rights (Rättsstat) where rights and relationships are established by law, rather than a population organized primarily on the primacy of language" (Paulston 1976: 145).

With a solid constituency in the Swede-Finn population, the SFP, in coalition with other parties, was able to introduce measures into legislation which would secure the legal rights and position of the Swedish language and ethnicity. The basic protections extended to Swedish are included in the Constitution Act of 1919. Swedish and Finnish are given equal standing as national languages; the right of individuals to use their mother tongue in all dealings with governmental authorities is guaranteed; equality before the law of all citizens regardless of language is insured; and administrative acts and decrees are to be drawn up in both languages. In a series of Language Acts, the nation was divided into monolingual and bilingual communities based on a 10% measure. If less than 10% of a community's population spoke Finnish or Swedish, then that community was classified as

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monolingual in the other language. In monolingual communities, the governmental authorities used only one official language (Modeen 1977: 63-84). In essence, Swedish, the language of less than 7% of the population, was secured in the basic law of the land, as legally and administratively the equal of the language spoken by the overwhelming majority of the Finns.

Conclusion

It is difficult to evaluate the success or failure of the Swede-Finn separatist movement. In its own terms, success would entail the survival of the Swedish language, culture, and institutions in Finland. By this measure the movement has succeeded. However, the increasing rates of marriage across the language boundary, and almost complete bilingualism among Swede-Finns today may indicate that the nature of the Swede-Finn population itself has changed (de Vries 1974). Further industrialization, urbanization, internal migration, and the declining number of monolingual Swedish communities have worked against the traditional agricultural basis of the Swedish community. It is no longer necessary to learn Swedish in order to prosper socially or economically. While the actual size of the Swedish-speaking population has declined but little over the last century, remaining steady at around 330,000, the position of the Swede-Finns as a percentage of the population has dropped steadily to a present level of less than 6.3% due to growth among the Finnish-speaking population. However, Swede-Finns continue to dominate such fields as banking, insurance, and shipping (Europa Year Book 1984: 414-433).¹⁰

The Swede-Finn movement is an example of an attempt to mobilize a population around cultural symbols and ethnicity (defined by language) in order to bring about social change (Paulston 1976: 140). The desired social change--the setting up of a viable separate cultural order for Swede-Finns under the changed circumstances of the 20th century--was primarily pursued by developing separate or protected institutions. By creating separate cultural institutions, the Swede-Finns saved themselves from immediate cultural annihilation. These institutions--cultural expressions, education, land tenure, protected economic sectors, the family, language itself--became both the means of social change and its end result. The Swede-Finn movement is unique, when compared to other ethnic separatist movements, in the degree to which it carried out its explicit strategy of separate institutionalization from the first years of the movement and in competition with another aggressive nationalist ideology.

1. Other ethnolinguistic minorities including the Same (Lapps) and Romany, are present in Finland today in insignificant numbers, and will not be considered in this review.

2. The term "middle classes" as I have employed it refers specifically to the so-called "new" middle classes, comprised of those groups between the Swedish-speaking aristocracy on the one hand, and the Finnish-speaking peasants and artisans on the other; specifically, clerical, supervisory, and technical workers, teachers, government

Unger

officials, and independent professionals.

3. Parish instruction, although important for the development of widespread literacy, was rudimentary in scope, limited, by and large, to learning to read Luther's Catechism and the hustavla, a collection of Scriptures concerning the social order (Fagerlind and Saha 1983: 145-147).

4. The University of Turku (Åbo) was founded in 1640 along with the University of Dorpat in Estonia, as part of the effort to "Swedify" the ethnically non-Swedish provinces (Fägerlind and Saha 1983: 144).

5. Swedish Ostrobothnia, Åboland, Åland, and Swedish Nyland.

6. Corresponding figures for the Finnish population as a whole were:

Agriculture, etc.	72.1%
Industry, crafts	11.1%
Commerce	1.2%
Government	1.6%

(Klõvekorn 1960).

7. "Finnishism" began to be equated with "Bolshevism" in Swede-Finn propaganda after the rise of the Finnish Socialist Party. Hamalainen (1979) examines the political coalitions and the linguistic issue during the Civil War of 1918. The Reds were almost exclusively Finnish-speaking; the Swede--Finns were almost to a man supporters of the White cause.

8. Except in the Åland islands, which attempted to "reunite" with Sweden. The issue was settled by the League of Nations in 1921. The islands were demilitarized, given substantial autonomy, and returned to

Finland.

9. See Myhrman (1937), pp. 113-120, for financial estimates concerning the wealth of the Swede-Finn movement circa 1937.

10. As indicated by a survey of Swedish-surnamed general managers in Finnish government and industry.

<u>Sector</u>	<u>% of businesses managed by Swede-Finns</u>
Finance	31% (including 2 largest banks)
Insurance	49%
Private industry	
Forest industries assoc.	55%
Shipping	64%
Aviation	33%
Manufacturers' assoc.	35%
State-owned industry	18%
Trade union leadership	3%

Source: Europa Yearbook 1984

This method of representing Swede-Finn influence in industry and finance is of course problematic, since many families with Swedish surnames have been Finnish-speaking for perhaps two generations at this point. However, the large figures give some indication of the degree to which wealth and education are rooted in Swede-Finn families dating back to the last century. Contrast the small numbers of Swede-Finns involved in (bilingual) national trade unions.

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