

Till viss del kan samhällets tryck mot en minoritet sägas botten i tanken att lika rättigheter är detsamma som likhet och att ett integrerat samhälle förutsätter en absolut kulturell homogenitet. Denna nationalistiska impuls har visserligen visat sig seglivad och stark, men inte desto mindre smärtsam och förödmjukande för alla som inte behärskar eller accepterar alla delar av den normerande kulturen.

Men därmed behöver man *inte* dra slutsatsen att nationalismen, i vilken skepnad den än uppträder, är ”en konsekvens av något slags universell drift av territoriell eller släktmässig art”.<sup>547</sup> Nej, ett samhälle som både är integrerat, öppet och pluralistiskt torde vara möjligt. Också detta har denna undersökning gett prov på.

## Summary

# The Stepchildren of the Nation. Jewish Integration into the Society in Some Cities of Northern Sweden 1870 to 1940

### Two-faced Nationalism

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century nationalism in Europe has shown both a democratic and a totalitarian side. On the one hand it has been a liberating and democratic force which has included a spectrum of population groups within the framework of the nation-state while on the other hand it has led to discrimination, exclusion and rejection. This tension between inclusion and exclusion seems to be built into the nation-state.

When European states during the 1800s organized themselves according to the principles of nation-states, previously disparate social groups were integrated, often by legally defined categories. Individuals and groups were politically included in a nation by means of citizenship, but also culturally by means of conceiving that the population within the boundaries of a state shared something in common: a history, ideas and values.

The national integration also meant a political and cultural homogenization of the population, but this process assumes exclusion as well. National identities were always constructed in relation to other identities. To define a national “we” demanded pointing out who “they” were, societal groups or categories which are not “we” nor are at all like “us”. The target of such rejection could be ethnic or religious minorities within a state territory, immigrants, indigenous people or special social groups on the margins. The examples of the mechanism of exclusion and discrimination of minorities from the last century are numerous.

During the era of nation-building the Jewish minority in Sweden and the rest of Europe was in tension between acceptance and exclusion in relationship with the state and the dominant society. How could the Jewish legal and cultural status be defined in these growing nation-states? The “Jewish problem” dealt as much with the citizenship status of the Jewish population as well as with the relationship to the national culture.

The process of emancipation which progressed throughout large areas of Europe during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a way of loosening the Jewish group as a legal social category but also gave advantages to the assimilation of the Jews into the national community. In Sweden the 1870 Parliament passed a decision to carry out the complete emancipation, a decision which gave the Jews their political and civil rights, and which also had a strong symbolic value. Emancipation was welcomed by the leadership for the majority political groupings in Sweden as well as by the Swedish Jews. The hope was that they would be economically and socially integrated and that the antagonism and discrimination which had earlier on affected the Jews would now cease.

The Swedish historian Hugo Valentin (himself a Jew) claims in his history on the Swedish Jews—which was printed in 1924 and is still considered a standard work in this field—that the way in which this emancipation decision was carried out in Sweden was unique for the whole of Europe. The sympathy Jews received was outstanding he writes. The growing anti-Semitism which befell Jews in many other countries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century did

not have the same impact here; but that Sweden was a country “where equality for the Jews was carried out in spirit and in truth”. Thus, “a rapid and painless inclusion” of Jews into the Swedish society took place during the decades after 1870.

Other historic research in the same vein have pointed out that tolerance and openness characterized the state and Swedish society’s relation to the Jewish minority, and anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism and discrimination were described as being “un-Swedish” phenomena. The anti-Semitism which has been exhibited in Sweden is considered an import from the Continent, a marginal occurrence with little support from the general population.

However, is this picture true? Does the Emancipation decision, as Valentin wrote, mean that Jews were rapidly and painlessly integrated into society? And was that the end of discrimination, stigmatic attitudes and anti-Semitism? These questions are central to this investigation.

Historic research of the past few decades into anti-Semitism, nationalism and minorities has partly come to other conclusions. A wider interest for other aspects of society, social and cultural relationships have completed earlier research focused on historic descriptions centred on the state and politics. New questions have been posed and other kinds of source material have been used so that new pieces are added to the picture of the Swedish Jewish history and the Swedish society’s relationship to the Jewish minority.

Research has been able to show that deep, well-established anti-Semitic prejudices towards the Jews have been part of the world view of the culture. The picture of the Jew has often functioned as a contrast in creating an identity of that which is Swedish. But a widespread ideologically coloured anti-Semitism has also been expressed in society. Organizations and associations have represented an outspoken anti-Semitism or the political discussion has used anti-Semitic rhetoric. Other studies have shown that anti-Semitism has often been openly expressed, i.e. in state bureaucracy which consistently undermined Jewish immigrants regarding granting citizenship. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Swedish state took administrative measures at this time—

precisely like the German state did, for example—with the purpose of limiting the Jewish presence in Sweden.

## Purpose and Method

This dissertation aims at further contributing to the history of Swedish Jewry and their standing in society. By means of describing and discussing Jewish integration in the period between 1870 and 1940, I investigated the mutual relationship between the dominant society and the Jewish society. By integration I mean the process through which the Jewish minority gradually became participants in the Swedish society, economically and socially as well as politically and culturally. But while relationships were established and developed within the areas of societal functions, the opposite can also happen—namely that the minority group is denied participation within one or several areas or are squeezed out of other areas where participation had been established.

I have chosen to give attention to a few local cities in a region. The idea is that human interrelationships in a limited context can reflect overarching societal changes and historic processes. As well as deepening the knowledge of the history of Swedish Jewry, this research will deepen knowledge of nation building and minorities, national identification and the creation of opposite pictures.

The process of integration is mutual, a cooperative effort between the minority and the receiving society. Thus I have chosen to investigate in part the Jewish strategy and pattern of actions in the workplace, social position, community life, educational strategies, marriage patterns and assimilation; and in part the dominant society's relationship to the Jews. This latter part has meant investigating what economic options the Jewish population was given, social networks and accessibility, the political and citizen status of the Jews; but also how the dominant population perceived the Jewish minority.

The region investigated includes a number of cities in the centre of Norrland, an area which was situated in the middle of

Sweden, where an amazing economic and demographic development took place during the last part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An increasing demand for sawed wooden products on the world market led to the region becoming during a time one of the leading lumber districts. The greater part of the dissertation is devoted to Sundsvall, the biggest city of the area, located on the coast, which developed into a central area for trade and administration. In 1870 the town had 6400 inhabitants, but by 1895 the number had doubled.

Seven hundred Jews are at the heart of this research, Jews who during a shorter or longer time lived and worked in this area between 1870 and 1940, most of them in Sundsvall. I have collected and processed geographic, demographic, social and economic data dealing with the Jewish contingent. Census information has been an important source of information, done according to the established rules at that point and taken by the Swedish State Church, as well as the notes made by tax authorities about incomes and professions. The participation of the Jews in local associations—dealing from trade associations to fraternal orders—has been researched through available association archives. Their political and civil involvement is also reflected in the minutes of the town hall.

The Jewish community in Sundsvall has left a small archive with membership lists and only a few minutes from meetings. This is material which along with information from the archives of the Jewish community in Stockholm and different archives of the authorities has contributed to the reconstruction of the life of the Jewish community here. An earlier investigation from the 1990s based on interviews with Jews who had settled in Sundsvall some time during the period of 1910–1940 was also used.

By means of literature and articles from newspapers with local connections I have investigated the values of the dominant society and their view of the Jews.

## Jewish Immigration and Demography

A difficult social and economic situation for Eastern European Jewry during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed to millions of Jews fleeing west—many to Western Europe’s expanding large cities and industrial centres—but most of them had America as their goal. For many Sweden functioned as a stopping place for a few years before going farther west, but several thousand Eastern European Jews settled permanently. During the period of 1855–1900 the Swedish Jewish population more than quadrupled—from 935 to over 3900 individuals—an increase which to a large extent was due to immigration.

The majority of the Jewish immigrants which during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century found their way to Sweden came from the Powiat of Suwałki, an area near the border between present-day north-eastern Poland and southern Lithuania. Upon arriving in Sweden most of them settled in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö, but many settled in smaller cities and thus a number of new Jewish communities were founded.

Since the 1870s it can be said that there has been a permanent Jewish settlement in the middle of Norrland. In three cities in the region of my investigation, Härnösand, Östersund and Hudiksvall, with a population of about 2000–3000 people each, Jewish colonies were established which never became especially large or permanent. After the numeric climax in the middle of the 1880s of about 50 individuals each, the size of the colonies diminished and by 1900 or so there were only a few Jews left in the three cities.

In Sundsvall, the biggest city of the region, a larger number of Jews settled there and founded a Jewish community which eventually received official status. Chart A shows the demographic growth of the Jewish population in Sundsvall.

*Chart A. Demographic Growth of the Jewish population in Sundsvall 1869–1937.*

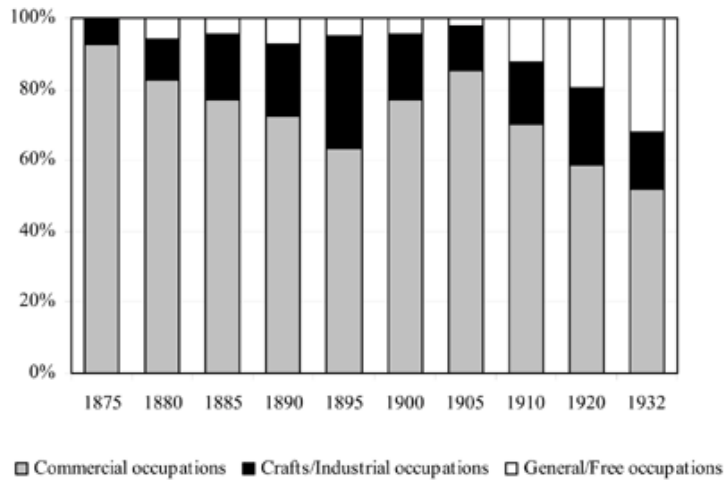
Period	Growth			Number at the end of the period	Percentage of the population at the end of the period
	net migration	birth surplus			
1869–1880	60	49	11	60	0,66
1881–1890	149	98	51	209	1,58
1891–1900	-1	-30	29	208	1,40
1901–1910	-70	-63	-7	138	0,82
1911–1920	-34	-37	3	104	0,62
1921–1930	-36	-27	-9	68	0,38
1931–1937	-8	-6	-2	39	0,21

As the numbers reveal, there was vigorous growth during the period 1870 – 1890 due to migration as well as to families being large. The climax was reached in 1895 when 258 Jews were registered in the city, which corresponds to 1,9 percent of the total population—which for Sweden is an unusually high number. But during the period 1895–1940 the development was in the opposite direction: the aging Jewish population decreased both by migration and a decrease in the birth rate. The synagogue which had been in use since the 1890s closed for good in 1937.

## Occupational Patterns

By means of special laws which had limited the professions open to Jews in Sweden as well as in other countries of Europe, the Jewish population was limited to certain kinds of occupations, especially commerce. Despite the increasing liberalization of the economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the law of 1864 which gave full occupational freedom to every Swedish citizen who was in control of his or her own property, commerce remained the dominating profession among Jews. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century 70 % of the Jewish occupational force was active in commerce, compared to 10 % of the rest of the population.

Diagram A Occupational Distribution Among Taxed Jews in Sundsvall 1875–1932.



Jews who immigrated from Eastern Europe during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were no exception nor were the Jews who settled in the middle of Norrland, as is shown on Diagram A.

The source material shows that the earliest Jews who migrated here to a large degree dedicated themselves to salesmanship, house-to-house peddling, market sales, exclusively within the clothing and manufacturing branches. The Jewish traders in the region made use of the Jewish commercial network which had connections within Sweden and in large areas of the rest of Europe. The profession was seldom lucrative and for many house-to-house peddling was a temporary job in which they were engaged until they were able to open stores in the urban centres.

There was a general distrustfulness within Swedish society towards the Jewish house-to-house peddlers not least from the trade associations which saw a formidable competitor in Jewish commerce. Even Swedish authorities kept a watchful eye on the Jewish traders who were believed to trick country folk with what was considered low quality goods. In 1887 legislation was passed which made it more difficult or even impossible for Jews to

dedicate themselves to house-to-house peddling—such as the total prohibition for foreigners to carry on trade.

The new rules affected many Jews in the area under consideration, in part because so many Jews received their livelihood from the profession and in part because so many were foreign citizens. But also because many other parts of the trade network were also affected, not least of all the Jewish wholesale firms in Härnösand and other places in the region, that delivered their goods to their fellow-believers within the trade branch.

The restrictive legislation contributed to the demise of the Jewish colonies in Härnösand, Hudiksvall and Östersund. The decline in number of traders in Sundsvall during the 1890s (see Diagram A) was caused by the same reason, but contrary to the Jews in other cities, the Jews in Sundsvall managed to find new occupational niches, both as shop owners and as craftsmen. Working as craftsmen was no more profitable than house-to-house peddling as an occupation for Jews and after a time they returned to their previous work in commerce, often outside the pale of the law.

However, not all circumstances were unfavourable to the Jews during the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. An economic boom, increasing demand within the retail trade and a significant building demand after a devastating fire in Sundsvall in 1888 made it possible for Jewish traders to open and run shops and retail trade businesses in the centre of town. In this way Jewish tradesmen—most of them in the garment and manufacturing industry—were able to build successful businesses and in time be rather well-to-do.

The most obvious change during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century relating to Jewish work patterns was the increase of the free professions, especially doctors and lawyers, while at the same time the percentage of Jewish traders decreased proportionately. Jews in the free professions often had parents who had migrated to the region in the 1870s and 1880s. After having studied in the urban secondary grammar school they were given the opportunity to study in the university and after receiving their degree they returned to their home towns to find work.

## An Economic Advance

For a long time the majority of Jewish wage earners in Sundsvall were in the lowest income brackets. During the 1870s and 1880s the Jews quite clearly were over represented among the section of population which had the lowest incomes. Research shows a slow economic climb taking place, but until 1900 the combined income of the Jews was never more than mediocre compared to that of other workers in the city.

A few Jews with professions such as pawnbrokers, retail traders and shop owners could already during the 1880s make socio-economic advances and in that way make contacts with the local bourgeoisie. During the 1890s a number of Jews opened shops in the garment and manufacturing sector, many seemingly successfully.

After 1900 the Jewish advances were more rapid. The combined Jewish income increased more rapidly. In 1920 the city Jews were responsible for more than 1.5 % of the total tax income for the city, despite representing only 0.6 % of the population.

The most economically successful Jews left their former simple lodgings and settled in the centre of the city, in a neighbourhood rebuilt after the city fire in 1888. The area was dominated by businessmen, civil servants and academics—the economically, socially and politically most prominent citizens. A tight network was established within this social and political elite within the boundaries of social relations and association membership. From the mid-1890s more and more of the economically successful Jews began to move in these circles.

A sign of the growing social position of the Jews was the naming of a Jewish businessman as a representative in the city's relief program. This Jewish businessman, who was also the first chairman of the Jewish community, was given more and more important posts in the city and after a time was chosen to the committee which had the ultimate responsibility for the poor relief. (In this very connection, it should be noted that the Jews, although politically emancipated since the 1870s, had no right to benefit from social poor relief – to which they had to pay taxes

– until 1899, which made it necessary for them to form their own charity associations. In other words, society forced them to exclude themselves.) The picture of Jewish advances is strengthened by the fact that the city hired a Jewish city engineer, who as well as filling this important post held a number of positions both in public and civil contexts as well as chairman of the Jewish community.

There are a number of examples of successes for Jews born and raised in Sundsvall. I have already mentioned that a number of them dedicated themselves to academic studies, but it was not unusual for sons to take over and develop trade businesses which their fathers had started and built up. From the register of taxpayers it seems like some Jewish retail businessmen belonged to the top economic elite in Sundsvall during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The economically successful Jewish families grew up in the local bourgeoisie in Sundsvall during the decades around 1900. Successful business was a precondition for Jewish participation but there was also an important cultural adjustment. Jewish families shared more and more the bourgeoisie values and norms, and at the same time Jewish religion and identity were toned down and limited to the private sphere. One can describe the societal integration as an economic and social insertion into the bourgeoisie, an insertion on an individual basis.

But there was an area where the ethnic boundaries were socially significant throughout the whole period of investigation: Jewish families were seldom united with non-Jewish families in the local society by means of marriage. Though it is true that marriage did increase slowly during the period of investigation, but the percentage of married Jews in mixed marriages never surpassed 20 %.

Despite the fact that the Jewish bourgeoisie integration was longstanding, inter-confessional marriages were unusual, but this was also true of marriage across class boundaries. The bourgeois Jews almost never married poorer coreligionists in the same city, but sought partners in either Stockholm or Germany within their own social class.

## The Jewish Lower Class

It is easy to point to the economic and social success many Jews in Sweden experienced after the emancipation while at the same time forgetting the large Jewish groups which remained outside this development. Income statistics from 1920 show that Jews were over-represented among high income brackets, but were also over-represented among the lower income brackets. A deep socio-economic chasm ran right through the middle of the Jewish group, a chasm which if anything, increased as time went by.

About half the Jewish group in Sundsvall can be referred to as the economic and social lower class, which after the city fire in 1888 until the 1920s built a colony in some working neighbourhoods, geographically and socially separated from the bourgeois parts of town. The majority of the poor Jewish families lacked Swedish citizenship, which obviously contributed strongly to social ostracism and poverty. The sources testify to the small means of Jewish families, the crowded conditions in which they lived and the very limited economic resources. During the 1920s economic downturn a number of the poorest families moved to Stockholm and by the 1930s the Sundsvall worker neighbourhoods had largely been emptied of its Jewish population.

The Jewish lower class had a peculiar position, between the working class and the bourgeoisie. Economically and socially they were far from the bourgeoisie, while at the same time in their capacity as business people they did not belong naturally to the working class which was organized into unions and politically active at this time. Thus it was not uncommon for both the bourgeoisie and the working class to regard the poor Jews as antagonists and enemies. They often had to carry the label "Polack" or "loan sharks" guilty of profiteering and exploitation.

As I mentioned earlier, there was not only a barrier between the Jewish lower classes and the surrounding society, but also between the lower class and their fellow believers who had been integrated into the bourgeoisie. The clearest expression of this barrier is seen in the marriage patterns. The Jewish community functioned to hold these groups together, but as community life became sparser, the social chasm widened as well.

## Jewish Community Life

In the locations where Jews settled in the region, small Jewish communities sprang up. Synagogues were established in private homes, worship services were held and holidays were celebrated. Among the first thing Jews had to do was to establish a special religious school for the young as soon as they arrived which was a precondition for the Jewish children to avoid the general Christendom education. Thus teachers of religion were hired, a person who was also given the task of taking care of the traditional Jewish animal slaughter. Religion teachers were hired in Sundsvall, Härnösand, Östersund and Hudiksvall from the 1870s and 1880s onwards, as long as there was a somewhat large Jewish population in that particular city.

In Sundsvall the group bought land as early as 1879 for a Jewish cemetery. A lot of time and effort were put into getting that land in shape for several decades. During the 1890s Jewish community life in Sundsvall included poor relief, worship services, traditional slaughter, as well as the traditional Jewish bath in the mikveh which had been established. In 1894 a chevra kadisha was organized, a Jewish funeral society with representation from the different social levels within the Jewish group.

These early communitarian activities were "spontaneous" and not under the control of authorities, but the Jews in the region wanted to register the community according to the rules that applied. In 1890 a group of nine established and prosperous Jews in Sundsvall, Härnösand and Östersund filed a joint application for an officially approved community with its headquarters in Sundsvall. The application was accepted by the government, but it would take almost exactly ten years full of internal strife before the plans were finally carried out.

The approval was economically significant since that gave the community the right to tax the Jews who lived in Norrland. The rules stated that a "person confessing the Mosaic faith" would belong to the closest officially sanctioned community. At the same time it also meant recognition that the Jewish community was a religious denomination which could work freely in the local society in accordance with state and social norms. Thus the

building of a Jewish community should rather be seen as a step in the process of integration and not as a way of building barriers to the surrounding areas.

## Social Anti-Semitism

Research has pointed out the hidden anti-Semitism which is present in Sweden, embracing large groups in society. As well as in other places, the Jews of Sundsvall were confronted by a number of expressions of this anti-Semitism. Contemporary literature and a humorous press could contain anti-Semitic undertone comments about the Jewish presence, but sometimes also open and gross anti-Semitic attacks occurred. Jews could also face hostility from the surroundings in different social contexts: in school, business contacts and with local authorities or on the street.

Research has also described how social and economic movements sometimes sparked anti-Semitic outbreaks. During the period of 1870–1940 one can identify at least two such outbursts of anti-Semitism, both general European but which also affected the local level.

The first anti-Semitic outbreak took place roughly during the 1880s. An economic recession, international competition and an aggressive foreign policy created social tensions which led to the fact that different social groups—the middle class and farmers—felt rejected and threatened by modern capitalism, oftentimes identified with Judaism. The anti-Semitic traditional thinking had symbols and props which often were used in the political struggle.

In Sweden the anti-Semitic wave can be perceived by the unusually strict administrative measures which were directed against the Jews when it came to granting citizenship; the anti-Semitic background propaganda which trade organizations carried out and the law which was a result, forbidding foreign Jews from becoming house-to-house salesmen. In my region of investigation the measures were seemingly severe for many Jews.

During this time there was also a larger demographic change which can be tied to a more severe climate: a concentration of Jews in Sundsvall in the region of investigation. The Jews in the region joined each other to resist economically and socially and to survive socially as a minority.

Another large demographic change took place in the second anti-Semitic outbreak, one that can be placed in the 1920s, namely the accelerating emigration of Jews from Sundsvall to Stockholm. In a way similar to that which occurred 50 years earlier, social pressure and a felt threat encouraged the Jews to seek safety in the larger Jewish community, but this time in Stockholm.

## Stepchildren of the Nation

In the language used in Nationalism, the nation has often been seen as a family, an organic interconnected fellowship, united by means of a common origin and a common history and even a common race. In this national organic thinking the Jewish minority is often placed outside and turned into an identity contrast despite citizenship, economic success and social integration. During the period which I investigated there was a constant mental barrier between that which was “Jewish” and that which was “Swedish”, a barrier which in certain circumstances was made to be socially significant and thus to express itself concretely in the relationships between the minority and the majority.

One of the background figures in the German Jewish Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central association for German citizens of the Jewish faith) Ludwig Holländer resignedly but pointedly said at the beginning of the 1920s during the period of anti-Semitism which erupted at the wake of the First World War, “Jews are Germany’s stepchildren—and stepchildren have to be twice as good”. Within the fairly integrated Western European Jewry there was a resigned feeling of not belonging. Despite their success and their national loyalty the Jews were not allowed to be organically joined with the

imagined national family other than as “illegitimate” children.

When it comes down to it, Swedish society gave limited space for multicultural structures. By means of emancipation the Jews were accepted as stepchildren, often harmonious and successful, but at the same time a Jewish minority which circulated without feeling at home, a group which was treated unfairly and from whom special demands were imposed to be able to belong.

*Translation: Thomas Rutschman, Jokkmokk.*

## Förteckning över tabeller och diagram

Tabell 3.1 Den judiska befolkningens antal och tillväxt fördelad på födelse- och flyttningsöverskott, 1891–1910, i Sundsvall, Östersund, Härnösand och Hudiksvall, absoluta tal.

Tabell 3.2 Flyttningsintensiteten i Sundsvall 1871–1930, fördelad på totalbefolkningen och den judiska befolkningen.

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