

## ***Ylioppilaslehti* and the University's Language Struggle in the 1920s and 1930s**

**Jukka Kortti**

*A new Universities Act was a current topic in 1922, just as it is today. The most essential part in the reform concerned the language of education, Swedish and/or Finnish. It was the starting point for the language struggle which lasted until the Second World War. Nationalistic university students played an important role in this ethnolinguistic conflict. This article covers the issue through the student's magazine *Ylioppilaslehti*, which has not only been an important forum for university students, but occasionally also significant for the wider Finnish public sphere.*

The topic which troubled the University of Helsinki the most in the 1920s and 1930s was the language struggle – the issue of finnicizing the university. The ethnolinguistic conflict was on the whole a significant national issue during the restless childhood years of Finnish democracy. The conflict had a great political importance, as it was directly linked to the struggles among political parties, the position of Swedish speakers and the rise of nationalism and right-wing radicalism. It penetrated Finnish society extensively during the interwar decades: the Swedishness of economic life was regarded as a far-reaching drawback; finnicizing the army officers developed into an important point of controversy and all levels of education had to take position in this issue. This paper focuses first and foremost on the university.

Even though the conflict had longer historical roots, an important starting point for the university's ethnolinguistic issue was the Universities Act of 1923, which defined the position of Finnish and Swedish languages at the university. A sort of vanishing point for the conflict was the Universities Act of 1937, which basis remained valid until the 21st century. University students played an important role in the conflict.

The ethnolinguistic conflict has been covered fairly comprehensively already in the 1960s, in general, and more specifically with regard to the university and the attitude of university students.[1] This article covers the ethnolinguistic conflict through the student magazine *Ylioppilaslehti* (founded in 1913). Regardless of whether *Ylioppilaslehti* has been more of a 'professional paper for students' or an 'academic cultural force', it is not just 'any student paper'. *Ylioppilaslehti* is a Finnish institution that has seen the major part of the Finnish cultural and political elite going through its editorial staff in the 20th century. The approach in this article, which is part of an ongoing research project on the history of *Ylioppilaslehti*, is slightly different than before. Although covering the ethnolinguistic issue and the Universities Act of 1923 through the most important students' publication by narrative history writing and in the tradition of the history of ideas, this article is particularly interested in discussing the role of *Ylioppilaslehti* in the Finnish public sphere in this context.

The object of this study is, in particular, how *Ylioppilaslehti* operated in the students' own public sphere, being the academic and more especially, the university students' world. However, even though *Ylioppilaslehti* functioned within its own Habermasian [2]

”bourgeois and normative arena of public sphere”, from the 1920s, it orientated itself increasingly towards ”the national public sphere” (Nieminen 2006, 30–31). This revealed itself in increasing nationalism: a kindred spirit in general, the ”Greater Finland” idea and the ethnolinguistic issue. The last one played an essential role in the development of Finnish-speaking ethnolinguistic nationalism, ”True Finnishness” (aitosuomalaisuus), of *Ylioppilaslehti*, before national defence affairs becoming more crucial when the war drew nearer at the end of the 1930s.

## Historical Background

The roots of the ethnolinguistic conflict are to be found in the nineteenth century, when the Fennoman movement, which came into existence from within the Swedish-speaking elite, promoted the improvement of the position of the Finnish language. The Fennomans were the most important political movement in the Grand Duchy of Finland in the 19th century. The movement pushed to raise the Finnish language and Finnic culture from its peasant-status to the position of a national language and national culture. Politically, this position was represented by the Old Finns (Finnish Party). In the 1860s and 1870s, their propaganda also led to the coming into existence of the Swede-Finn national movement, which included already at that time the idea of giving Swedish speakers their own separate national identity. The Finnish national movement gradually evolved into a class movement, reflecting the division of the Diet in four estates: nobles, clergy, burghers and peasants. Finnish speakers had an edge over clergy and peasants. Swedish was first and foremost the language of the upper class.

The situation changed with the promulgation of the Parliament Act at the 1st of October 1906, when one of the world's most modern and democratic parliamentary systems was created. The unicameral parliament was elected by general and equal universal suffrage and replaced the former Diet, which caused a drastic decrease of the Swedish-speaking elite's power. A group of Swede-Finns founded the Swedish People's Party (SPP) which had the ambition to get the support of the whole Swedish-speaking population. The ethnolinguistic issue played an important role in the parliamentary elections of 1907. However, soon the defence of the autonomy of Finland overshadowed all other issues, during the so-called second years of oppression (Russification of Finland 1908–1917). When Finland had achieved its independence in 1917 and when new democratic institutions had to be created after the civil war of 1918, the ethnolinguistic conflict reared its head again.

Among the university students, the ethnolinguistic conflict had moved into a fruitless stabilised war during the first years of the twentieth century. The stabilisation of the language fronts was furthered by the division of the so-called student nations (osakunta) – regional student associations – along language lines between 1904 and 1908. In bilingual student nations, both language groups even had their own organisations. As a result of these measures, the Finnish student nations developed into ideological, political and even party-like operational units – in contrast to their counterparts in Sweden.

A significant phenomenon was also the finnicization of names, a process in which the students played an important role too. For this purpose they founded the Society for the Study of Finnish (Kotikielen seura), which was located at the Student House and which translated some hundred thousand names in the years 1906-1907. Particularly the student organisation of Old Finns, *Suomalainen Nuija*, promoted the finnicizing of the university and the Student Union in this period. The group of Young Finns, the Finnish party which separated itself from the main Fennoman movement, acted somewhat more moderately, but

a noticeable part of them supported openly the policy of the Old Finns. After 1908, also among the students the debate lost a bit of its intensity and a more or less conciliatory spirit dominated with regard to the linguistic conflict, until the end of the civil war. (Klinge 1978a, 307, 331–344.)

Half a century after Finnish was used for the first time in academic teaching, K.R. Brotherus sketched in *Ylioppilaslehti* the historical background of this process. In the issue of the 11th of May 1913, the first year of the publication of the student's magazine, Brotherus presented a statistical diagram of the development of teaching in Swedish and Finnish since the start of the century. It proved that teaching in Finnish had strongly increased. In 1910, the number of professors giving lectures in Finnish had even exceeded the number of Swedish-speaking professors and in the spring of 1912, only five professors of the latter group was still teaching only in Swedish. Thus, the number of professors lecturing in both languages had increased constantly. Especially young docents (external lecturers) at the Faculty of Arts were the ones who taught most in Finnish. (YL 15/1913, 165–166.)

In 1914, approximately a quarter of the students was Swedish-speaking. Nevertheless, most professors still lectured in Swedish (and Finnish). This flaw, that "the language which was used by only 1/8 of all the inhabitants prevailed at our highest educational institution" caused "sorrow and concern", as the editor of *Ylioppilaslehti* wrote. (YL 10/1914, 105–107) The editorial written on the occasion of the Finnish national epic Kalevala celebrations in 1914, was clearly a political statement in favour of the increased use of Finnish at the university, even though the tone was not as aggressive as in the previous or certainly in the following decades. (Klinge 1978a, 361–365; Meinander 2006, 161.)

## Swedish patricians

Before 1918, the ethnolinguistic issue was actually covered more in the magazine *Studentbladet*, which was published by Swedish-speaking university students. The idea that Swedish speakers, as related to Germans, were of a higher race than Finnish and Slavonic people was promoted mainly by the first chief editor of *Studentbladet* Artur Eklund. The student leader Eklund was one of the most visible Swedish-speaking nationalists who supported the doctrine of race. He admired people like the Frenchman Arthur De Gobineau and the Englishman Houston Stewart Chamberlain, both famous for developing racialist theories. In line with their views, Eklund regarded Swede-Finns as Germans, which as a feature was unfamiliar to a typical Finn. In his eyes, Swedes were "chivalrous and energetic; they assume an air of the noble sense of freedom; they are clever and have a lighter temperament than Finns". Finns, for their part, were considered prone to "pondering, heaviness, a slower and darker temperament and passionate feelings below the calm, steady surface, now leading to admiring enthusiasm and then to bitter grudge". Despite their Kalevala, Finns were not a warrior nation like Germans. The whole idea was connected with the belief that the Swedish-speaking peasantry was of a purer origin than Finnish farmers, who had a mixed ethnical background. Indirectly, Eklund compared Finns even with "American niggas". He also noted that socialism, which "could be characterised as a religion, had not gained remarkable support among Swedish speakers, a prove of the healthy self-confidence of the Swedes". (Klinge 1978a, 263–264; Hämäläinen 1968, 25–27.[3])

Eklund was surely not the only Swedish-speaking nationalist leaning on the doctrine of race in the 1910s. The theory was discussed publicly in the Swedish-speaking press of the

time. One Swede-Finn medical doctor contrasted, for instance, the manly heroism of Swedish speakers with the feminine features of the Finno-Ugric race. (Hämäläinen 1968, 27) The conception that Finns were not considered true Europeans being members of a Europeid or White race, originates from 19th-century anthropology. In that period, Swedish encyclopaedias mostly classified Finns within the Mongolian race. However, around 1900 anthropologists had realized that language and race cannot be identified, but still, the racist definition of the Finns remained valid until the middle of the 20th century. (Kemiläinen 1998, 12, 68, 70)

In contrast to these racial writings of Swede-Finn nationalists and propagandist articles and interviews in Swedish newspapers, the tone in *Ylioppilaslehti* was still of a more moderate kind. In the aftermath of the civil war, the editor emphasized that the commemorative book of the war, which was initiated by university students, had to include "both language groups, Finnish and Swedish." However, the dissatisfaction about the development of the ethnolinguistic issue increased and in 1919 complains appeared in the Finnish student's magazine, that "at the only state university of Finnish Finland" merely 17 of the 68 permanent professors were Finnish-speaking. (YL 3/1918, 23; YL 18/1919, 207–208.)

Gradually, the atmosphere of the debate became harsher. Finnish-speaking people got increasingly irritated about the racial theories of their Swedish-speaking compatriots, resulting in the strengthening of the hostility towards the "privileged" Swedish-speaking upper class. Especially among agrarian circles, who were mostly lower educated and who did not have family or other relationships with Swedish speakers, as was often the case for the Old and Young Finns, Swedish speakers were regarded as a "patrician" class. This became particularly apparent in the negotiations about the Constitution Act in 1919. The harder attitude towards Swedish speakers also harmed Finland's relations with Sweden.

When the language act was accepted in 1922, Swedish speakers gave up their ideal of self-governance, which many extreme nationalists had promoted in the years before. (Hämäläinen 1968, 72–83.) Instead of an own Swedish-speaking parliament and government, in the end only an own diocese and department in the National Board of Education were implemented from their radical programme. The decision of the League of Nations to give Åland (the islands between Finland and Sweden in the Baltic Sea) to Finns also calmed down the Swedish speakers' demands. Simultaneously, their position had changed from criticizing and attacking the demands of the Finnish-speaking population, to defending their own (diminishing) language rights. Politically, an "unholy" union was set up between Swedish speakers and the Social Democratic Party (SDP), who – quoting their leader Väinö Tanner during the most intense years of the conflict in the late 1930s – regarded the language struggle as "the issue of the sixth class". In practice, this union resulted in SDP and SPP supporting each other in the parliament.

However, shortly afterwards the debate intensified again due to increasing nationalism, which itself was inspired by upcoming radical right-wing and fascist movements in other parts of Europe. The attitude of both Finnish and Swedish speakers was characterised by a romantic idea of nationalism, viz. that the language contributed to a large extent to the national identity. Another decisive factor in this period consisted of Swedish speakers maintaining their crucial positions in the society, whereas the size of the Swedish-speaking population decreased continuously. At the beginning of the 1920s, still more than half of the persons active in the economic sector had Swedish as their mother tongue and also in science and culture they were largely overrepresented in proportion to their share of the population.

Particularly among the Agrarians, this awoke resistance towards city bureaucracies and the world of high finance, even outright "hatred towards masters". But also the university students got increasingly irritated about this imbalance and, as in the rest of the society, the ideological differences between both language groups became more apparent again. The idea of "True Finnishness" was opposed to the previously described idea of Eastern Swedishness, viz. Swedish-speaking nationalism. Certainly the latter had already a long tradition among the students.

Closely connected with the ethnolinguistic conflict, was the foundation of the Finnish University of Turku in 1922 to counter the establishment of Åbo Akademi, realised by the financial support of Swedish-speaking economic circles a few years earlier. *Ylioppilaslehti* happily greeted the new Finnish university and the Student Union of the University of Turku became one of the official publishers of the magazine, immediately from the start of the following year (14/1922, 178–179).

The strikingness of the unequal language balance was an important reason for the birth of the idea of "True Finnishness". When *Ylioppilaslehti* charted in 1923 the "language relations of the Finnish intelligentsia" in the years 1921–22, it was revealed that from approximately two and a half thousand university students over seventy per cent were Finnish speakers and nearly thirty per cent were Swedish speakers. At the same time, fifty four per cent of teaching was available in Finnish and forty six per cent in Swedish. (YL 7/1923, 100.)

### "True Finnishness"

In the 1920s and 1930s, the activities of the university students concentrated specifically on the Academic Karelian Society (AKS). The first institution which the AKS took over within student circles in 1923 was *Ylioppilaslehti*. The AKS was an extreme right-wing student movement founded in the previous year. In accordance with its name, the main aim of the AKS was the revenge-spirited Karelia idea – to regain the Eastern Karelian parts of Finland, handed over to Soviet Russia in the "Shame Treaty" of Tartu. Still, from the start they supported the "True Finnishness"-movement out of a feeling of kindred between Karelia and the rest of Finland. The organisation's worldview was based on Hegelian national philosophy and aimed for creating an externally and internally strong "Greater Finland". The society's ideologist, the social theorist Yrjö Ruuth, put the idea of "True Finnishness" into words. He defined it at a later stage in the 1920s on the pages of *Ylioppilaslehti*.

The background of the Academic Karelia Society's nationalism was, firstly the unrealised hope of what independent Finland had to look like, secondly the somewhat conservative reaction of the agrarian middle class to modernisation and, thirdly the uncertainty about the future due to the economic situation after the First World War. The just ambition of Finnish soldiers to obtain an officer's rank was always slowed down by the arrogant Swedish-speaking upper class.

The ideology of pure Finnish nationalism, promoted by the AKS, received a practical application in the striving for the University's finnicizing from the Universities Act of 1923, which became the actual starting signal of the language struggle at the university, in which the AKS played an important role. In Martti Haavio's opinion, Niilo Kärki – one of the main ideologists of the AKS – has summarised the "True Finnishness"-ideology of the AKS in one of his writings particularly well:

*The activities which are spreading among Finnish university students to free the Finnish cultural life from too many foreign influences are simultaneously going to improve this nation's internal integration. For the current state of affairs, the Swedish element in Finland's intelligentsia is out of proportion which is unnatural and therefore it has very harmful consequences. Our Swedish-speaking educated do not, even when they have sincere patriotic spirit, feel solidarity with the grass roots. Therefore, they are not inclined to promote the rise of the lowest range of people to a higher standard of living and education. This can only be done by those who are, with regard to their language and their mind, part of the educated Finnish class that does not treat the people with an arrogant scorn, but feels related to them through blood-ties. (Haavio 1972, 577–578.)*

Martti Haavio and Niilo Kärki both were chief editors of *Ylioppilaslehti* at the beginning of the 1920s and the most important "journeymen" [4] in the foundation period of the AKS. During the first year of the society's existence, the finnicization of the university was a rather insignificant issue in the activities of the AKS. The Universities Act of 1923, however, caused a crucial change. At the first sight the act satisfied *Ylioppilaslehti* – already controlled by the AKS and led by Niilo Kärki and Martti Haavio – but when more attention was paid to the details of the act, its flaws were noticed. This led to the ethnolinguistic issue becoming one of the most important items on the agendas of the AKS and *Ylioppilaslehti*. It may even be that without the language struggle and the "True Finnishness"-movement, the AKS would not have remained so vital in the following years, if it had limited its activities to the Eastern Karelian question and the promotion of the idea of kindred topics within the Finno-Ugric population. (Haavio 1972, 576.)



*The AKS ideologist Niilo Kärki (1897-1930) was one of the first public figures to frame the idea of "True Finnishness" among the students. Image: Ylioppilaslehti 11/1921*

## **Target: the University's complete finnicization**

The Universities Act, as part of the Constitution Act, was confirmed in the autumn of 1923. Its preparation had not been easy and especially reaching a consensus about the languages of instruction appeared to be most difficult. Finnish political parties, for instance, were

irritated by the interference of some Scandinavian university professors. The SPP, at its turn, was worried about the principle of proportionality that made the amount of courses in both languages dependent on the student numbers, which were clearly evolving in the wrong direction for Swedish speakers. The fact that the language was decided on the basis of the language of the students and no longer of the professors, was probably the most radical section in this act. Swedish speakers feared that this eventually would lead to the finnicization of the entire University.

The act that was accepted in the parliament was a compromise. In accordance with the principle of proportionality, fifteen professors were allowed to teach in Swedish. The proportions between the languages of instruction were checked every third year. However, the act required bilingualism of the students. Only the basic teaching and personal supervision were guaranteed in one's mother tongue. The act was supposed to come into force within five years. Shortly after its promulgation, Swede-Finns' propagandist writings in the Swedish press concerning this issue increased. The articles emphasised, among other arguments, the higher education of Swedish speakers which got even the most moderate Finnish speakers to defend the act which was confirmed in general terms in the form drafted by Finnish-speaking university students. It was decided that this was a limit to concessions, which foreshadowed the final appearance of nationalism.

The AKS ideologist, "master", Yrjö Ruuth commented on the language struggle in the editorial of *Ylioppilaslehti* (YL 20/1923, 333–334) in November 1923, when leaving the duties of chairperson of the Student Union – immediately after the Universities Act was accepted. In his opinion, Finnish and Swedish speakers should go different ways; and he stood up for a separate Finnish University and a separate Finnish Student union. Moreover, Ruuth linked the language struggle to a more comprehensive nationality issue.

The actual ethnolinguistic conflict was only to begin. After a couple of quiet years, during which the Finnish university students focused on messing up Russian signs and the kindred issues, it was time to focus on the language struggle again. After the AKS gained control over *Ylioppilaslehti* and took over the whole Student Union in 1925, realising a purely Finnish national state university became its most important mission.

The AKS began its effective operations as a paramilitary organisation, with infiltration as one of its tactics – within the student world, but also outside, up to the political parties. The Agrarians supported the idea of "True Finnishness", whereas within the other bourgeois parties there existed many different opinions. Already in November 1925, the Student Union of the University of Helsinki requested the Senate to propose the University's complete finnicization, but without any results. Of course, the fact that Rector Hugo Suolahti resisted against this request, was not much good to the whole affair. Moreover, the leading Finnish newspapers *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Uusi Suomi*, which described the suggestion of the students as the best joke of the century, supported his position.[5]

In the article "What does the Finnish nation say about our motion?", the editor of *Ylioppilaslehti* summarized the opinions of all main newspapers. In addition to *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Uusi Suomi*, *Karjala* in Vyborg and *Aamulehti* in Tampere opposed against the finnicization of the Student Union and the University's finnicization project of the AKS. All the other newspapers approved the suggestion, according to the interpretation of *Ylioppilaslehti*. The most outspoken supporters were dailies from the Agrarian Party, such as *Ilkka*, *Savon Sanomat*, *Maakansa* and *Pohjolan Sanomat*. However, also *Savo*, *Savonmaa* and *Lahti* from the National Coalition Party and *Länsi-Savo* and *Tampereen*

*Sanomat* from the National Progressive Party, approved the idea of finnicization of the University. (YL 24/1925, 390.)

An important event with regard to the language struggle and the whole ethnolinguistic issue was the taking-over of the Association of Finnish Culture and Identity (Suomalaisuuden liitto) by the AKS in 1927, led by its "journeymen" Vilho Helanen and Urho Kekkonen. The Association developed into an aggressive promoter of "True Finnishness" and also *Ylioppilaslehti*, with Kekkonen as its chief editor, continued the AKS policy. In his editorials, he criticized, for instance, the Senate's decision to reject the professorship for Baltic-Finnish languages, and instead to suggest a permanent position for Swedish language and literature a few days later (YL 8/1927, 153–154).

## **Intense petition**

On the 26th of April 1928, the Student Union of the University of Helsinki decided in an additional meeting, on the initiative of its Swedish-speaking members, to make an appeal to the Senate to propose a change of the Universities Act, which would enable Swedish speakers to resign from the Student Union and to create their own association (YL 14/1928, 279–280). In the same period, the AKS tried to force a breakthrough in the language struggle by deploying the mass of students, as a concrete indication of the organisation's strength. The change of Väinö Tanner's socialist government into J.E. Sunila's agrarian government, moreover created the right political background, although the AKS was somewhat disappointed about the actual ethnolinguistic programme of the latter. (Klinge 1978b, 125–126.)

The great university student demonstration around the statue of the great philosopher and statesman J.V. Snellman on the 20th of November 1928 became one of the crucial mass events in the University's language struggle. As part of the demonstration, a delegation of 18 students delivered a petition about the University's finnicization to the Council of State, signed by 3014 students of the University of Helsinki (90 per cent of the student population at the time) and 419 engineering students of the Helsinki University of Technology (81 per cent of the student population at the time). Only a small minority of the students, mainly the members of *Itsenäisyyden Liitto* ('Independence League'), who had resigned from the AKS, and some socialist students, tried to oppose the petition, but open resistance was given up, particularly when there were rumours of even physical pressure by collecting the names of protesting students. The reception at the Council of State passed off in a cold atmosphere and the Prime Minister "pronounced to the Senate only a few deliberately superficial words", as Martti Haavio recalled. The University was ignored because the purpose was to influence the general opinion by showing university students' enthusiasm and conscientiousness. (Haavio 1972, 577; Klinge 1978b, 127, 129.) In other words, the aim was to cut directly to the first level arena of the public sphere: the State instead of the second arena of the University.

*Ylioppilaslehti* published on the 17th of November 1928, in connection with the petition, a special issue with as cover the appeal of the petition to the Council of State. The issue was written in a very declamatory style, appealing to history from the very first line: "During those centuries, of which history knows to tell, the Finnish nation has constantly lived under guardianship. [...] Each country's greatness can be said to depend for most parts on the abilities of its intelligentsia." (YL 21/1928, 409.) Besides, *Ylioppilaslehti*, led by its chief editor Tauno Jalanti, was an essential actor in collecting the signatures of the petition.

An unofficial delegation of the key figures within the AKS, had been assembled to write in this special issue. The article "I was a dictator" on the second page, written by Urho Kekkonen under the pseudonym Lautamies ("juror"), has later become one of the most famous causeries in Finland. It has been published again and again in many different contexts. The causerie has also been used as a weapon, particularly by Kekkonen's opponents, for example in the Presidential elections of 1956 when Kekkonen was only just elected as the President of the Republic for the first time. The article described a fictional vision of what Finland would look like when the AKS would reach its goal and when the "impossible would become possible". Next to the University's language struggle, the causerie also discussed other important aims of the AKS, such as the finnicization of the army: "I removed societal defects and integrated the Finnish nation." (YL 21/1928, 410.)



*The petition to the Finnish government, regarding the Finnicization of the University. Published on cover of a special finnicization issue of Ylioppilaslehti in November 1928. Image: Ylioppilaslehti 21/1928.*

The actual effects of the petition were completely insignificant. It can even be stated that the government's indifferent attitude towards the university students' matter was like a bucket of cold water. Both the Agrarian President Lauri Relander, whose wife was Swedish-speaking, and Prime Minister J.E. Sunila aimed for restraint and equality in the language struggle. Resistance against the government was furthered by the fact that Professor Lauri Ingman was appointed as Minister of Education in the next government of Oskari Mantere (from December 1928). Already before, professor Lauri Ingman had characterised the "True Finnishness"-movement as humbug. According to Ingman, the

university had other problems to deal with, e.g. the question how the conditions for researchers could be improved. Professors' salaries had been decreased, in a time when filling the academic posts was already difficult. The matter got even worse because of the "flood of university students" in the 1920s. (Klinge 1978b, 130–131; Uino 1989, 208.)

The board of professors was completely ignored in the wording of the petition, but still a committee was set up in December 1928 to explore the possibilities to renew the University's language conditions. Shortly before Ingman started his activities as Minister of Education, he was appointed to the committee, together with two of the most influential professors, the rector, vice-rector and deans. The committee spawned one report after the other, e.g. the suggestion to hire additional Finnish-speaking professors, the so-called Lex Ingman, but the rudimentary procedures did not satisfy Finnish-speaking university students. (Hämäläinen 1968, 174; Klinge 1978b, 130.) In *Ylioppilaslehti*, the motions proposed by the new Minister of Education were labelled as Ingman's "emergency works". The editor admitted the tactical worth of Ingman's suggestions (to decrease the pressure on this highly sensitive issue), but the general opinion of the student's magazine about most of the motions, was fairly negative. (YL 3/1929, 85; YL 10/1929, 201–202)

The conflict about "True Finnishness" had a break of approximately a year when the Lapua Movement took over the headlines at the end of 1929. The Lapua Movement was a radical right-wing populist movement, closely connected to the AKS. Its main goal was the opposition against communism. The movement also cut across the ethnolinguistic lines because it consisted of Finnish-speaking members as well as of representatives of the Swedish speaking elite – or "foreign-based super-capitalists", as *Ylioppilaslehti* (15/1932, 251–252) characterised them a few years later. The Lapua Movement almost caused a breaking up of the SPP and also the SPP–SDP front scattered for a moment when the parliament voted about communist acts.

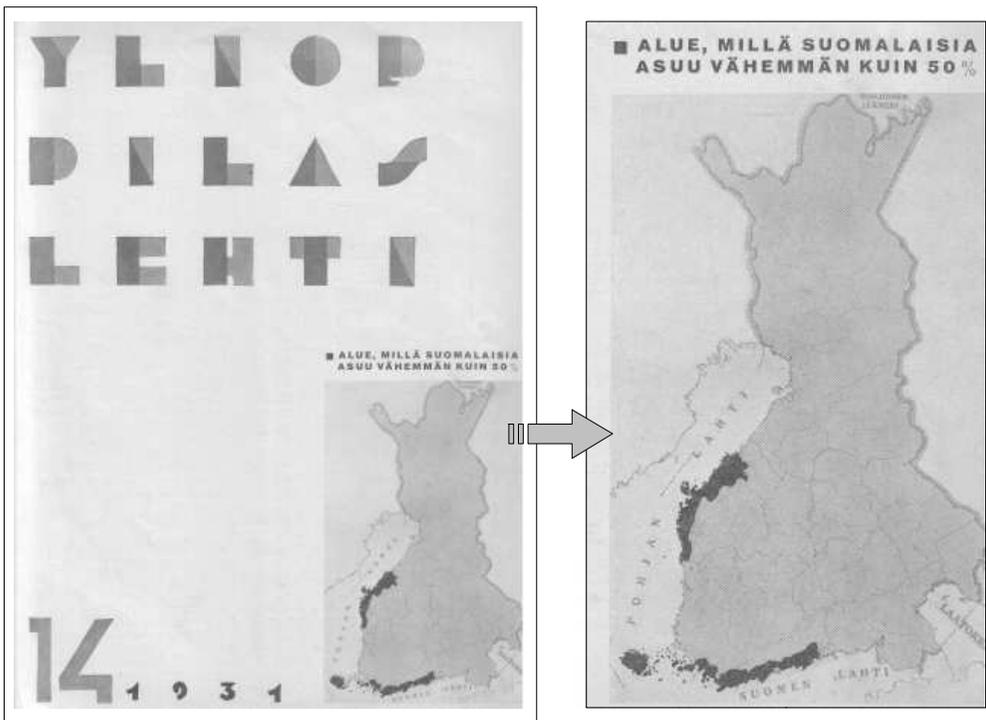
The programme of the People's Patriotic Movement (IKL), which was founded on the ruins of the banned Lapua Movement, included the idea of "True Finnishness", due to the demand of the AKS, even though many leaders of the Lapua Movement, including the leader of the movement Vihtori Kosola, resisted against it. Still, by the middle of the 1930s, the IKL had accepted the spirit of ethnolinguistic politics, typical for the AKS. (Uola 1982, 80–82.)

After a short interruption *Ylioppilaslehti* started a new, and even stronger campaign to attain the finnicization of the University of Helsinki. The student's magazine published a petitioner motion on this issue drafted by the member of parliament Jussi Annala, who convinced over a quarter of the members of parliament to back up his proposal; in practice almost the whole group of Agrarians within the parliament. For the Agrarian party, this general support to Annala's motion was the link to the adoption of a more radical programme of "True Finnishness", which also included the idea of Finnish as the only national language. In this new situation, the ranks of social democrats broke down, which incited the SPP to emphasise its opposition to right-wing radicalism. (YL 5/1931, 65–66; YL 5/1931, 72–73; Uino 1989, 215–219; YL 8/1937, 163).

## Unsatisfied solution

At the end of 1932 a certain culmination phase of the University's language struggle started. In the spirit of the speeches of the national poet and professor V. A. Koskenniemi, the shouts "cut them down", "make Finland Finnish" and "make the University national" became increasingly common (YL 20/1932, 331; YL 21/1932, 347–348; YL 21/1932, 354–

356). They evolved into mottos which were also used in the covers of *Ylioppilaslehti*. The fourth issue of 1932 depicted a Finnish sword to show the seriousness of the conflict. The combativeness of the caption was certainly inspired by the 10th anniversary of the AKS: "Make the State University Finnish! Education allowances according to population proportion! All privileges for Swedish students must be removed!" Occasionally the cover pictures were pure propaganda, such as this of the issue 14/1931 which showed a map of Finland with the caption: "An area which has less than 50% of Finns". The map was darkened in a few areas at the southern and southeast coast, the Ostrobothnian coast and Åland – the Swedish speaking areas of Finland. The "cut them down"-attitude became concrete in the following years when physical fights between "true Finns" and Swedish speakers broke out on the 6th of November, which was traditionally the day of Swedishness (Svenska Dagen). Skirmishes were manifested as street fights and the authorities were needed to calm them down. (Hämäläinen 1968, 204, 209; Klinge 1978b, 173–174; Uino 1989, 221)



*Occasionally, the covers of Ylioppilaslehti were pure propaganda for the "True Finnishness"-movement, like this one from 1931: "An area which has less than 50% of Finns." Image: Ylioppilaslehti 14/1931.*

Based on the meeting of university students organised at the Old Student House in February 1933, appeals were drafted for the Council of State and the government, which resulted in the first version of the new Universities Act, proposed by a special committee set up at the student meeting. The draft had categorically given up the principle of proportionality: the Finnish language came first; teaching in Swedish was only supported if the budget allowed it. It was suggested that all the courses in Swedish would be completely

transferred to the independent Åbo Akademi. This particular proposition was discussed several times, but Åbo Akademi always rejected the idea. The opinion of *Ylioppilaslehti* was unambiguous: "We cannot accept that such a financially impossible motion delays the implementation of the Finnish state university even a moment longer." The great majority rejected the draft bill, because Agrarians as well as the National Coalition Party opposed it. In September 1933, the Ministry of Education launched the idea to establish a new Swedish university in Helsinki with 24 professors, which would receive a share of the property of the University and the Student Union as a kind of starter's budget. A few months earlier, the Agrarians had proposed a language bill on the initiative of Aitosuomalaisten Liitto which would have given Swedish not more than the status of a local language. The draft was related to the approaching parliamentary elections. In the campaign preceding the polls, non-socialist parties aimed to present themselves as the defenders of the symbols of "True Finnishness". The bill was rejected by 91 votes against 88. (Hämäläinen 1968, 206; Uino 1989, 221–222; YL 16/1933, 285–286; YL 8/1937, 163.)

An additional parliamentary session was suggested as a solution in January 1935. It was also the last big performance of the proponents of "True Finnishness". The moment had come "when the final stampede of Finnishness could begin". The parliamentary galleries were overcrowded, whereas it was more or less empty on the floor. The AKS, which was increasingly developing into the radical right section of the IKL, organised all kinds of activities, even though *Ylioppilaslehti* advised the students to avoid party politics (on the other hand, the IKL did not consider itself a political party). The activities of the AKS came to a climax with a demonstration which led to the Snellman statue where red-yellow flags were burned as the symbol of Swedishness. Whistle concerts were organised in front of the houses of professors and politicians, signboards were tarred and smoke bombs exploded. University students burned in a fascist manner a cardboard picture of a cow, referring to "cow trade" (horse trade). At the University itself, a lecture strike was organised. In the parliament the handling of the language act was delayed by marathon speeches of nationalists which were often written by university students.

Orchestrated by the AKS, an extraparliamentary road was taken. Following the example set by the Lapua movement, mass meetings were organised in the provinces. All in all over five hundred meetings were held. It was claimed that altogether over one hundred and thirty thousand people had participated in these meetings and that they had given the authority to a few representatives to go down to Helsinki at the beginning of February to demand the entire finnicization of both the University of Helsinki and the University of Technology. The mass meeting arrived at Senate Square resembling a peasant march by Lapua Movement five year earlier. The declaration of *Ylioppilaslehti* to "the Embassy of the Finnish nation" stated that "now that this embassy has adopted our issue, there are no excuses for denying Finnish people a university in their own language". However, Prime Minister Kivimäki did not make any concessions and "the embassy realised very concretely to be met by a wall of complete incomprehension". (Klinge 1978b, 179–189; Uino 1989, 230–232; Hämäläinen 1968, 221–230; YL 2/1935, 21; YL 2/1935, 23; YL 3/1935, 37.)

The additional parliamentary session was not a success and the situation stood still for a few years. A solution was only reached by A. K. Cajander's coalition government, the first so-called red ochre government (social democrats and centre parties) in 1937. According to the act, named after the Minister of Education Uno Hannula, Swedish speakers received fifteen professorships and Finnish became the only administrative language at the University of Helsinki. All Finnish-speaking professors had to know Finnish and understand Swedish. Swedish speakers, for their part, had to be fluent in Swedish but also

to be able to teach in Finnish. Swedish-speaking students were allowed to use their mother tongue in practicals, as well as in oral and written examinations. The act also abolished the obligation to belong to a student nation. The bill appealed to a feeling of national unity and the urgency of some issues on the international political agenda, due to increasing international tensions. No one was really satisfied with it, but still the act was approved by a clear majority. (Uino 1989, 241–243; Klinge 1978b, 187–189; Hämäläinen 1968, 257–260.)

## On national arenas

Obviously, *Ylioppilaslehti* closely followed all the phases of the Universities Act, as it played an essential role in the whole language struggle. Since 1933, its attitude in this regard was practically an equivalent of the language programme of the IKL (YL 17/1933, 301–302). The language struggle was in fact one of the two dominating topics in *Ylioppilaslehti* in the 1930s, the other one being the relationships with Estonia following on the kindred spirit (Kortti 2009).

The University's finnicization project was clearly an issue which penetrated the public sphere on the national level and *Ylioppilaslehti* had, along with new forms of university students' activism, moved to the first level of the public sphere. *Svenska Pressen* (formerly and later *Nya Pressen*), for instance, published by the Swedish-speaking publisher Amos Andersson, who himself criticised the isolationism and nationalism of Swedish speakers, gave *Ylioppilaslehti* the honour to be one of the first nationalistic publications (YL 21/1925, 349). However, it was not the only publication in this area as the AKS had its own magazine *Suomen Heimo*, and in the autumn of 1926 the journal *Aitosuomalainen* was founded, which became the organ of Aitosuomalaisten Liitto from 1928.

The activities of the right-wing AKS-students reminded of what Habermas (2006) calls the public sphere of 'republican models of democracy'. The republican tradition stresses the political participation of active citizens. During its first years, *Ylioppilaslehti* was mainly a "professional magazine for students" and it reflected the general non-political sentiments of the student world: the magazine followed the student-as-such thinking. However, the situation changed in the 1920s. University students' activities concentrated on the AKS and, along with the language struggle, *Ylioppilaslehti* in particular started to emphasize the student-as-citizen thinking. *Ylioppilaslehti* fits in with Habermas' concept of normative public sphere, because it was about conversational and precisely bourgeois intelligentsia elite. It also gave room for AKS opposition in the letters-to-the-editor section, at least in the 1920s. *Ylioppilaslehti* of the 1930s was, however, increasingly under the hegemony of one ideological tendency, appropriating elements of a totalitarian public sphere. After all, the AKS managed to achieve hegemony only among the students.

Moreover, part of the propaganda strategy of the AKS consisted of controlling or at least influencing the Agrarian newspapers. And in addition to these, they also tried to gain the new electronic media, such as the radio, for the cause of "True Finnishness". The "True Finnishness"-ethos also found its way to advertisements in *Ylioppilaslehti*. A particular tobacco company did even use the efficient target group advertising – segmentation, in the current marketing language – when targeting its advertising message to Finnish-minded university students. 'Erikoinen Kerho' cigarettes were advertised with the slogan: "I speak Finnish – I smoke Kerho." (YL 2/1933, 31).

The previously mentioned division of the press also indicates how problematic the "True Finnishness"-movement was for bourgeois parties, particularly to the National

Coalition Party. The Agrarians could be considered a certain kind of godfather as "True Finnishness" as a term was launched for the first time in April 1921 in the paper *Ilkka*, being the main organ of the party. Even though the AKS practised aggressive propaganda, the organisation eventually did not manage to infiltrate sufficiently into political parties. Of course, some parties did include nationalist themes in their programme (whether or not due to the influence of the AKS), but mostly these manifested themselves rather in words than in actions. Creating ties to the social democrat labour movement failed completely and the SDP twisted the knife when it supported Swedish speakers in the language struggle in the parliament (see Hämäläinen 1968, 116–147; Uino 1989, 196–200). Even though the AKS wanted to stress that it operated outside and above of political parties, its policy of "True Finnishness" was strongly connected with the Agrarians at first, and later in the 1930s particularly with the right-wing radical IKL.

YLIOPPILASLEHTI

**Suomalaisuuden saavutuksia**

Turun Suomalainen Yliopisto.

## Herätys.

Hidas suomalainen luonne tarvitsee voimakkaan "herätyksen" ennenkuin oppii edes pitämään kiinni omasta arvostaan. Itenäisyytemme saavuttamisen jälkeen kului vuosia, ennenkuin suomalaisuus järjestyi toimivaksi voimaksi, "aitosuomalaisuudeksi". Vasta vuosina 1924–25 otettiin yleisemmin puheeksi kansalliset kysymykset niin sivistystyössä kuin talouselämässä.

Erään tärkeän kulutustavaran, tupakan, valmistaminen on meillä yleensä ollut epäsuomalaisissa käsissä. Suomalaiset tupakkatehdasyritykset ovat vuoronsa perään saaneet lopettaa toimintansa. Mutta näihin aikoihin syntyi uusi yritys, Viipurin Tupakka Oy., jonka kohtalo oli muodostuva toisenlaiseksi: sen tuotteita alkoivat suomalaiset tupakkamiehet vaatia. Sattui näet, että eräs tupakkatehdas lahjoitti 5 miljoonaa suomalaisilta tupakkamiehiltä kerättyjä rahoja Turun ruotsalaiselle akatemialle. Se oli herätys, joka sai monen ajattelemaan, mitä suomalaisen miehen sopii polttaa.

**"I speak Finnish  
— poltan Kerhoa"**

VIIPURIN TUPAKKA OY

**Uutuus:**

**Erikoinen  
Kerho**

— erikoistupakka  
ja erikoispanu.  
3 markkaa 25 kpl.

*The "True Finnishness" found its way even to advertisements in Ylioppilaslehti. The Finnish University of Turku was associated to a tobacco brand: "I speak Finnish – I Smoke Kerho." Image: Ylioppilaslehti 2/1933.*

All in all, during the 1920s and 1930s, the idea of "True Finnishness" significantly influenced domestic policy. And it even had an effect on foreign policy – particularly on the relationships with Sweden which appeared as disagreements in international arenas, such as in the League of Nations. Particularly Hjalmar Procopé, long-term Minister for Foreign Affairs (altogether in five governments in the years from 1924 to 1931) experienced "True Finnishness" as an unpleasant brake in international politics and with regard to Swedish relations in particular. (Uino 1989, 201, 212.)

”True Finnishness” was also a problematic issue for Finnish-speaking professors. Part of the whole language struggle was evidently a matter of a generation conflict between university students on the one hand and politicians as well as professors on the other hand, the latter regarded the activities of the former often as too radical and vice versa. Besides, from the start of the ”True Finnishness”-campaign, the proponents of finnicization had the explicit aim to change the views of the older generation. However, it must be emphasised that this was a question of the worldview created by a fairly limited elite, as usual when referring to generation experiences – particularly in the university student world. With this worldview, a fairly efficient generation unit was mobilised which had a soldier-like organisation [6]. In the ideological strategy and effectiveness of this organisation, the AKS, ”True Finnishness” played an important role and *Ylioppilaslehti* was one of the main propaganda media. All in all, *Ylioppilaslehti* was a strictly nationalistic Finnish-minded propaganda magazine throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In this sense, as a thoroughly political university student magazine, it was exceptional, even when compared internationally. As a student publication *Ylioppilaslehti* evoke a significant response in the Finnish public sphere – a position, which continued after the Second World War, still in a different manner.

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- [1] See for instance Hämäläinen 1968; Klinge 1978b [1968]; Uino 1985; Uino 1989, 177–249; Alapuro 1973; Eskelinen 2004; Nygård 1978; Uola 1982; Soikkanen, Timo 1991; Ahti 1999.
- [2] This refers to the dissertation of the philosopher Jürgen Habermas, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, published in 1962, which is considered a classic in the field of research on the public sphere. See Habermas 1989.
- [3] Hämäläinen uses the article by Eklund from 1924 ’Ras, kultur, politik’ in *Svensk i Finland: Sälling och strävanden*, 2. The quotations are from the article.
- [4] This refers to the masters, journeymen and apprentices model, launched by the Finnish social scientist Matti Virtanen (2001, 351–390). Virtanen’s idea, in brief, is that the oldest and the most experienced faction of the generational tradition, forms the class of masters, the journeymen form the middle layer and the latest arrivals become apprentices. Often the academic youth has been led by slightly older activists who have received their education from an older ideology or thinker.
- [5] The reply for the writings in *Uusi Suomi* and *Helsingin Sanomat* was also drafted in the *Ylioppilaslehti* Board (15.5.1926, 5§).
- [6] I have also studied *Ylioppilaslehti* in the same period with a focus on the theories of generation. See Kortti 2008.

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