

# Historical research into racism and racial intolerance in Sweden

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– an analytical knowledge overview

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# Summary

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The purpose of the report is to compile a knowledge base concerning how racism and racial intolerance have been studied in Swedish historical research, and the results to which this research has led. This knowledge base, which is based on an inventory of the collective research situation concerning racism and racial intolerance in Sweden's past, is presented in the report.

In part, the report contains a compilation of the approaches and results of previous research, and in part it contains an analytical discussion in which various terms, definitions and interpretations are compared and problematized. The report adopts an exclusively intersectional perspective, whereby special attention is devoted to how racism and racial intolerance have interacted with such instruments of power as class and gender. The inventory comprises historically oriented works from several scientific disciplines. In certain cases, journalistic works have also been included if they are of a high quality in terms of source references and contribute substantial knowledge about the subject. The focus of the report, with certain exceptions (primarily concerning discrimination against the Sami and Roma/Travelers), is mainly on the period of approximately 1700-1990. And the fact that a large part of the Swedish body of research concerns the period of about 1900-1945 is reflected in the report.

The report is limited specifically to racism and racial intolerance, while closely related phenomena such as nationalism are not addressed. Exactly what should count as "research into racism and racial intolerance" is not self-evident, however. Research that has used these precise concepts are naturally included in the report. However, it also includes research that, without necessarily using these terms, addresses discrimination, as well as

negative or stereotypical statements about people based on preconceptions concerning nationality, "race" or ethnic culture. Whether hostility directed at religious groups should be included was a difficult question. Criticism of religion cannot automatically be regarded as racism or racial intolerance. At the same time, it is obvious that a great deal of hostility towards religious groups often interacts in practice with preconceptions about biological "race", nationality or ethnicity in a way that makes it possible to link them to phenomena like racism and racial intolerance.

## What general concepts have the researchers used?

There is no consensus about the general concepts that should be used, and how they should be understood. However, certain tendencies can be discerned. Firstly, it is conspicuously unusual that Swedish historically oriented researchers use the concepts "racism" and "racial intolerance" at all as analytical tools. Secondly, when the terms are used, they are relatively often used without their meaning being defined. Thirdly, the definitions that are made of the term "racism" are often narrow and thus result in relatively few phenomena being considered as racism. Fourthly, these definitions have virtually always been made without the researchers having been inspired by, or having entered into a dialog with, the comprehensive research about the concept that is found in the social sciences. It is only in recent years that certain theoretical concepts from international social science have started to be tested by historically oriented researchers in Sweden: "institutional discrimination", "structural racism" and "racialization" are a few examples.

The theoretical terms that are nonetheless used

are primarily “racial intolerance” and “racism”. The closely related concept “xenophobia” comes up a few times but has been subject to strong objections; critics take the view that the suffix “phobia” draws thoughts to individual illness rather than to the social conditions that facilitate discrimination. The term “racial intolerance”, when it has been used, has often had to pertain to a wide construction of conceptions about the characteristics and differentness of ethnic groups. However, this concept has also met with criticism; for example, that it risks cementing the idea that certain groups are “aliens”.

“Racism” has generally been used with a significantly narrower meaning than “racial intolerance”. The narrow definitions are all founded in the history of ideas or are discursive, and racism is primarily defined in terms of explicitly stated ideas, while practices and structures are generally not mentioned. The definitions also incorporate assumptions that racism presupposes that humanity is divided into “races” or on the basis of appearance and biological heritage, thus excluding discrimination and preconceptions that are based on ideas concerning “culture” or religion.

Narrow definitions mean that the concept of “racism” does not expand and become too sprawling. They also make it easier to distinguish historical breaks between, for example, preconceptions about “culture” and biological preconceptions about “race”. However, they also have problems that should be discussed. They lead, *inter alia*, to statements and phenomena that might very well be termed racist in the current social climate and in the social sciences not being designated as “racist”.

## Antisemitism

The first efforts in research concerning the history of Swedish antisemitism were made as early as the 1920s, but it is primarily in the past 30 years that a larger amount of research has been produced, and the field is currently well-established in Swedish

historical research.

How the term “antisemitism” should be defined, however, is far from self-evident. In older research, explicit definitions were rarely made; however, the term was implicitly used in an often narrow way and reserved for describing political campaigns in which discrimination against Jews was a stated objective. It was not until about 1985 that researchers started to anchor their studies in international theorizing, and only recently has the term been discussed in a more exhaustive manner. A common feature of the research of recent decades is that the term is defined in a relatively broad manner and, to a great extent, focuses on ideas, conceptions and cultural representations. Antisemitism is thus viewed as a structure of hostile conceptions about Jews as a group that can be expressed in explicit ideas, cultural representations, discrimination or violence. Certain researchers want to make the definitions even broader, and consider that stereotypical pictures of Jews should also be defined as antisemitism, even if they are not directly hostile. On the other hand, other researchers take the view that the definitions have become too broad. Certain of them have chosen to use the term “allosemitism” to characterize non-hostile but prejudiced statements about Jews.

The period prior to approximately 1850 is still largely only studied in older research. This shows that Jews certainly did move to Sweden as early as the 1500s and 1600s, but then only on condition that they converted to Christianity. It was not until the end of the 1700s that it became possible for certain Jews, and under highly conditional structures, to live in Sweden and to practice their Jewish religion. These reforms had nothing to do with religious tolerance, but were instead instigated by royalty for financial reasons. The reforms met with resistance in newspaper debates, and anti-Semitic preconceptions, which have since proven to be highly persistent, existed even then; for example, the idea that Jews engage in international conspiracies and

threaten to take over the entire economy.

The conditions for Jewish migrants were established in the profoundly discriminatory document known as the “Jewish regulation” of 1782. For example, Jews were only allowed to live in certain cities, they were not electable to political positions, they lacked suffrage, they were not allowed to engage in business activities that competed with the crafts conducted by guilds, they could only marry other Jews, and they were forced to take care of their own poor (but they had to pay the same taxes as others). Gradually, increasing numbers of exceptions were made to the regulation, which was abolished by the government in 1838. This did not mean that Jews were granted the same rights as others, but the economic discrimination was eased. The abolition met with protests, particularly from the bourgeoisie in the cities. It is possible that anti-Semitic resistance also played a role in the violence that was directed at certain Jewish families in Stockholm and against the synagogue in Stockholm on a number of occasions in connection with other political unrest during the years 1838-52. However, there is no consensus concerning how important a role antisemitism played in these events, and there is scope for conducting more in-depth research into it.

The great emancipation of Jews with Swedish citizenship took place in the second half of the 1800s, when this group was gradually granted almost the same rights as other citizens. However, research has illuminated the fact that the emancipation only pertained to Jews with citizenship. During the final decades of the 1800s, Jews from eastern Europe accounted for a new wave of immigration to Sweden, and they were exposed to profound anti-Semitic preconceptions in the general debate and to actual discrimination in the exercise of public authority; for example, when they applied to become Swedish citizens. Certain cities also took action to limit the settlement of the new migrants and, when parliament decided in the 1880s that only Swedish citi-

zens were to be permitted to peddle goods, this was a measure aimed at this group.

A large part of the research of recent decades has addressed the persistent cultural representations of Jews that have occurred in the comic press, literature and films over about the past 175 years. As early as in the political satirical drawings of the 1850s, Jews were portrayed as crooked nosed, ugly, disloyal and obsessed with the thought of making money. The same stereotypes were conveyed in the comic press, which had large reader circulations about 1870-1930, and were also regular features in Swedish feature films in the 1920s and 1930s. Several individual Jewish cultural figures, such as the artist Isaac Grünewald, the literature critic Oscar Levertin and the composer Moses Pergament were also subjected to similar stereotypes. The pictures of Jews show such temporal continuity that certain researchers held the view that “hegemonic” antisemitism prevailed in Sweden at that time, or alternatively that the period was characterized by an “anti-Semitic background noise.”

Cultural antisemitism also occurred in other parts of Europe at that time, in places where political movements were also organized with anti-Semitic discrimination as their objective. That sort of organization-building had relatively little success in Sweden, despite a number of attempts. Certain protectionist organizations and societies of merchants put forward demands to limit the rights of Jews. More explicit campaigns were conducted by such organizations as the Swedish Anti-Semitic Association during the 1920s, and by the scriptwriter Elof Eriksson, who published the profoundly anti-Semitic periodical, *Nationen*.

On the basis of the research produced, it is possible to make certain observations of a general character. The first is about the strong continuity pervading several anti-Semitic concepts and attitudes, for example, that Jews strived to control the Swedish economy and that Jews were part of an international

conspiracy. The second was that, at the same time as these preconceptions showed great continuity, they were also elastic. In an incongruous manner, Jews were given the blame for highly divergent phenomena. From the left, Jews were occasionally blamed for being capitalists and, in certain parts of the revolutionary left, anti-Semitic preconceptions have flavored political criticism of the state of Israel's behavior in the Palestine conflict (how much and in what way, however, have been a highly debated issue). From the right, Jews have instead been accused of being behind both communism and the labor movement in general. From a cultural conservative direction, Jews have been given the blame for a series of "modern" phenomena: everything from Jazz music to a more liberal view of sexuality.

The third observation involves the conceptual basis for antisemitism. A number of researchers have pointed out that ideas emerged in the 1800s that humanity could be divided into biological "races" with genetic mental characteristics. Biological racism influenced antisemitism, but without it being possible to point to a certain point in time when antisemitism founded in religious and social aspects was replaced by "biological" antisemitism. On the contrary, certain researchers have pointed out that ideas portraying Jews with genetic characteristics existed as early as the 1700s, and that religiously legitimated antisemitism also occurred during the 1900s. Antisemitism was also influenced by biological racism but it was never dependent on it, and it is still not today.

### Swedish society and the Sami

On the basis of a currently comprehensive body of research, the report can affirm that contacts between the Sami and the Swedish government have occurred for a long time. As early as in the 1500s, large parts of Sápmi (familiarily known as Lapland) were relatively well integrated into the Swedish tax and

legal system. However, the first major attempt to influence the Sami's internal affairs did not occur until the 1600s. It was then that the Christian, fundamentalist Swedish government focused its efforts on impeding the Sami from practicing what were perceived as heathen religious customs, such as the use of drums (goavddis) and sacrifices during so-called seitar. The government initiated what is described in the research as a forced christianization whereby the Sami's religious artefacts were destroyed or confiscated. At the same time, the first economic intrusion into Sápmi occurred with the aim of starting mining operations.

In the 1700s, an economic process was initiated that involved the state additionally limiting the Sami's access to natural resources. The Sami who paid tax had then owned so-called "Lapp-taxed land" for a long time and their right to this had been upheld in Swedish courts of law. However, the county boards then started, without legal grounds, to redefine the "Lapp-taxed land" as land of the crown. This meant that the state seized the Sami's right of ownership to these territories and that the state was able to permit non-Sami to build properties on the land.

That the economic infringement caused problems for the Sami people had been observed as early as in the mid-1800s. At that time, the basis for a cohesive Sami policy started to be laid by parliament and the government. This remained largely intact up to the mid-1900s and had wide-ranging consequences. One of the reasons underlying the policy was to "protect" the Swedish Sami. However, it was strongly conditional, equating in practice to ethnic discrimination, and "the protection" applied only to people that the Swedish government regarded as "real" Sami. The policy had been influenced by biological ideas about the "racial" characteristics of the Sami, although Swedish researchers had emphasized these to different extents. The policy was often called the "Lapp-must-be-a-Lapp policy" after an expression

of that time. It was based on the picture of the Sami as an exotic people who would not cope with the encounter with the “superior” Swedish culture.

The foundation for the policy was the view that the only occupation for which the Sami people were suited was nomadic reindeer farming, and only reindeer farmers in the Swedish mountain district were to be considered “real” Sami. This meant that the Sami who supported themselves by means of other activities would never be recognized as Sami and would not be granted the special rights that had been introduced during the decades around the end of the 1900s, primarily because of the regulation that only Sami had the right to farm reindeer.

The participants in the debate about the Sami policy – a debate in which the Sami people themselves were not considered desirable parties – were worried that excessively few Sami would choose reindeer farming as a business occupation. Many of them were particularly afraid that the Sami had too much contact with “civilization” and were thus being drawn away from reindeer farming. If the non-reindeer-farming Sami were affected by being made invisible, the reindeer-farming Sami were instead affected by a number of political decisions designed to achieve ethnic segregation; the reindeer-farming Sami were to be impeded from having too much contact with Swedish society. This discrimination had many faces, but it was primarily two that attracted particular attention: education policy and housing policy.

Starting in the 1910s, “the Nomad school” was introduced and this type of school was intended only for Sami who were nomadic reindeer farmers. Since the objective was to get the children to continue the reindeer farming conducted by their parents, the school was designed so that the children would not become accustomed to an excessively comfortable life. The conditions in the school premises were also usually meagre, not least in what were known as the “household goahtis” where the

children lived under conditions resembling a boarding school. The children also received less education in the subjects to which other Swedish children were entitled. The Nomad school was reformed substantially in the 1950s but did not become a totally voluntary type of school until 1962.

In terms of housing policy, the government implemented a number of measures to prevent reindeer farmers in the Swedish mountain districts from obtaining permanent residences with a high material standard. The Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886 gave government civil servants considerable power to deny reindeer-farming Sami permission to construct permanent buildings and they could even decide where the various reindeer-farming groups were allowed to congregate, measures that certain researchers have described as forced displacement.

It was not until 1950 that the Sami were given the right to build homes on reindeer grazing land, and not until 1959 that they became entitled to housing allowances.

Nowadays, there is a large and growing scientific production describing these discriminatory decisions and the intrusion into Sápmi starting in the 1600s, although there have also been many discussions about how the state’s actions should be interpreted. One highly debated issue concerns the terms that should be used to describe the segregation policies of the period from about 1850 to 1950. From the 1970s up to the turn of the Millennium, this policy was often described as “Social Darwinist”, a term that most researchers of today have abandoned. Subsequently, a number of researchers have chosen to designate the policy as “racist”, and the concept of racism has perhaps had a wider analytical use in research into the Sami policy than in any other case that is discussed in the report. The existence of biological racial arguments as the reasons for introducing the Nomad school has been particularly emphasized. Other researchers have underscored statements describing Sami as a “cul-

ture” rather than an unchangeable “race”. However, most of them emphasize that arguments pertaining to both “race” and “culture” were important.

Another issue is the extent to which the intrusion into Sápmi can be described as an element in Swedish colonialism. The researchers representing such an opinion emphasize that colonialism must then be defined broadly: although the Sami policy was not based on military conquests on foreign continents, it had colonial elements in the sense that a stronger party attempted to change a weaker party’s internal religious, cultural, economic and social conditions.

The report also states that, to a considerable extent, the history of Sami policy shows that the power to define and designate a group affects the design of discriminatory politics. The Sami policy was long targeted at the groups that the state regarded as “real” Sami, or “Lapps” using the terminology of the time, and the state thereby recognized only reindeer farmers in the mountain districts as “real”. However, many of the Sami lived in different ways, and a consequence of the Swedish Sami policy was that these were made invisible.

## Discrimination against Roma and Travelers

Groups of Roma and Travelers have existed in Sweden since the 1500s, and since then they have been subjected to various forms of discrimination. Nevertheless, this is a phenomenon that did not arouse any significant scientific interest until the past approximately 15 years. The research that has been produced thereafter has been compelled to manage certain terminological problems. “Roma” and “Travelers” are relatively modern designations used by people to describe their own identity. The terms used in historical sources, which have usually been created by authorities, are instead the derogatory words “gypsy” and “tinker”. Research in the

field is relatively united in agreeing that the terms Roma/Travelers and “gypsy”/“tinker” have not necessarily had the same meaning. The authorities could, for example, point to certain families as being “tinkers” without having to have identified them as Travelers. Certain researchers have opted to translate the negative words used in the sources as Roma/Traveler in order to avoid conveying a racist usage of language. Others have instead written, for example, “people who were called gypsies” to emphasize that they are studying discrimination in society and not the group’s ethnic self-designation.

Discussions have also been conducted about the possibility of introducing a collective theoretical designation for this discrimination, for example, by using the term “anti-gypsy”. Although the term intends to illuminate similarities and continuities in society’s preconceptions about groups of Roma and Travelers, it has not achieved general acceptance: arguments against it are that continuity is emphasized at the expense of differences and change, and that during certain periods groups designated “gypsy” and “tinker”, respectively, were regarded as distinctly different by the authorities, whereby the suffix “-gypsy” did not capture this circumstance. The report states that we currently know a great deal about society’s encounter with groups of Roma and Travelers. During the 1500s and 1600s, the edicts were frequently contradictory and it is difficult to talk about a cohesive policy. Most of the measures were designed to drive traveling families out of Sweden, which became more difficult when people from these groups were born in Sweden and could not be sent to another country. The families were also denied the right to be baptized and buried in church. During the second half of the 1600s, the policy of exclusion was replaced gradually by an integration policy; the ban on baptism was repealed and the state used men from these groups as soldiers. Although during the 1700s, a number of families were granted a legal right to reside in cities and

engage in certain forms of commerce and crafts, the integration policy was conditional, and a number of people from the groups were actually condemned to hard labor.

Nonetheless, the policy of exclusion continued at local level. As early as the 1700s, certain parishes issued decrees banning the inhabitants from allowing “tinkers” or “gypsies” to spend the night on their farms, and, around 1900, such bans were issued in a number of parts of Sweden. At the beginning of the 20th century, certain rural municipalities used tax revenue to acquire houses that Roma and Travelers would otherwise have moved into. After World War II, many municipalities attempted to prevent Swedish Roma from becoming permanent residents by impeding their registration as residents, and certain municipalities participated in evicting people from Romany estates. On the whole, research has shown a very long tradition of municipal exclusion targeted at Roma and Travelers, which bears obvious similarities to the evictions that Swedish municipalities, supported by the state, are implementing against groups of Roma today. The exclusion policy also included violence. During the period of approximately 1870-1955, there were repeated incidents of local inhabitants arming themselves and assaulting families of Roma and Travelers and evicting them from the community. The riots in Jönköping in 1948 are perhaps the best known, but they are not the only example.

At the end of the 1800s, a nationwide political debate arose about the actions that society should take against the Roma and Travelers. During this debate, which was often conducted under the name of “the gypsy matter” or “the tinker matter”, the local incidents of exclusion were criticized. Instead priests and liberal-social politicians advocated compulsory assimilation, by means, for example, of a proposal for the systematic compulsory care of all children from the families of tinkers. What soon emerged were biological ideas claiming that “gyp-

sies” and “tinkers” were “races” with unchangeable characteristics.

The research has particularly pointed to the proposals presented in 1923 by the government’s “Committee for the Care of the Needy”, which had the assignment of issuing a statement on “the gypsy matter” or “the tinker matter”. Inspired by similar activities in Norway, the Committee proposed that the state should support private associations that undertook to operate homes for the children of “tinkers”. However, no such associations actually saw the light of day, despite attempts that were made in the 1920s. Concerning “the gypsy matter”, the committee did not propose any compulsory assimilation measures. Instead the state should impede the group’s mobility to such an extent that they would choose to leave the country. However, there is no support in the research for the claim that the committee was to have introduced a rule that Roma families were only allowed to stay for three weeks in the same municipality – a claim that is included in certain contemporary government inquiries – and this has not been established empirically.

During about 1920-45, the debate was increasingly characterized by arguments concerning “race”. A number of actors, including the National Board of Health and Welfare, then advocated an active sterilization policy particularly in relation to the families regarded as “tinkers”. It is not known exactly how many Roma and Travelers were sterilized pursuant to the Sterilization Acts of 1935 and 1941, and the 1938 Abortion Act, and there is surprisingly little research into the matter. To date, only random checks and statistical estimates have been made, and there is scope here for further research. Nor does any consensus prevail concerning the extent to which it is possible to talk about a “systematic” or “targeted” sterilization policy against Roma and Travelers. Although these Acts did not contain any wordings to the effect that ethnicity or “race” could be used as a basis for sterilization, the texts

of the Acts were so vague that they provided scope for considerable subjectivity in terms of application. Many Roma and Travelers have also borne witness to the fact that as children they were subject to be taken into the care of the social services; however, systematic research into the matter is lacking.

In 1942-44, an intensive inquiry into the “tinker matter” and the “gypsy matter” was conducted by the National Board of Health and Welfare; however, it never succeeded in designing functioning criteria for who should actually be considered a “tinker” – despite the fact that the authority commissioned the services of the Racial Biological Institution in Uppsala to conduct, in semi-compulsory ways, racial biology measurements of 117 people, including a number of children. Subsequently, the “tinker matter” faded away as a national political project and the interest of government authorities’ moved increasingly over to the “gypsy matter”.

After 1945, a number of programs were launched to ensure that Swedish Roma were entitled to receive elementary education and housing, and these measures were frequently opposed by municipal authorities. A protracted debate was conducted about whether Roma children were at all suitable to attend the same schools as other children, and the right to education was never a given. No decisive steps were taken until the 1960s and 1970s, following demands from the Roma’s own civil rights movement, which had had been formed.

The Committee for the Care of the Needy had already implemented a nationwide “inventory” of the number of “gypsies” and “tinkers”. This was the starting shot for a long Swedish tradition of personal registration of Roma and Travelers: the report states that the illegal register maintained by the police authority in Skåne, which was uncovered in 2013, was just one of several. During the 1930s and 1940s, municipal authorities in Malmö, Gothenburg and Jönköping created a number of registers of “tinker families”.

Comprehensive registers of the groups were also established in connection with the National Board of Health and Welfare’s inquiry of 1942-44. The government’s so-called “Gypsy inquiry” created its own register in the mid-1950. At approximately the same time, what was known as the “Gypsy section” was created within the City of Stockholm’s social services, which established files on virtually all Roma born in Stockholm during 1881-1980. All of these registers were created without the consent of those who were registered and contained sensitive personal information.

A number of proposals have been put forward concerning how this long-standing discriminatory policy should be contextualized. Certain researchers have emphasized the role played by the state; others the role played by municipal authorities and local society. Certain researchers have related the emergence of a national debate on the “tinker matter” and the “gypsy matter” to the ethnic nationalism of the 1800s, to the liberal-social policies of the turn of the 20th century or to the so-called “folkhem (Swedish people’s home) policies” of the 1930s. Others have wanted to see even greater continuities and have related the policy to a tradition of measures against traveling families that can be discerned as far back as the policies of the 1500s and 1600s against groups regarded as vagrants. These researchers also have different interpretations of the importance of “racial” arguments to “the gypsy matter” and “the tinker matter” from about 1900 and onwards (exactly when the ideas had an impact is a matter of debate). That such ideas existed and occasionally dominated the debate has been established; however, the research has also shown that discrimination existed during periods when the groups were not primarily described as biological “races”.

In recent years, it is possible to see increased interest in transnational analyses of the research field. A number of researchers have emphasized that political measures aimed at traveling groups

had been implemented in our neighboring Nordic countries at about the same time as in Sweden; and that Swedish actors were often aware of these and, in addition, were inspired by them.

### **Discrimination against Finnish migrants and speakers of Meänkieli**

Finnish and Meänkieli (Tornedal Finnish) are national minority languages in today's Sweden. As opposed to the other national minorities, however, there is relatively little research into how speakers of Finnish and Meänkieli were treated in Sweden's past. The report states that there is scope for further research. On the basis of the research that is available, however, it is apparent that Swedish feature films in the first half of the 1900s contained stereotypical portrayals of Finns, and that Finnish labor immigrants in the middle of the century were occasionally treated in a derogatory way by the local community. The research also shows that at the turn of the 20th century the Meänkieli-speaking part of the Tornedalen population was occasionally described as "degenerate" and inferior in racial biology terms by Swedish-speaking debaters. The state's policy in Tornedalen has been described as a policy of Swedification, which primarily found expression in the school sector and was designed to force out Meänkieli as a language. For example, so-called work cabins were established for the children of Tornedalen, which were formally voluntary but in practice obligatory. Speaking Meänkieli was forbidden in the work cabins, which were run by private organizations. This activity became less intense after the 1930s, but it was not discontinued until the early 1950s.

### **Islamophobia**

In our own age, Swedish Muslims are the targets of hostile attitudes and discrimination, as are Swedes who in racist rhetoric are associated with Islam. This entails something more than "just" criticism of

religion, since the attitudes are connected to racist preconceptions about "Arabs", "terrorism" and the like. The discrimination is occasionally characterized as "Islamophobia", a term that is also used in the report. Even though the term has rarely been used in historical research, there is some research that shows that today's stereotypical pictures of Muslims have long-standing connections in history, and that today's Islamophobia has therefore not arisen out of a vacuum. However, the report states that this is a field in which a great deal of research is still required. It can be stated, *inter alia*, that Islamophobic preconceptions existed in Sweden long before the country had any Muslim population. The earliest occasions were in a Christian religious context and, in the Christian fundamentalist Sweden of the 1600s, Islam is described as a fanatical religion that strives to make Christianity extinct. The images of Muslims as cruel and fanatical were subsequently conveyed into more secularized ages. They existed in the Swedish comic press of the turn of the 20th century, and in encyclopedias and educational books. In the latter, they were supplemented with categorical statements to the effect that Islam was a religion that was oppressive of women, and one that tried to conquer the world through violence and terror. In all of these contexts, it is difficult to draw exact lines between phenomena such as Islamophobia and orientalism, since Muslims are often associated with more general, stereotypical images of "the Orient" and (particularly Arabian) "Orientals".

It was not until after World War II that Sweden had a Muslim population in the proper sense of the word. Researchers focusing on contemporary history have shown that while racial intolerance has certainly existed in Sweden ever since then, it was not until the end of the 1980s that Muslims, in particular, started to be pointed to as a specific "threat" in social debate. Since then, Islam has been depicted as a threat to "Swedish" values and to equality, and is also associated with terrorism and religious fana-

ticism. The report states that these preconceptions have long-standing historical continuity, both in Sweden and the rest of Europe.

## Sweden's participation in colonialism and the slave trade

For several hundred years, Sweden was a colonial power that participated actively in the slave trade, albeit on a relatively small scale. It has been known for a long time that this was the case, but it was not until the turn of the Millennium that the subject started to generate considerable research, and it is currently a rapidly growing field of research.

The first colony was New Sweden, which was founded in 1638 on the east coast of North America. The project lasted just a few decades and was hardly successful. In older historical descriptions, New Sweden is occasionally hailed as an unusually peaceful colonial project. The colonialists did not commit any massacres or engage in any military conquests. As Swedish researchers have recently shown, however, this was primarily because the objective of the colony was solely of a commercial economic nature and the fact that this underfunded colony was in an exposed military situation. Somewhat later, in what is now Ghana, a short-term trading station called Cabo Corso (The Swedish Gold Coast), was established and used, among other things, for slave trading. This marked the start of the slave trade under the Swedish flag, which took place for nearly two hundred years and comprised Transatlantic slave trading, as well as slave trading in the Mediterranean.

Sweden's longest-serving colony was St. Bartholomew in the Caribbean, which was under the control of Swedes from 1784 to 1878. At the end of the 1800s, the town Gustavia on this island was an important base for slave trading under the Swedish flag, but it was also used as a transit harbor for slave trading from other countries. Although it is difficult

exactly to quantify the scope of the slave trade on St. Bartholomew, the latest calculation concluded that at least 87 slave ships set out from Gustavia during the years 1785-1829 (of which 37 under the Swedish flag) and that the total number of slaves was at least 7,370. The slave trade was not stopped until the 1830s. However, slavery continued to be permitted on St. Bartholomew and was actively supported by the Swedish colonial administration, and slaves who did not obey their owners met with extremely cruel punishments. In the peak year, 1812, there were 2,400 slaves on the island. Slavery on St. Bartholomew was not abolished until 1847.

Although Sweden did not have any other colonies, a number of Swedes participated individually in, for example, the colonial administration of the Belgian Congo. A number of researchers have also studied how Swedish discoverers, missionaries and other travelers considered people in Africa and Asia with colonial eyes; the white European "civilization" was described consistently as superior to the African and Asian societies to which these travelers came.

## Afrophobia

People with black skins have lived in Sweden for several hundred years. Some of these came to the country under circumstances similar to kidnapping in the 1700s, while others came voluntarily during the 1800s. Nonetheless, historical research into Swedish society's attitudes to people with a black skin is very limited and there is scope for further research. In the social sciences, the subject is more dynamic. There the racism to which black people are exposed is designated "Afrophobia", a term that is also used in the report.

On the basis of the research that has nevertheless been conducted, it can be stated that the pictures of black people that flourished in Sweden, particularly in approximately 1850-1950, were based on extremely derogatory and coarse stereotypes, and were

frequently affected a great deal by biological ideas of “race”. The images were partly a result of colonialism, but were also used to legitimize colonial oppression. They were seen within a number of media and cultural genres, such as in geography books in schools, in children’s literature, in the silent movies of the 1920s, and in film documentaries and music journalism. They described black people (particularly those of African origin) as childish, cowardly, irrational, lazy and stupid – characteristics that were frequently claimed to be due to inbred “racial” characteristics. The power of the white Europeans was occasionally described as necessary in order to “foster” the peoples of Africa to obedience and “civilization”. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that these images started to be challenged in a more fundamental manner, albeit without disappearing completely.

### The myth of the generous refugee policy

Sweden is often upheld as a country with a generous migration and asylum policy, based on international solidarity and ideas about human rights. The report states that historical research provides little support for such a picture. The research actually describes a Swedish migration and asylum policy that has been extremely restrictive for long periods, that has occasionally been influenced by explicit preconceptions about “race”, and in which refugees are conspicuously often depicted as a threat to Swedish welfare or to Swedish culture.

In the years 1860-1914, passport freedom prevailed and there was in principle no impediment to entering Sweden. However, the state could deport people who were not Swedish citizens. The right of deportation was used relatively often and, during the decades around the turn of the 20th century, the research has shown that hateful emotions of racial intolerance were stirred up against particularly ex-

posed groups of migrants, such as Jewish migrants from Eastern Europe. Other groups that were pointed to as a threat to Swedish society included poor Russian migrants from the Novgorod area, Christian Armenians, and migrants from southern Italy. It was not until 1914 that parliament passed an elaborate deportation law, following a debate that included both anti-Semitic arguments and labor-market policy motives. The Deportation Act also contained what is possibly the singly most ethnically discriminatory legal paragraph in modern Swedish history: all immigration of “gypsies” was forbidden. This ban was not removed until 1954. More comprehensive laws concerning migration policy were passed in 1927 and 1937, and explicit “racial” arguments were emphasized in the liberal government’s bill that formed the foundation for the 1927 Act (in addition to labor-market policy motives).

In the 1930s, refugees from Nazi Germany started to try to find their way to Sweden to seek asylum, particularly after the November pogrom of 1938. They were met with aggressive opinion campaigns, organized, among others, by student groups from Uppsala and Lund, who protested against any thought of accepting Jewish refugees. A great deal of attention has been devoted to these campaigns in research. The campaigns contained arguments that were later repeated time and again in Swedish anti-refugee rhetoric; if we accept a few refugees, we will then be exposed to an uncontrollable “invasion”, refugees threaten Swedish jobs, and Swedish welfare is threatened with collapse. Similar anti-refugee views were also heard in major Swedish authorities. The National Board of Health and Welfare described, for example, the migration of Jewish refugees as a matter of “race” and kept special registers of Jewish refugees. The research has also shown that Jews were exposed to discrimination when having their asylum requests heard in the years 1938-44, whereby it was significantly more difficult for Jews to be granted residence permits or

visas than for other groups.

Another group of migrants during World War II comprised refugees from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, often referred to as “Baltic people” in the Swedish debate. There were also anti-refugee campaigns against this group just after the end of the war. In 1945, for example, the textile workers’ trade union in Norrköping demanded that all “Baltic people” be extradited and, in certain industries, the migrants were subject to structural discrimination in that they had to conduct the most arduous and monotonous work duties.

Although about 1910-45 is the most well-researched period in this field, the report states that studies have been published in recent years that address migration policy even after 1945, occasionally with different conclusions. Certain researchers have emphasized the international solidarity and equality objectives of the post-war period’s migration policy, while others have claimed that it was more complicated than that. They have instead emphasized that the labor immigration of the 1950s and 1960s was occasionally regarded as somewhat problematical at the time, even if with hindsight it has been common to portray it as something that most observers viewed as positive. As early as about 1970, labor immigration was also sharply curtailed, in part based on the argument that non-Nordic immigrants found it difficult to adapt to Swedish culture. At the same time, “immigrants” started to be connected with housing segregation and social problems in the political debate. Some researchers have claimed that the aggressive anti-refugee propaganda that started to be disseminated in Sweden in about 1980 ended up influencing the political debate in general; statements suggesting that refugees threatened Swedish welfare and that they could not “adapt” also appeared in government inquiries during the 1980s.

The report states that research on the whole has shown that Swedish migration policy has a tradition of restriction rather than generosity and that refu-

gees are often depicted as a threat. Some of these threats have a long history and display a number of similarities with the threats that Swedish politicians also paint today: immigration of refugees is said to lead to a collapse of the welfare system, and it is claimed that even limited reception of refugees could give rise to an uncontrollable wave of migrants. But the research also shows that these threats have never materialized. Virtually incessantly, Sweden has increasingly become a more affluent country over the past 150 years, with more developed welfare, and in that respect neither the immigration of refugees nor the reception of other groups of migrants has constituted any tangible “threat”. Ironically, the research also shows that politicians and other participants in the social debate tend to forget this. In fact, a pattern that is discernible throughout is that an immigrant group that is depicted as a threat at a certain point in time is described as “good” 20 or 30 years later.

### Swedish racial research

The Institute of Racial Biology, which was founded with party-political unity by the Swedish parliament and set up in Uppsala in 1921, has often stood as a symbol for the comprehensive Swedish research into matters concerning race in the first half of the 1900s. However, the report states that this was a scientific activity that had started long before that year and one that was not conducted solely by the Institute of Racial Biology. Indeed, it was an activity that in certain regards continued to exist, albeit in a changed format, in the second half of the 1900s. The report states that this tradition of racial research has yet to be examined in an all-embracing research project. Considerable research has instead focused specifically on the first decade of the Institute of Racial Biology, and there is great scope for conducting further research about the other racial sciences in Sweden.

The report also states that this field is in need of more precise terminological definitions of concepts such as “racial biology”, “racial research” and “racial hygiene”. In the scientific literature and in popular history, these concepts are very rarely given exact definitions and they are used in partly different ways by different authors. The report argues in favor of the importance of keeping these three concepts separate and of giving precise definitions of their meanings. In order to provide inspiration for a terminological debate, the report also contains proposals concerning such definitions. “Racial biology” is given a narrow definition that pertains only to research that has called itself racial biology, while “racial research” is given a broader definition and pertains to all types of research that makes statements of a racial nature about groups of people (regardless of whether or not the word “race” is used. The term “racial hygiene” is defined in the same way as the English term “eugenics”. It refers to policies that are legitimized using statements about people’s biological heritage and that attempt to influence the composition of the population. The report also argues in favor of the importance of critically investigating the human genetic research of our own time and the use of DNA analyses in, for example, archeology, and also of discussing the similarities and differences between these activities and the racial research that was conducted earlier.

The report states that there is not only scope for research projects that study the emergence of the Swedish racial research tradition in the 1700s and 1800s, but also that the research that has been conducted to date has provided us with knowledge about certain main features of the process. There were moves towards a scientific division of humanity on the basis of, inter alia, skin color as early as the time of Carl von Linné. The real start, however, can be set at the middle of the 1800s, in the form of the activities of the natural historian Sven Nilsson and anatomist Anders Retzius. Nilsson and Retzius used

skulls to determine which “people” lived in what is currently Sweden in prehistoric times, and Retzius launched a method, using the so-called cephalic index, that could be used to measure the skulls of living people. The breakthrough for the large-scale use of the cephalic index came in 1897-1902, when anatomists Gustaf Retzius and Carl Magnus Fürst arranged measurements of 44,939 men doing military service. This and other research projects were considered to prove a thesis that was subsequently spread in, for example, school books up to the 1950s, namely that the “Nordic race” that purportedly lives in Sweden had existed in Sweden for thousands of years and that this “race” was unique in the world for being “pure” and free from the “mixing of races”.

This research took an interest in physical characteristics. In the early 1900s, it became increasingly usual for racial researchers and racial biologists also to claim to be able to explain the mental characteristics and social behaviors of people and, by means of racial hygiene, to be able to reduce the number of criminal, sick and sufferers of “amentia” in the population. In part, this was connected with the rediscovery of Mendel’s genetics in about 1900 and in part to the powerful expansion of social politics that occurred at the same time. At that time, racial research became institutionalized to a greater extent than previously, and the driving force in that process was a group of men who in the research have been described as a “racial biology network”, under the leadership of Herman Lundborg. The network regarded racial biology not only as a scientific discipline but also, to a certain extent, as a science of society; it was claimed that society was threatened by an ongoing “degeneration”, and social divisions were explained with “racial” arguments. The network achieved its principal objective when the Institute of Racial Biology was established in 1921.

It was the activities of this Institute during the period of about 1921-35 that were largely the focus of the research. For that reason, we know a lot about

it. Among other activities, the Institute initiated a new inventory of the Swedish population, which ended up with approximately 100,000 Swedes having undergone anthropometrical measurements. The survey never led to any major scientific results, and the collection of measurement data appears to have been a goal in itself. A large part of the measurements focused on the Swedish Sami and the population of Norrbotten, groups that were claimed to have started to become “racially mixed” and were thus particularly important to study. In connection with the measurements, photographs were often taken of the people under study, occasionally of a nature that constituted an extreme invasion of privacy. This photographic practice has also been studied by a number of researchers.

Nor did these measurements lead to any tangible scientific conclusions. In the early 1930s, the Institute was the object of serious criticism, not least from other racial biologists. The research has frequently characterized the racial biology directions that were crystalized during this time using the English terms “mainline eugenics” (with Lundborg as an important representative) and “reform eugenics”. The latter direction was more left-oriented, and was skeptical of self-assured statements about “racial” characteristics and of the idea that it should be possible to quickly change the existence of certain genetic traits in the population. This opposition culminated as a result of the “reform”-oriented racial biologist Gunnar Dahlberg being appointed head of the Institute in 1935. Thereafter, the Institute’s activities focused more sharply on matters of public health and medical, genetic surveys. However, this is actually a piece of history that we know relatively little about, since most of the researchers ceased their work in 1935. The report states that there is a need to study the Institute’s activities even after that year, not least because the Institute was never closed down (at the end of the 1950s, however, the Institute was renamed as the Department of Medi-

cal Genetics at Uppsala University). The few studies that have been conducted show that it could hardly have been so simple that the older tradition of racial research was abandoned at a specific point in time. The Department’s surveys of Swedish Roma during the 1960s have been the subject of special attention. These involved both tests of blood groups and older measurement methods that had been used as early as when Lundborg was in charge. Researchers active in the Department were also involved later in DNA examinations of Swedish Sami.

The report also states that there is scope for additional studies of the racial research that was conducted outside the Institute of Racial Biology during the 1900s. The anatomical institutions in Uppsala and Lund conducted racial research with the help of skeletal and cranial material up to about 1950, and the human remains used were in certain cases acquired through grave robbing in Sápmi and in other countries. And up to 1970, physical anthropologist Bertil Lundman was able to lecture about various “human races” at Uppsala University – a multi-year scientific endeavor that is only one example of an almost un-researched part of the history of Swedish racial research.

## Racism and racial intolerance in political parties

Another field that has generated a great deal of research concerns how racist, anti-Semitic and racially intolerant opinions were expressed in organized political parties in the 1900s. However, the research is unevenly divided: the existence of “racial” opinions in liberal and communist parties, for example, has hardly been studied at all.

It is a fact, however, that such opinions existed in parties of various ideological colors. In the predecessors to the Center Party, parties representing the Swedish farmers’ movement, demands were made in party manifestos of the 1920s and 1930s that

“the Swedish race” had to be protected from “racial deterioration”. At the same time, anti-Semitic statements were occasionally voiced in the conceptual debates of the Swedish right. Anti-Semitic rhetoric also existed in the Social Democratic labor movement, although it never made demands for discrimination of Jews. Up to the 1930s, certain Social Democratic politicians could occasionally link Jews with both capitalism and communism in a way that linked to an old anti-Semitic tradition. Subsequently, a number of researchers state that the march of Nazism appears to have compelled the party to take a more distinct stand, and anti-Semitic statements disappeared almost completely from the movement’s propaganda.

The most aggressive racist and anti-Semitic messages were heard from the Swedish National Socialist and fascist movements, which emerged during the 1920s, and which, up to the end of World War II, conducted intensive activities (even though this divided movement never accumulated many votes in elections). The report can conclude, however, that no consensus prevails regarding how the concepts “National Socialism” and “fascism” should be defined within the historical research. The fact that these movements were racist and anti-Semitic is not enough to be able to define them, because racism and antisemitism also existed in other parties, as shown above. Certain researchers have chosen to reserve the terms for parties that call themselves either National Socialist or fascist. Others have claimed that what characterizes National Socialism is the objective of revolutionarily reconfiguring society in accordance with mystical “racial” ideas and in line with a leadership cult similar to that of Nazi Germany. The revolutionary and ultra-nationalistic aspect has also been emphasized in a number of definitions of fascism, a movement that was not, however, characterized by the National Socialist leadership cult or by extreme antisemitism. Certain definitions emphasize ideas,

others emphasize the organization and practical operations of fascist movements. Certain researchers want to reserve the term for political movements during the period between the two world wars, others take the view that certain movements of today can also be characterized as fascist. This important debate about definitions has not led to any generally accepted solution, and certain historical movements may be characterized as National Socialist by a number of researchers and as fascist by others.

The heyday of the National Socialist and fascist movements in Sweden was the 1930s. The movements were dominated by the Swedish National Socialist Party, and by the National Socialist Workers’ Party, which, however, was renamed Swedish Socialist Unity in 1938. The “socialist” feature of the party’s ideology has been viewed in differing ways by different researchers and there is no agreement as to how it should be judged. After the end of World War II, the movements were highly discredited; however, as a number of researchers have underscored, certain National Socialist and fascist organizations lived on, primarily in the form of the explicitly National Socialist Party (Nordiska Rikspartiet, NRP). These became an important mediatory link to the neo-Nazi, militant organizations that, since the 1980s have committed extensive acts of violence targeted at “immigrants” and political opponents. They also became a mediating link to the parliamentary, racist right extremism that emerged at the same time, with animosity to refugees as the most important issue, and for which the Sweden Democrats (SD) became the most successful party. The report states that the research has clearly shown that the founders of SD, which was established in 1988, included a number of people who had previously been members of National Socialist organizations, such as the NRP. There were also cases in the 1990s of SD activists participating in meetings and demonstrations that were organized by explicitly National Socialist organizations.

## Recommendations for future research

The report states that Swedish historical research concerning racism and racial intolerance has moved over many fields but that certain fields are significantly more researched than others. For example, it is not until recent years that Afrophobia and Islamophobia have started to be illuminated in earnest. The report provides a number of recommendations about fields that offer scope for new and more in-depth research.

The report also states that the period of about 1900–45 is clearly the most studied era. In the future, research that does not stop at the end of World War II but that also studies the continuity between the racism and racial intolerance of our own time and those of earlier periods would be particularly valuable. The report also states that, considering the amount of research that has been produced about discrimination, persecution and stereotypical opinions of various ethnic groups in Sweden's past, it is remarkable how little of this research has used the term "racism" analytically. When it has been used, it has sometimes not been defined at all and, when it has been defined, it has predominantly been defined very narrowly and with an emphasis on the history of ideas. The researchers that have defined the term have also rarely entered into a scientific dialog with the comprehensive research about racism that the social sciences encompass in both Sweden and internationally. The report argues that Swedish historical research would have much to gain from participating in such a dialog and allowing itself to be inspired by the theoretical debate that is underway today. In that case, intersectional analyses and racialization studies are just a few of the tools that could then also be used in historical studies.