

The story of one nation's determined pursuit of her own way in something short of the best of all possible worlds

Finlandization Is Not a Curse Word

Anne Fried

Senior editor Arnaud de Borchgrave of *Newsweek* writes (July 10, 1972):

Today, Western Europe is a collection of nations united only in disunity. Within the last month, I have spoken with more than a dozen of the top foreign policy planners in Europe. Never before have I seen them so gloomy; never before have I heard so much talk about Europe's confusion and disarray. "The spectacle we are presenting to the world," one expert told me, "is truly lamentable." It is more than lamentable; it is highly dangerous. For Western Europe faces the threat of "Finlandization"—which is to say, of finding itself effectively dominated, so far as foreign affairs are concerned, by the Soviet Union. More tragic yet, Moscow's unwitting partner in establishing Soviet hegemony over Europe is the United States.

In almost all the literature about the future of Europe, whether hopeful or doom-laden, it is assumed that a Europe of real independence or of genuine partnership with other nations is not possible. Europe, we are told, can only be shaped by the struggle between the two superpowers. More particularly, wherever the U.S. withdraws we can be sure the USSR will move in, thus creating the unhappy situation which the international press has come to describe as Finlandization.

But what does Finlandization mean? What, really, does it have to do with Finland?

Anyone familiar with Finnish character and political history suspects that talk about Finlandization reflects either a gross misunderstanding of a country's determination to maintain independence, neutrality and, if possible, peace in Europe, or deliberate anti-Soviet propaganda. Such propaganda is common abroad as well as in certain political circles

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in Finland. To answer a slogan with a slogan, one may challenge talk about Finlandization with the title of the first chapter of Max Jakobson's book, *Finnish Neutrality*: "The Rebellious Pawn." A brief sketch of Finnish history elucidates the implications of Jakobson's metaphor.

Around A.D. 100 the original population of the middle region of the River Volga moved north. Part of these Finnish-Ugrians moved to the fertile lands later known as Hungary, part, to the shores of the Baltic Sea, while the hardiest among them proceeded to the northern wilderness beyond Lake Ladoga. These people called the land in which they settled Suomi (Finland) and held onto their language, vastly different from the surrounding Slavic, Germanic and Scandinavian tongues. Despite 654 years under Swedish and 108 years under Russian rule, the Finnish language has always been maintained as the country's dominant language, spoken by the people even during those long periods when the intelligentsia preferred to speak Swedish, which was the first language taught and used in all schools. The switch to Finnish as the language of instruction took place about a hundred years ago. Today Swedish-Finns comprise only about 6½ per cent of the country. Russian is taught and known in very small measure only. Finnish-language literature is fully developed. These facts are important, demonstrating that a nation can be sure of its identity and steadfastly develop its specific character despite changing political fortunes.

Due to its geographic location Finland's territory was coveted by both Russia and Sweden. Despite repeated attacks the small nation was for a thousand years able to withstand foreign intrusion, political as well as spiritual. It was not until about 1155 that Finland was conquered by Sweden, and a slow organic process of shared political and cultural development took place. Finland accepted the Roman Catholic faith—thus becoming the last European

country to give up its ancient religion—to which both she and Sweden adhered until 1527, when King Gustav Vaasa "converted" his whole realm to the new Protestant faith.

After 654 years of Swedish rule, Finland was handed over to Russia as compensation for a lost war. In 1809, under Tsar Alexander I, Finland became a Russian Grand Duchy but—and this is of lasting significance—was endowed with a remarkable degree of autonomy. Finland was free to maintain her own legislature and laws, set up and administer her own judiciary, civil service and defense forces, issue her own currency and set customs tariffs. Alexander I stated that she was "elevated as a nation to the rank of nations." Not only did he understand Finland's strong feeling for autonomy, but he knew that it was in Russia's own interest to have an ally rather than a political and military adversary so close to her own frontiers. Alexander's precedent has been lastingly significant.

Even as a Russian Grand Duchy, relations with Russia were discussed by Finland's political leadership in the same independent fashion they discussed relations with other foreign nations. Emphatic pro- and anti-Russian attitudes have always been active in Finnish political parties. As complicated and as at times contradictory as Finnish political history may seem, the underlying motif has always been the stubborn determination to remain an independent nation, living in a context of productive and mutually protective peace with her immediate neighbors. This is the very essence of Finnish neutrality.

In recent history the Finnish passion for independence has been expressed again and again:

After a hundred years of varying degrees of Russian domination, Finland seized the opportunity of the Russian Revolution to declare her independence on December 6, 1917—action formally recognized by V. I. Lenin on the last day of the same year.

For the Finnish people the action was, however, not simply a matter of freedom from foreign rule. It also marked a point at which the constitutional future of the country had to be decided. For the liberal and left-wing "Red" parties it seemed a foregone conclusion that close ties with Russia had to be maintained and that Finland would emerge as an autonomous Communist state. The right-wing "White" parties had no use for the new Soviet Union, which, for them, was only too ready to "extend a brotherly hand" (Stalin). They tended rather to follow the monarchic model prevalent in Scandinavia, and their extremists went as far as to request German emperor Wilhelm II to designate one of his sons as future king of Finland. While the white extremists' plans had to be abandoned with the collapse of Germany, the Red forces were beaten, despite substantial assistance given by Russian troops. Finland became a

republic and the liberal candidate K.J. Stahlberg became her first president. The groundwork for an independent, middle-of-the-road course was laid.

It was, however, only groundwork. The conflicts between Finland and her neighbors to the East and to the West were yet to be settled. In briefest summary, the decades 1919-1939 were filled with these events:

Finnish attempts to develop a mutual security relationship with Sweden failed, due to Swedish unwillingness to enter any commitment which might handicap her neutrality.

Russian demands for Finnish territory and bases on Finnish soil in order to meet a possible German invasion on non-Russian ground were rejected by Finland, as were Russian offers of military assistance in case of an invasion. Finland stood firm in her desire to maintain independence and neutrality.

This firmness led to growing Russian concern for her own safety and resulted in the 105-day Winter War (November, 1939-March, 1940), in which Finland lost more territory than had been demanded in the prior negotiations. There were moments during the war when Finland tried to obtain outside help, but Germany and America were inaccessible, while England and France did not really wish to initiate a widened conflict that might have involved forceful entry into neutral Sweden and Norway. They made assistance dependent on a formal request by Finland. Max Jakobson writes:

Throughout February and in the first week of March the Finnish Government was torn between the uncertainties of Allied aid and the awful prospect of peace on Soviet terms. The choice before it *had a significance far beyond Finland's own fate* [emphasis added]. Acceptance of Allied aid could have plunged all Scandinavia into war. . . . On 7th March 1940 a delegation headed by Risto Ryti, the Prime Minister, travelled to Moscow; on 12th March, the last deadline set by the Allies for a Finnish appeal for aid, a peace treaty was signed; on the following day, fighting came to an end.

The Winter War demonstrated both Finnish determination to fight rather than lose her independence and her strong feeling of responsibility for her neighbors.

Russian pressure did, however, continue in the face of Nazi Germany's aggressive moves throughout Europe. This created a difficult position for Finland which wanted neither to return to the idea of close partnership with Germany nor to fall anew under Russian domination. The latter fear being greater, a second war against the Soviet Union (the so-called Continuation War, 1941-44) was undertaken. Due to the political and military situation of the moment, Finland had to enter a seeming alliance with Germany, which, as Russia had long foreseen, considered

Finland has made great strides in constructive neutrality

Finland the logical territory from which to invade the Soviet Union. For a short time Finland and Germany conducted their separate yet parallel wars against Russia. It was self-defense on Finland's side, aggression on Germany's. Although Finland was forced to accept help from Germany in the form of massive food supplies, and although the presence of fighting German troops along the Finnish-Soviet border was of military advantage, she never accepted any of the Nationalist Socialist ideology and never became a German satellite. She was, as Max Jakobson calls her, "a co-belligerent" on her own terms.

This attitude of looking out only for her own interests and ideology prompted Finland to seek a separate peace with the USSR as early as 1943; the Russian terms, however, proved unacceptable. It was only in 1944 that somewhat more tolerable terms could be obtained, and an armistice was signed on September 19.

Even the lighter terms were hard. They included ceding Carelia and the northernmost port of Petsamo; a fifty-year lease on the Porkkala Peninsula near Helsinki, which would give Russia full control of the Gulf of Finland; and a war indemnity of \$300 million (measured in gold dollars of 1938) to be delivered within six years in the form of industrial goods.

Finland had thus suffered the loss of ninety thousand men in the fighting (2½ per cent of her population), while another 12 per cent fled from the lost eastern frontierland into the interior, thus creating a severe shortage of housing and jobs. Eleven per cent of the country's territory had been ceded to the Soviet Union, and Lapland was almost destroyed at the hands of the forcefully expelled German troops. In the face of devastating human and territorial loss and of the most severe shortage of all necessities, Finland was forced to step up her industrial production in order to meet the war debts. It seemed impossible, yet it was done; and Finnish independence remained inviolate.

At the Paris Peace Conference of 1946-47, Finland tried to obtain a softening of the armistice terms imposed by the USSR. The Western Allies were, however, not inclined to pay attention to the needs of a small nation, even though she had remained free of the misjudgments that had led more powerful countries into fateful alliances and degrading ideologies. The only participant in the conference who understood the Finnish position was

also in need of alliance with Finland and, therefore, willing to act—the Soviet Union. In 1948, two years after the Peace Conference, a treaty was signed between Finland and the USSR which led eventually to a substantial reduction of the war indemnities and, in 1955, in connection with the renewal of the treaty, to the return of the Porkkala Peninsula. The importance of this document is such that it warrants detailed discussion.

The first article of the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance Between the Republic of Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics states Finland's obligation to use all her available forces for defending its territorial integrity by land, sea and air in the event of an armed attack on her, or through her territory on the Soviet Union, by Germany or any State allied with Germany. In case of need, this defense is to be carried out with the assistance of, or jointly with, the Soviet Union.

This treaty is considered the most important document in contemporary Finnish history. Historian L. A. Puntila has written:

The point of departure of Paasikivi's [Finnish President in 1948] "East politics" was mutual trust. Doubts were part of the past. Finland had to be sure that the Soviet Union was no threat to her independence and to her own organization of government. The Soviet Union in turn had to be able to rely on the absolute safety of her borders. Finland was not to get involved in any undertaking directed against her.

In 1961 the treaty was put to its first severe test. On October 30 of that year, the Soviet Union sent a note to the Finnish government stating that, "on the grounds of increasing international tension," it was necessary to ask for consultation on "measures to safeguard the frontiers of both countries." The international tensions referred to were an increase in West German influence in the Baltic area, the establishment of a joint command in the Baltic by West Germany and Denmark, and the visit by West German Defense Minister Strauss to Norway.

Urho Kekkonen, just finishing his first term as president of the Republic of Finland, saw himself faced with three possibilities: confirm Finland's readiness to cooperate in case of need and enter immediate negotiations as requested; deny the threat of danger, refuse consultation and thus upset the sense of the treaty; or dissolve parliament and call

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