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OLD FOES, NEW FRIENDS? THE FINNISH DEFENCE REVIEW COMMITTEE AND MILITARY-POLITICAL ASSESSMENTS AFTER THE SECOND WORLD

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Abstract

The Finnish defence had been organized before and during the Second World War to wage war against the Soviet Union. Defensive measures taken during the 1920s and 1930 were almost solely designed to meet attack by the Soviet Union, and the brief Winter War in 1939–1940 was a clear demonstration of a right threat perception. Finland sought security from Germany after the Winter War and actively participated in Operation Barbarossa, launched by Germany in 1941. The war, however, was lost in 1944, and Finland was – like so many nations in Eastern Europe – transferred into the political sphere of the Soviet Union.

The new military-political environment differed radically from the pre-war era, and as early as 1945, a special parliamentary committee was nominated to assess new realities. The committee worked for four tedious years to complete a three-volume review of the Finnish defence.

This paper aims to assess the work of the Parliamentary Defence Committee in 1945–1949. Since the committee produced recommendations on various defence matters, the papers focus mainly on assessments of the Finnish military-strategic position in the emerging Cold War.

In addition to previous research on Finnish Defence policy, the paper takes full advantage of archival primary sources produced by the Parliamentary Defence Committee, the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Command.

Initially, appreciations and assessments of the Parliamentary Defence Committee questioned the neutrality and military non-alignment of Finland. However, the majority of committee members favored a military alliance with the Soviet Union. The ongoing experience of World War II, still raging in Europe and the Far East, had demonstrated the implausibility of neutrality in a global conflict. The military high command also called for military cooperation, if not an actual alliance, in the new military-strategic environment, as the Soviets would secure their western border, with or without Finnish assistance.

Since the division in the emerging new political order had not yet taken shape, the Soviet Union rejected Finnish aspirations for deeper military cooperation. However, the idea of military cooperation was reintroduced by the Soviets in early 1948, after the Paris Peace Treaty had been signed. The political and economic confrontation between the wartime allies had materialized, and the Soviet Union sought to establish a buffer zone along its western border. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, signed in April 1948, was negotiated under the determined guidance of President Paasikivi, without interference from the Defence Review Committee. The treaty was considered a compromise by contemporary Finnish leadership, as it did not include obligations for automatic military cooperation with the Soviet Union, and the potential use of Finnish Defence Forces was restricted to Finnish territory. On the other hand, in hindsight, the treaty proved to be a cornerstone of Finnish-Soviet relations for more than four decades. Whether it was politically beneficial for Finland and Finnish society or a compulsory political burden remains a matter of debate.

Keywords: Finland Cold War, strategic assessment, Soviet Union

Introduction – Transition to Peace

The military operations between Finland and the Soviet Union ceased on 4 September 1944, and the interim peace was signed in Moscow two weeks later. According to the treaty, territorial arrangements called for the Moscow Treaty of 1940 and the Soviets leased a military base near Helsinki for 50 years. The Finnish Defence forces were expected to expel Wehrmacht from the Northern parts of Finland and, simultaneously, conduct demobilization within two months. War reparations rose to some 300 million dollars.

The Allied Control Commission established to supervise the Interim Peace Treaty intervened actively in Finnish politics and military arrangements. For example, according to the Commission's directive, The Finnish Defense Forces were obliged to adopt an organization preceding the Winter War, which practically made any mobilization planning impossible as the Civil Guard, responsible for the practical execution of the mobilization, was disbanded at the same time as a fascist organization. (1)

Since the conscription law from 1940 was outdated, the Finnish Military-political position had changed entirely, and peacetime arrangements were laid on temporal bases. The Finnish government, headed by Prime Minister Juho Kusti Paasikivi, the future president, nominated a special Parliamentary Defence Committee (*Puolustusrevisiokomitea*) in May 1945.(2)

The idea to create a special committee was introduced to President Marshall C.G.E. Mannerheim in May by General Erik Heinrichs, the Commander-in-Chief, who was concerned about the future of the Defence Forces. The communists, banned before and during the war, had won a landslide victory in the recent parliamentary elections and became the second-largest party in the new parliament. The post-war economic situation with massive war reparations and re-settlement of almost 400,000 people from the lost territory meant that resources for the defence would be marginal. As a result, Heinrichs proposed to establish a high-level parliamentary committee assisted by the military high command to assess the future and role of the Defence Forces.(3)

The committee's charter called for a holistic approach to defence in the framework of the new political situation and economic resources. In addition to organizational issues, the committee was tasked to assess the future of conscription.(4)

The committee was chaired by J.W Keto, who was a member of the Finnish People's Democratic League, which was a political framework for various leftist organizations, including the Finnish Communist Party. His vice-chairman was Toivo Veistaro, a former colonel, now active in the Finnish business life. Six parliamentary members were chosen by their political alignment. The military representatives included Lieutenant-General J.F Lundqvist, the Commander of the Air Force, and Major-General Kustaa Tapola, the head of War College and the future Inspector of Infantry.(5)

The committee divided its charter into three categories. The first category – the topic of this paper – was to analyze and describe the framework for the whole Review since it contained assessments of the military-political and geopolitical environment,

1. Juha Ratinen, *Kaaderiperustamisesta aluejärjestelmään. Suomalaisen liikekannallepanojärjestelmän kehittyminen* 1918–1945 (diss.), (Tampere: Juvenes Print, 2018), 283.

2. Vilho Tervasmäki, *Puolustusneuvosto vuosina 1958–1983*, (Helsinki, Gummerus Osakeyhtiön Kirjapaino, 1983), 15.

3. Pekka Visuri, *Puolustusvoimat kylmässä sodassa. Suomen puolustuspolitiikka 1945–1961*, (Helsinki: WSOY, 1994), 56–57.

4. TNA (The National Archives of Finland), Puolustusministeriön asiak nro 6825/45, 24.5.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

5. Visuri (1994), 57.

the nature of the future war, including technical development, and the implications of restrictions imposed by the Interim Peace. [6]

Military Pact with the Soviet Union Introduced

The critical security issue – relation with the Soviet Union – dominated the discussions in the fourth session of the committee. Although the Soviets had not yet proposed any military treaty with Finland, the chairman anticipated security arrangements with the Soviet Union. He noted that Finland should aim for a certain level of cooperation with the Soviet Union. The rationale he predicted was to dominate Finnish strategic thinking until the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. If Finland would not defend her territory and convince the Soviets of her political will to conduct the defence, the Soviets would, in the worst scenario, occupy Finland and take care of the defences with their military forces.[7]

The idea of military cooperation or even a military pact originated from President Mannerheim, who had earlier in the spring suggested military cooperation to Colonel General Andrei Zdanov, the Soviet head of the Allied Control Commission stationed in Helsinki. Initially, secret discussions had addressed common coastal defences within the Gulf of Finland. Still, later, Mannerheim put also more comprehensive military cooperation on the agenda, suggesting a pact obliging Finland to defend her territory if Finland or the USSR via Finnish territory was attacked by a third party.[8]

It appears that General Heinrich was once more active since he produced a special assessment of the Finnish Military-Political situation in June 1945. Heinrichs reasoned that the Soviet Union would, in every circumstance, secure its eastern border to prevent any potential enemy from using Finnish territory or the Baltic Sea, as had taken place during the Second World War when the Finnish territory had been a platform for German operations.[9]

Heinrichs reasoned that voluntary cooperation with the Soviet Union would be beneficial both militarily and politically. Finland could avoid the Soviet occupation in the case of more significant conflict but also create favourable conditions for peaceful coexistence. However, verbal promises were not enough. Any defence arrangement or alliance should be arranged formally to consolidate the arrangement and remove the lack of mutual trust.[10]

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6. TNA, Puolustusrevision 4. kokouksen pöytäkirjan liite, 8.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

7. TNA, Puolustusrevision 4. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 8.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

8. Pekka Visuri, "Valvontakomission vaikutus Suomen sotilaspolitiikkaan" in *Suomi valvonnassa 1944–1947,* (Jyväskylä: Gummeruksen Kirjapaino, 1997), 65–67.

9. TNA, Kenraali E Heinrichsin muistio puolustusrevisiolle, 19.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

10. TNA, Kenraali E Heinrichsin muistio puolustusrevisiolle, 19.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

The defence of Finland was not an easy task because of the size of the landmass and relatively small population. All the domestic forces were required to defend long borders. As a result, from the Finnish perspective, it was essential to restrict the potential use of Finnish troops in domestic territory. Any Soviet military assistance should be maintained as an option rather than an automatic procedure. To fulfil military tasks and Soviet aspirations, Finland should build a defence based on large-scale mobilization of all available resources. Any half-hearted effort would not convince the Soviets of the Finnish military and political resolve. As the formal peace between the Soviet Union and Finland remained unclear, Finland could use an initiative for a defence pact to hasten formal negotiations and even seek relief on final peace conditions.[11]

It is interesting to note that Heinrichs' reasoning for the defence pact ran parallel to the Finnish-German cooperation during the Second World War. The mobilized field army had been the Finnish political bargaining chip during the Second World War. Apart from a few raw materials and products – such as nickel or plywood – Hitler and the German High Command had not been interested in Finnish economic capabilities but merely in Finnish military capabilities. For the German war effort aiming to establish a German economic zone after the war, how many Soviet divisions the Finns were able to tie down on her long eastern front was more relevant than production. As a result, despite being a minor part of the alliance, Finland had been able to conduct at least partially independent military operations and policies. After all, the Finnish field army did not actively take part in operations to capture Leningrad and the Finnish Jews were primarily spared from the Holocaust because the Finnish government refused to hand them over to the German security services.[12]

A concept of neutrality widely questioned

The idea of a defence pact was vividly discussed in the Defence Committee. As a whole, the concept of neutrality was widely rejected. The political members noted almost unanimously that neutrality had proved to be an outdated concept in a global conflict. The idea of neutrality had been seen as devious and susceptible by Stalin before the Second World War and any form of Nordic military coalition. Finnish strategic position depended entirely on the Soviet position. Although the committee decided it would be necessary to discover the Soviet view, some members suspected the time was not ripe for the military pact because the larger strategic picture was still unclear. The Soviet Union had emerged from the war as an undisputable superpower. What was its political

11. TNA, Kenraali E Heinrichsin muistio puolustusrevisiolle, 19.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

12. Mikko Karjalainen and Toni Mononen, *Mannerheimin sotataito*, (Keuruu: Otavan Kirjapaino, 2022), 205–207; Ilkka Seppinen, *Suomen ulkomaankaupan ehdot 1939–1944* (diss.), (Tammisaari: Ekenäs Tryckeri, 1983), 139, 237–238; For the German aspirations for large economic *Grossraum*, see, Adam Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction. The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy,* (London: Allan Lane, 2006), 385–390.

approach to Norway and Denmark? Would the Soviet-Finnish Pact drive them towards Britain and the United States, and was that in the Soviet interests?[13]

The military members of the committee made no remarks during the discussions on the Finnish military-strategic position. This is hardly surprising since Heinrichs was the Commander-In-Chief of the Defense and an exceptionally respected officer due to his long-term service as Mannerheim's chief of staff during the war. Any criticism against his views among politicians would have been inappropriate. His career came to an abrupt end very soon after he had delivered his memorandum. Colonel Valo Nihtilä and Lieutenant Colonel Sakari Haahti, serving in the operations division of the wartime general headquarters, had organized in autumn 1944 a secret operation aimed to cache weapons for some 30,000 men to meet possible Soviet occupation. The venture, which was to lead to the largest trial in Finnish history, was revealed in early 1945. Although Heinrichs had evidently played no part in it, he had to resign from his post to meet the demands of the Allied Control Commission.[14]

Heinrichs' retirement did not end his influence. Lieutenant-General J.F. Lundqvist was nominated as the new Commander-in-Chief, and the operations division soon produced a strategic appreciation based on Heinrichs' thinking in July 1945. The paper noted in an almost rhetorical tone that it would be suicidal to be part of any coalition aimed against the Soviet Union. Since Sweden alone would hardly pose any threat against Finland, the only alternative for threat perception came from the West.[15]

Due to Finland's geostrategic location near Soviet vital regions – such as Leningrad – the Finnish territory was essential and exciting to the Soviets and the West. Any larger-scale conflict would also drag Finland into conflict, causing Finland to defend her territory either by her forces or in collaboration with the Soviet Union. Three scenarios were conceivable because the Finnish territory was considered an operational stepping stone for further operations towards the east. If Sweden remained neutral, an attack against Finland would take place on the southern coastal area as an amphibious operation and as a land attack from the Norwegian territory in Northern Finland. The second scenario comprised air operations taking advantage of the Swedish airspace. According to the third option, the Finnish western border was also vulnerable because Sweden had allied with the Western powers.[16]

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13. TNA, Puolustusrevision 4. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 8.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1, TNA; Puolustusrevision 7. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 27.6.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

14. Markku Iskanius, *Ilmojen kenraali ja kiistelty komentaja J.F. Lundqvist 1940–1946*, (Jyväskylä: Docendo, 2015), 413–416; Veli-Matti Syrjö, "Asekätkentä" in S*uomen puolustusvoimat 1944–1974. Puolustusvoimien rauhan ajan historia, osa 2*, ed. Mikko Karjalainen & al, (Helsinki: WSOY, 2006), 59–62.

15. TNA, PvPE:n operatiivisen osaston numeroimaton muistio, 14.7.1945, T 21622/Kansio 4.

16. TNA, PvPE:n operatiivisen osaston numeroimaton muistio, 14.7.1945, T 21622/Kansio 4; Juuso Säämänen, *Suurmaihinnousun uhkasta kaappaushyökkäyksen torjuntaan. Suomen meripuolustuksen maihinnousutorjuntakyvyn kehittyminen jatkosodan päättymisestä 1960-luvulle* (diss.), (Tampere: Juvenes Print, 2017), 70–73.

The idea of a military pact was questioned in the 11th meeting of the Committee in August 1945. Nils Meinander, representative of the Swedish People's Party, suggested caution in the question. Finnish strategic position was linked to a larger strategic framework in the Nordic. Although the Allies still formed demonstratively a united front, there were signs of political division. If Finland actively approached the decision-makers of Moscow in this question, Norway and Denmark would automatically approach the West. Meinander suggested neutrality or Nordic cooperation as an option for any military alignment with the Soviet Union. (17)

Other members of the committee challenged his views. Major Yrjö Schildt emphasized the role of Leningrad in Soviet thinking and their reluctance towards Nordic military cooperation in the late 1930s. The Finnish government had not realized the importance of Leningrad's security in the Soviet strategic thinking before the Winter War. Neutrality had a place in an ideal world but not in the world order dominated by real politics, as the ongoing war had shown. Esko Tainio (SKDL) also noted that technical evolution – referring probably to the introduction of rocket technology and ruthless employment of air power - made neutrality even more complicated. He also said that the wartime alliance with Germany was a political burden that left Finland no choice but to align with the Soviet Union. (18)

Members of the committee disagreed about whether elements of political confrontation between the allies were already in the air. The Soviets had occupied the island of Bornholm, which irritated the United Kingdom, and any Soviet ambition to become a maritime power would directly challenge Britain.(19)

The second secretary, Professor Yrjö Ruutu, predicted that political tensions between socialist and capitalist countries were evident and rising. However, large-scale conflict was improbable in the short term since the world was simply exhausted from war. But would political and economic competition lead to military confrontation, especially as the Labour party had recently won the elections, Ruutu asked. The likelihood of military conflict was more probable in the longer term, but because the British power had weakened significantly, the Soviets would probably prevail. And this time Finland should choose her side more wisely than in 1941. (20)

It is somewhat surprising that strategic assessments and estimates were Eurocentric despite the massive US contribution to the war. The upcoming role of the United States was not addressed in the discussions. However, only a few days after Professor Ruutu's predictions, they used an atomic bomb to force Japan into peace.

17. TNA, Puolustusrevision 11. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 1.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

18. TNA, Puolustusrevision 11. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 1.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

19. TNA, Puolustusrevision 12. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 2.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

20. TNA, Puolustusrevision 12. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 2.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

Major-General Kustaa Tapola emphasized the difference between military cooperation and alliance with the Soviets. It was necessary to cooperate with the Soviet Union, but a legally binding treaty was not essential. Tapola's view again illustrated the Finnish politically practical approach to military cooperation with Germany during the war. Apart from a letter in late June 1944 in which President Ryti personally committed to continue the fight against the Soviet Union, the Finnish government had made no formal agreement of military alliance with the Third Reich. The lack of formal commitment is also one of the main reasons for a debate on this subject, which has continued in Finnish history since the Second World War.[21]

Chairman Keto shared his pessimistic view on the future. Two devastating world wars demonstrated that ideologically and socially competing nations tried to solve their problems violently. Since any alliance was a highly political issue, the committee decided to ask for guidance from the government.[22]

The Soviets Reject Military Pact

The letter to the government was drafted by Professor Yrjö Ruutu, who had a chair of political sciences at Helsinki University. The committee had addressed potential military cooperation with the Soviet Union but did not unanimously agree on the scale and scope of the collaboration. The committee asked for political guidance since any military alliance directly reflected Finland's international status. The question of cooperation was linked with the organization of the defence forces and arrangements of conscription.[23]

It is unclear whether the letter was ever sent to the Minister of Defense. However, the initiative of a military pact was apparently presented to the Soviets verbally, who rejected it shortly. Although Germany had been defeated, the war raged in the Far East, and the post-war strategic posture was unclear. Finland was not that important that Moscow would not provoke her allies and decided not to consider a military pact before a permanent peace treaty was signed.[24]

Paris Peace Treaty, 1947

Although the question of a military pact or cooperation with the Soviets remained unsolved, the scope and volume of cooperation were addressed when the foundations of the defence system were debated. The role of the territorial mobilization organization

21. TNA, Puolustusrevision 12. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 2.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1; Martti Häikiö, "Jatkosodan ulkopolitiikka: irtautuminen Saksasta 1944" in *Jatkosodan pikkujättiläinen,* ed. Jari Leskinen & Antti Juutilainen, (Porvoo: Bookwell, 2006), 814–816, Martti Turtola: *Risto Ryti. Elämä isänmaan puolesta*, (Keuruu: Kustannusosakeyhtiö Otavan painolaitokset, 1994), 298–303.

22. TNA, Puolustusrevision 12. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 2.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

23. TNA, Puolustusrevision 16. kokouksen liite, 7.8.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

24. Visuri (1997), 66–67.

was forcefully questioned, especially by the leftist members of the committee. The discussions resonated with the Civil War of 1918. The Civil Guard, which had formed the framework for the governmental forces during the Civil War and had also been politically active in the right-wing policies, especially in the early 1930s, raised deep suspicions amongst leftist members of the committee. Even though the Civil Guard were disbanded, the territorial system was seen as an enabler of the arms cache incident and politically unreliable. Some members also argued that there would be no need to maintain any mobilization system if Finland aligned herself with the Soviet Union.[25]

The Soviet reluctance to address the issue meant that the committee was compelled to carry out its work without the exact nature of the strategic outline. Yet, the idea of a military pact proved detrimental to the Finnish defence, especially in the long term. Information about potential military cooperation or pact reached London. As political friction between former allies gradually deteriorated into political and military confrontation, the Whitehall pursued to disarm Finland. The British peace treaty delegation sought strict limitations for the Finnish defence.[26]

The Paris Peace Treaty, signed on 10 February 1947, limited the combined size of the Finnish Defense Forces and Border Guard to some 41,900 men. Although the Finns later interpreted it differently, the treaty made no distinction between peacetime and wartime strength as the defence forces were "restricted to meeting tasks of internal character and local defence of frontiers".[27]

In addition to quotative restrictions, the Finnish Defence Forces were deprived of offensive weapon systems. Bomber aircraft, submarines, rockets, missiles and even motor torpedo boats were forbidden armaments. The excess of armaments – weapons for some 15 divisions stored in the central depots – should be delivered to the Allies according to separate and additional instructions.[28]

Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance in 1948

As some committee members had predicted, the Allies became politically and militarily divided soon after the Second World War. For the Finns, amongst others, harsh military restrictions imposed in the Paris Peace Treaty were concrete signs of accelerating political competition. The Soviet political venture to create a buffer zone along its western borders in early 1948 also directly impacted Finland. Almost parallel with the communist coup in Czechoslovakia, President J.K. Paasikivi received a letter

25. TNA, Puolustusrevision 39. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 9.10.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1, TNA; Puolustusrevision 40. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 10.10.1945, T 19572/Kansio 1.

26. Ibid.

27. Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Finland, Paris 10 February 1947. Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Finland, Paris, 10 February 1947 (usnwc.edu).

28. Tapio Koskimies, *Puolustuskykyinen valtio vai Ruotsin hälytyskello. Suomen sotilasstrateginen asema kylmän sodan alkuvuosien asiantuntija-arvioissa* (*diss.*), (Helsinki: Edita Prima, 2010), 37–40.

from Generalissimus Stalin proposing a treaty of mutual friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance.[29]

The Soviet proposal was addressed in the Defence Committee by President Paasikivi, who took a decisive role in the formulation of the treaty. Paasikivi, amongst others, had advocated at least a limited military treaty with the Soviets in 1945. Political winds, however, changed during three years. The Peace Treaty had been signed, and the influence of the Soviets and Finnish communists had been contained to some extent. Despite the heavy burden of war reparations, the economic situation had steadily improved. As a result, Paasikivi aimed for a treaty that would fulfil Soviet security interests but would leave Finland an option to develop political and economic relations with the West. The result was a treaty which differed significantly from those signed by Hungary or Romania. The very concise treaty stipulated in the introduction, that Finland sought to remain outside the political interests of superpowers. Yet, it obliged Finland to defend its territory if Germany or its ally attacked Finland or the Soviet Union via Finnish territory. From the Finnish perspective, it was important that Soviet assistance was not an automatic measure but was preceded by political consultations and that Finnish forces would operate only within Finnish borders.[30]

The Defence Committee had no part in negotiations or preparations. However, it had to formulate its consequences for the final Review. The committee addressed the implications of the treaty only two weeks after it had been signed in Moscow. The main body of the committee had openly supported a military pact with the Soviets three years earlier. Still, the obligations of the recent treaty left its members more or less confused as the introduction of the treaty clearly emphasized Finnish ambition for neutrality. Still, the principal articles stipulated Finnish military obligations if the West attacked Finland or the Soviet Union. Was neutrality a plausible and realistic option? If it was, how should the committee describe it in the Review?[31]

Introduction of Independent Defence

Since the interpretation of the treaty remained obscure, the Committee called two experts to address the subject: Professor Yrjö Ruutu, who had worked with previously with the committee and Tauno Suontausta, who was a docent of international law in the Helsinki University.

The experts noted that the Moscow treaty was a military treaty, although, from the Finnish perspective, it was designed to keep out of the conflict. Maintaining neutrality, however, would be very difficult because the Soviet base in Porkkala and communications

29. Pekka Visuri, *Suomi kylmässä sodassa,* (Keuruu: Otavan Kirjapaino Oy, 2006), 92–94; *Tietoja Maanpuolustuksesta. Maanpuolustus turvallisuuspolitiikan osana,* (Mikkeli: Länsi-Savon Kirjapaino Oy, 1976), Liite 3.

30. Ibid; Hannu Rautkallio, *Suomen suunta 1945–1948,* (Savonlinna: Savonlinnan kirjapaino, 1979), 177–181.

31. TNA, Puolustusrevision 215. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 14.4.1948, T 19572/Kansio 2.

leading to it were legitimate targets for the Western powers, even though Finland declared neutrality. The Leningrad security zone *de facto* now lay along Finnish western borders, while the defensive measures within Finnish borders would be carried out by the Finnish Defense Forces unless common measures with the Soviets were agreed. Professor Ruutu also claimed that the logic of the treaty was to maintain Finland's independent, but it politically prevented any speculations about the use of the Finnish territory against the Soviet Union, which was vital for Finland. (32)

In the final report, the Finnish strategic position was described in very broad terms. The world was divided into two power blocks with conflicting political, social, and economic interests. In spite of the recent devastating global conflict, the new power blocks could drift into armed conflict. Since Finland had a long border with the Soviet Union, its territory, including air space, had strategic value both for the East and the West. (33)

The committee did not refer to the Moscow Treaty separately or directly at all. Instead, it noted that friendly relations with the Soviet Union removed the aspect of war between Finland and the Soviet Union. The Review described Finnish territory as a potential operational stepping stone for the Western powers since some key areas – such as Leningrad or the Kola Peninsula – are located near the Finnish borders. But instead of emphasizing potential military cooperation with the Soviet Union, the Review called for neutrality. A strong and credible independent defence was vital to keep Finland outside any possible conflict. Although not explicitly mentioned, this rationale also included the Soviet Union, which, during the later stages of the Cold War, led to ultra-secret operational planning against the Soviet Union.

Conclusion

The views and assessments of the Parliamentary Defence Committee from 1945 to 1949 reflect the range and evolution of Finnish military-political thinking during the first post-war years. Finland sought to remain independent, yet it was widely acknowledged that Finland was within the Soviet sphere of influence. As Stalin's aspirations, political goals, and the means to achieve them remained unclear, the Parliamentary Defence Committee and the Finnish military high command considered military cooperation or even a military pact with the Soviet Union in 1945.

The Soviet grip on Finnish internal and external affairs remained relatively tight until the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947. However, Moscow did not pursue military cooperation with Finland until 1948, when political confrontation between the former allies and the political division had already occurred. The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, signed in April 1948, was considered a compromise by contemporary

32. TNA, Puolustusrevision 217. kokouksen pöytäkirja, 16.4.1948, T 19572/Kansio 2, TNA.

33. *Puolustusrevisiokomitean mietintö, I osa.* 10.3.1949, 13–14. Maanpuolustuskorkeakoulun kirjasto.

Finnish leadership, as it did not contain obligations for automatic military cooperation with the Soviet Union. Additionally, the potential use of Finnish Defence Forces was restricted to Finnish territory. On the other hand, in hindsight, the treaty proved to be a cornerstone of Finnish-Soviet relations for more than four decades. Whether it was politically beneficial for Finland and Finnish society or a compulsory political burden remains a matter of debate.

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