

THE SOCIALIST SOVIET REPUBLIC OF SCANDINAVIA

Ainur Elmgren

ABSTRACT

Nationalist and regionalist geopolitical concepts were appropriated in the service of Communist world revolution by Finnish activists in Sweden, Finland, and Soviet Karelia. The influence of Social Democratic statesman and scholar of geopolitics, Väinö Voionmaa, can be traced in the negotiations that led to the foundation of an autonomous Karelian Labour Commune in 1921. Exiled Finnish revolutionaries persuaded the Bolsheviks that Karelia could become a stepping-stone towards revolution in Finland and Scandinavia. A greater Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia, united by cultural, geographical and economical factors, would monopolize the timber market and exercise economic power over Western Europe. The idea of a Scandinavian revolution was abandoned along with the idea of world revolution in the mid-1920s. The last mentions of a Soviet Scandinavia can be found in anti-Soviet propaganda long after the demise of its promoters in the Great Terror.

Keywords: geopolitics, revolution, regionalism, nationalism, Scandinavia, Soviet Union, Karelian Labour Commune

The pursuit of a “Greater Finland” is a well-known chapter in the history of Finnish nationalism. The Greater Finland project uniting the “tribal brothers” of Finland and Karelia, sometimes also the national irredenta of the border regions in Northern Sweden and Norway, the Kola Peninsula and the Finno-Ugric minorities of Russia, was practically monopolized by right-wing intellectual movements after Finland’s independence in 1917 and the subsequent civil war.¹ However, it had inspired politicians and scholars identifying as Socialist before, and it would continue to do so. Another geopolitical project could be argued to be an extension of “Greater Finland” – the unification of “Scandinavia” (in practice, Sweden and Norway) with Finland and Karelia in the service of world revolution. I follow the trail of this “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” from its obscure

¹ Maria Lähtenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa – puolue- ja geopolitiikka* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, 2014), 113. Cf. *Luvattu maa – Suur-Suomen unelma ja unohdus*, ed. by Jenni Kirves and Sari Näre (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga – WSOY, 2014).

beginnings among the exiled leadership of the failed Finnish revolution of 1918, to its use in the debates on the foundation of an autonomous Soviet Karelia in the early 1920s, until its promoters were destroyed in the Great Terror 1936–38. The “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” made its final appearances in anti-Soviet propaganda in the 1940s.

Arguably, a “Red Greater Finland” had been promoted by the short-lived revolutionary government of Finland, the Finnish People’s Delegation, as well as Finnish Communists in Soviet Karelia, wishing to expand the borders of 1917.² On the Social Democratic side, statesman and historian Väinö Voionmaa articulated a pre-independence geopolitical vision of a Greater Finland including the Kola Peninsula and Russian Karelia.³ Scandinavianist or Nordacist tendencies in left-wing Finnish nationalism have been studied to a lesser extent. Scholars of regional identities have noted that the “Nordic” and the national are historically entangled concepts, possibly to a higher degree than the more specific “Scandinavian.”⁴ Progressives in all the Nordic countries have at times used the strategy of presenting ideas as Nordic or Scandinavian to make them palatable to a conservative audience.⁵ Being “Nordic” or “Scandinavian” is a way of being “national” outside the constraints of conservative nationalism. These associations have also been evoked in response to external threats. Inversely, the “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” was abandoned as fears of external threats to the Soviet state intensified.

From Karelia, via Greater Finland, to Scandinavia

Karelia is a cultural-geographical region divided by the state border between Finland and Russia. In the south-west, it is framed by the Gulf of Finland and Lake Saimaa. In the south, the borders are considered to be the southern shore of Lake Ladoga and the River Svir, and in the north-east, the White Sea south of the Kola Peninsula. Geologically, Karelia belongs to

² Tuomas Tepora, “Heimoveljiä, valkobanditteja ja punikin perkeleitä – valkoisen ja punaisen Suur-Suomen aate- ja tunnehistoriaa ennen toista maailmansotaa,” *Luvattu maa – Suur-Suomen unelma ja unohdus*, ed. by Jenni Kirves and Sari Näre (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga – WSOY, 2014), 113–123.

³ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 105–106.

⁴ Jussi Kurunmäki, “‘Nordic democracy’ in 1935,” *Rhetorics of Nordic democracy*, ed. by Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011), 75.

⁵ Such as the aforementioned “Nordic democracy,” cf. Kurunmäki, “‘Nordic democracy’ in 1935,” 77. See also Jan Hecker-Stampehl, “Keeping up the morale – constructions of ‘Nordic democracy’ during World War II,” *Rhetorics of Nordic democracy*, ed. by Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011), 141ff.

the “old Fennoscandian bedrock region,” and its conifer forests connect it to the vast taiga belt of Northern Eurasia. Beyond Lake Onega in the east, the landscape starts to resemble “the typical plains landscape of Eastern Europe,” which may indicate that it is easier to draw Karelia’s eastern border than its western one.⁶ However, it is possible to speak of several “Karelias” and define them each according to different historical and geographical preconditions.⁷ The numerous interlaced lakes in Eastern Finland and Western Karelia have connected people, rather than separated them. The border region was an old battleground of the Kingdom of Sweden and first Novgorod, then Muscovy, but also an important trade route. Christianity was spread from both east and west and came to define nationality in the Early Modern era. Orthodox Karelians nicknamed Lutherans *ruotsi*, Swedes.⁸ The area referred to as “East Karelia” (*Itä-Karjala*) or “Far Karelia” (*Kauko-Karjala*) had remained beyond the reach of the Swedish Kingdom, but attracted the interest of Finnish scholars exploring the Finno-Ugric linguistic family tree in the nineteenth century. The Karelian language consisted of several dialects of a varying degree of closeness to Finnish, which itself was not standardized until the 1860s.⁹

A culturally as well as geographically defined Karelia was central to every vision of a Finnish nation, despite its peripheral position. A whole branch of scholarship and art, Karelianism, was dedicated to it. Folklorists in the early decades of the nineteenth century such as Elias Lönnrot travelled through Finland and ventured beyond the country’s historical borders in their quest for authentic and primordial Finnish customs.¹⁰ Although Karelia as a region had interested Finnish scholars since the late Enlightenment, in the second half of the nineteenth century it became something more than a memorial to a golden past, namely a possible future source of national development. Väinö Voionmaa wanted to move on from museal

⁶ Petri J. Raivo, “Karjalan kasvot: näkökulmia Karjalan maisemaan,” *Karjala: historia, kansa, kulttuuri*, ed. by Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 12.

⁷ Pirjo Uino, “Karjalan arkeologian suuntaviivoja,” *Karjala: historia, kansa, kulttuuri*, ed. by Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 28ff.

⁸ The expression was still in use in the 1930s, according to Mikael Björk, *Myö karjalaizet: karelskspråkiga inslag i tidningen Laatokka under 1920- och 1930-talen* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2011), 59.

⁹ Heikki Kirkinen, “Keitä karjalaiset ovat?” *Karjala: historia, kansa, kulttuuri*, ed. by Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 38.

¹⁰ Raivo, “Karjalan kasvot,” 21–23.

“Karelianism” to a view on nationality with economy and territory as central concepts, drawing inspiration from German geographer Friedrich Ratzel and Swede Rudolf Kjellén.¹¹ Karelia’s coniferous forests were desired by the timber industry, Finland’s main source of wealth in the early twentieth century.¹² Even today, Finland’s share of global trade in the forestry product industry is around ten per cent, and two of the world’s biggest forestry companies are Finnish-owned, an enormous accomplishment for a country of its size.¹³ The political activities of leaders of the Finnish forestry industry in the early twentieth century have increasingly attracted scholarly attention.¹⁴ Connecting Finnishness and Karelianism to a vision of modernity and progress, Karelia could even be visualized as Prometheus, a culture hero sentenced to suffer for a noble cause: “because into the darkness of the North [it] brought fire from heaven // and from the slave of the soil, formed a human being.”¹⁵

This progressive vision developed out of increased struggle, both against the attempts at centralization by the Russian Empire, as well as between different political tendencies within Finland. However, Karelia, split as it was between Finland and Russia, could not easily be used as an argument for Finnish independence from Russia. Scandinavia, on the other hand, provided examples of small nations associated with ideological qualities such as freedom and equality.¹⁶ During the first wave of Russification in 1900, when Russia threatened to impose its own laws on autonomous Finland, Väinö Voionmaa considered Finland a member of the Nordic countries (*Pohjoismaat*). He argued that although Finland had been separated from Sweden in 1809, it had not been split off from the Nordic nations, but developed into an equal partner in a brotherly union.¹⁷ Thus it could

¹¹ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 96–98; 102–105. For Karelianism, see Raivo, “Karjalan kasvot,” 22–25.

¹² Tapio Hämynen, “Karjalan yhteiskunta ja talous 1800-luvun lopulta toiseen maailmansotaan,” *Karjala: historia, kansa, kulttuuri*, ed. by Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 189–205.

¹³ Markku Kuisma, *Metsäteollisuuden maa: Suomi, metsät ja kansainvälinen järjestelmä 1620–1920* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2006), 13.

¹⁴ Kuisma, *Metsäteollisuuden maa*, 451–467. See also Oula Silvennoinen, *Paperisydän: Gösta Serlachiuksen elämä* (Helsinki: Siltala, 2012).

¹⁵ Otto Manninen, “Huokaavat korvet. Runo Karjalalle Kalevalanpäivänä 1921,” *Suur-Suomen runoja*, ed. by Antero Manninen and Yrjö Vuorjoki (Helsinki: Sana, 1941), 34.

¹⁶ Bo Stråth, “Nordic modernity: origins, trajectories, perspectives,” *Nordic paths to modernity*, ed. by Jóhan Páll Árnason and Björn Wittrock (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 29.

¹⁷ Väinö Voionmaa, “Neljäs pohjoismaa” (The Fourth Nordic Country), *Kyläkirjaston Kuvalehti*, 7 (1900), 82–84 (quoted in Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 99–100).

be argued that Finland took active part in the positive qualities associated with the Scandinavian countries. However, Finnish debaters could pick and choose between those qualities depending on their political stance. Conservatives appreciated the Scandinavian monarchies, language nationalists looked for allies for or against the Swedish language, and liberals as well as socialists collaborated with their peers.¹⁸

The crisis years of 1917–18 meant independence for Finland, but also the eruption of a bloody civil war. The revolutionary unrest in Russia created an opportunity for Finland to renegotiate its eastern borders.¹⁹ In a 1918 article, Voionmaa discussed various models for a “Greater Finland,” settling for the most modest option, namely Finland including East Karelia and the Kola Peninsula. For Voionmaa, this was a “natural neck of land,” a geographical unit in its own right.²⁰ To protect its wholeness, cultural policies were also needed; Voionmaa worried that “Russification” threatened the “primordial” cultural unit of Finns and Karelians.²¹

The Swedish connection

In late April 1918, Red Finnish refugees from the Finnish Civil War started to gather in Russia and Sweden. Because of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk, they could not hope for an immediate Bolshevik support for their cause.²² Seemingly, the Red Guards in Finland had been abandoned in the hands of the vengeful Whites, and bitterness grew against the exiled leaders. Partly because of the volatile internal situation in the Finnish refugee community in Petrograd, some exiles advocated the foundation of a Finnish colony in Karelian Olonets.²³ Meanwhile, the labour movement in Finland started to recover under the leadership of Social Democrats who had distanced themselves from the attempted revolution, and the exiles in Sweden were aware of the need to keep in touch with Finland as not to lose connection with the working class. The border between Finland and Soviet Russia was

¹⁸ Cf. Ainur Elmgren, *Den allrakäraste fienden – Svenska stereotyper i finländsk press 1918–1939* (Lund: Sekel, 2008).

¹⁹ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 110–111.

²⁰ Väinö Voionmaa, “Suur-Suomi,” *Kansanvalistusseuran kalenteri 1919* (Helsinki: Kansanvalistusseura, 1918), 6–9, 13, 20–21, 32 (quoted in Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 112).

²¹ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 106, 112.

²² Tauno Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1919* (Tampere: Kansan sivistystyön liitto r.y., 1996), 28.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29–30.

not impermeable, but nevertheless heavily controlled. Therefore, the Swedish connection suddenly gained strategic relevance.²⁴

Edvard Gylling was among those exiles in Sweden who argued for the foundation of a colony in Karelia. From a bourgeois family of limited means, Gylling (1881–1938) became interested in the crofters' situation as a student and defended a dissertation on the crofter question in Finland during Swedish rule. As a member of parliament for the Social Democratic Party, Gylling warned against the uprising of 1918 but accepted the post of secretary of finance in the revolutionary government, the Finnish People's Delegation. In office, Gylling negotiated with Soviet Russia on several subjects, including an eventual cession of Russian Karelia to an independent Finland.²⁵ The Finnish People's Delegation claimed a large section of the Kola Peninsula and East Karelia for Finland, and, in Gylling's words, wished that "the border between kindred peoples disappear."²⁶ It has been suggested that Gylling had adopted the principles and outlines of his Karelia policy from Voionmaa.²⁷ Gylling and Voionmaa had both been active in the Students' Social Democrat Union 1905–07. Contemporaries were aware of the similarities in geopolitical interests and Voionmaa had to defend himself against allegations of participating in negotiations between the People's Delegation and the Soviets.²⁸

After the defeat of the Red Guards at Tampere in 2–5 April 1918 by the White Finnish army and the capture of Helsinki by Imperial German forces in 14–15 April, Gylling took command of the revolutionary troops and led the final and ultimately unsuccessful defence of Viipuri. From this last front of the revolution in Finland, Gylling escaped – not to Petrograd, as many of his comrades had done, but to Stockholm, the capital of Sweden, in the summer of 1918.²⁹

Finnish connections to Swedish and Norwegian radical socialists influenced the conception of political action plans for Scandinavia in 1918–19. These connections were not self-evident, however. The Scandinavian labour movements maintained a tradition of cooperation from the late 1880s, with

²⁴ Cf. Max Engman, *Gränsfall: utväxlingar och gränstrafik på Karelska näset 1918–1920* (Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2008).

²⁵ Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: politics, planning and terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2007), 21; Markku Kangaspuro, "Nationalities policy and power in Soviet Karelia in the 1920s and 1930s," *Communism: national and international*, ed. by Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (Tampere: Finnish Historical Society, 1998), 120.

²⁶ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 24.

²⁷ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 135.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 66, 126.

²⁹ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 107–108.

limited participation by the Finns. For example, the Scandinavian committee for cooperation founded in 1913 did not include Finland.³⁰ This “labour Scandinavism” struggled with the historical memory of the original Scandinavianist movement, the failed attempt to unify Sweden-Norway and Denmark politically in the nineteenth century.³¹

After the split of the labour movement during the First World War and the founding of the Communist International, the left-wing in Scandinavia rekindled cooperation, centred in Stockholm. The Swedish Left Socialists had established close contacts with Russian revolutionaries under the war.³² Particularly Sweden and Norway became important for Soviet Russia during the Entente’s blockade 1918–20. Stockholm was one of the first cities where a regional committee of the Communist International was founded, functioning as news agency, communications centre and bank, in the spring of 1919.³³ However, there were several groups vying for an important position in the international movement. The patchy history of the organizations founded by Finnish exiles in Sweden also reveals rivalries and ambitious projects that never took off, due to sudden dispersal of activists or simply a lack of human and material resources.

The Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee and other organizations

Long before the October Revolution, Finns and Russians, separatists as well as revolutionaries, had used the route over the border river Tornio between Finland and Sweden to smuggle activists and materials in and out of Russia.³⁴ The route remained important after the Finnish Civil War when the Red Finnish exiles in Stockholm were planning to rebuild

³⁰ Tauno Saarela, “Nordic communists in the Communist International,” *Finnish communism visited*, ed. By Tauno Saarela (Helsinki: The Finnish Society for Labour History, Papers on Labour History VII, 2015), 92.

³¹ Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang, “Introduction: ‘Nordic democracy’ in a world of tensions,” *Rhetorics of Nordic democracy*, Studia Fennica Historica 17, ed. by Jussi Kurunmäki and Johan Strang (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2011), 23.

³² Cf. Aleksander Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerna: den svenska socialdemokratin, ryska bolsjevikerna och mensjevikerna under världskriget och revolutionsåren 1914–1920* (Stockholm: Carlssons, 2005).

³³ Saarela, “Nordic communists,” 91–93.

³⁴ Tauno Saarela and Kevin Morgan, “Salaperäiset suomalaiset ja Britannian kommunismin synty,” *Aave vai haave*, ed. by Tauno Saarela *et al.* (Saarijärvi: Työväen historian ja perinteen tutkimuksen seura, 1998), 8; cf. Michael Futrell, *Northern underground* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963); Hans Björkegren, *Ryska posten – de ryska revolutionärerna i Norden 1906–1917* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1985).

contacts with their old homeland. A “Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee” (*Skandinavian Vallankumouksomitea*) was formed in Stockholm to facilitate the mobilization of the refugees in Sweden. According to official estimates, the refugees numbered about 573 during 1917–20. Most of them were men from Northern Finland.³⁵ The politically radical refugees soon controlled even the apolitical organizations that had been founded to support Finns in Sweden.³⁶

Organizer Jussi Railo (1887–1920) arrived in Sweden from Moscow in early July 1918 to establish contacts between the emigrant community and Finland.³⁷ He was a former Social Democrat Member of Parliament and secretary of the party’s radical Youth League. When the Communist Party of Finland was founded in Moscow 29 August 1918, a Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee was appointed as its local party committee in Stockholm, with Railo in charge.³⁸ The committee contacted union leaders in Helsinki to distribute aid from Scandinavia to persecuted Reds and their families. It sent money to arrange the travels of Edvard Gylling and others still in hiding in Finland. The committee also lent support to at least one Norwegian comrade, and it arranged meetings in Oslo and Stockholm for travellers on the way to the second congress of the Third International to be held in Petrograd and Moscow in the summer of 1920.³⁹ Most importantly for this study, the committee produced several organizational plans for military and agitational activities involving Finland, Sweden and Norway in the autumn and winter of 1918–19.⁴⁰

The Stockholm committee of the Communist Party of Finland and the Scandinavian Committee of the Communist International seem to have partly fused in 1920. The first preserved report of the activities of the Comintern’s committee was signed in the handwriting of Swedish Left Socialist

³⁵ Matti Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta Tornion laaksossa 1918–1939* (Oulu: Kustannus Pohjoinen, 1991), 18–19; The name of the committee is mentioned in a letter quoted in Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkäri liikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000), 653.

³⁶ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 19.

³⁷ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 107.

³⁸ From 1918 to 1920, the party’s name was *Suomalainen kommunistinen puolue* (“Finnish Communist Party”). In 1920, the name was changed to *Suomen kommunistinen puolue* (“Communist Party of Finland”). Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola, “Introduction,” *Communism, national and international*, ed. by Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola (Tampere: Finnish Historical Society, 1998), 10.

³⁹ Saarela and Morgan, “Salaperäiset suomalaiset,” 8–9.

⁴⁰ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 108–109.

Zeth Höglund and Finn Mauno Heimo.⁴¹ Heimo had been an assistant to Adolph Joffe, the Soviet ambassador to Berlin, and became the permanent secretary of the Stockholm committee of the Communist Party of Finland.⁴² The Comintern's Scandinavian Committee also aided Finns financially and engaged them in various tasks, including sending two Finns to build a Red Army in Great Britain.⁴³

The numerous organizations, often involving the same individuals in different roles, have confused historians working with incomplete material. Missing sources make it difficult to determine whether the Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee, founded in 1918 with Jussi Railo as its leader, and the "Swedish Battalion of the Red Guard of Finland" (*Suomen punaisen kaartin Ruotsin pataljoona*), founded at the latest in early 1919 in Stockholm with Railo as its commander under the alias "Mäntymäki," were actually the same organization.⁴⁴ In his work on secret Communist activities in the Tornio river valley in 1918–39, written in 1991, historian Matti Lackman had expressed the hope that archives that were only just being opened would bring clarity to the confusing turns around the foundation of the Stockholm committee.⁴⁵ However, the Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee's history is still waiting to be written in detail.

The Red jägers – shock troops of Red Scandinavia?

Exiled Finns who had settled in Northern Sweden established connections with Finland via Luleå and the border town Haparanda. Some of them had experience of cross-border connections through the *jäger* movement (1914–18). The *jägers* were militant independence activists who clandestinely left Finland to receive military education in the Imperial German army. Its core was the Royal Prussian *Jäger Battalion 27* (*Königlich Preußisches Jägerbattalion Nr. 27*), which had seen action at the Eastern Front.⁴⁶ *Auswärtiges Amt* and the German General Staff were promoting the idea to establish a buffer zone of economically, culturally and politically subjected nations towards Russia. They provided support to separatists in the territories of Germany's geopolitical opponents. While the initiative to the *jäger* project was taken by the Finnish activists, Germany set strict conditions for

⁴¹ Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerna*, 437.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 438.

⁴³ Saarela, "Nordic communists," 93. Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerna*, 457.

⁴⁴ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 647–648.

⁴⁵ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 19.

⁴⁶ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 693.

the jäger training according to its own interests, as it set the conditions for its direct military support to the White government in the last stages of the Finnish Civil War.⁴⁷ Many jägers with Socialist sympathies, or those who had simply criticized Germany, were seen as politically unreliable by their own officers.⁴⁸ 70 per cent of the jägers (about 1,300 men) returned to Finland before and during the Civil War, 451 men returned later. Only those who committed themselves to the White government were allowed to return to participate in the conflict.⁴⁹

The new revolutionary phase expected by the Communists in the autumn of 1918 aimed at a Scandinavian revolution, but it relied on the development of events in Germany connected to the German revolution in November 1918. German troops and advisers left Finland, which was liberated from its numerous commitments to Germany. Inspired by the uprisings in Germany, the Communist Party of Finland sent leaflets to Finland declaring world revolution. As relatives and former comrades of the jägers remaining in Germany began to press Finnish officials for their repatriation, Finland and Germany arranged for their transport by train via Sweden.⁵⁰

Some of the socialist sympathizers among the jägers became active in the clandestine organizations of the Communist Party of Finland. Via the student Mauno Heimo at the Soviet embassy in Berlin, the “Red jägers” established contacts with Jussi Railo and the Scandinavian Revolutionary Committee in Stockholm. In the summer of 1918, Railo wrote to Heimo suggesting that the Red jägers would receive support from Moscow and Swedish contacts “if they begin to work for the propagation of Communism in the army” in Finland. In the letter, “Hedman” (possibly a pseudonym of Gylling), announced that the Committee invited at least 5-10 jägers, experts in various fields, to Stockholm for negotiations. In November 1918, a group of jägers travelled to Stockholm to meet Gylling and other leaders of the committee. Military issues were probably discussed, as the jägers represented different military branches, but no sources remain.⁵¹

The latecomer jägers returning via the Haparanda-Tornio route aroused suspicion among the border guards but also at the Finnish Embassy in Stockholm.⁵² Finnish military intelligence intercepted letters addressed to Viktor Vilhelm Vuokko, a Swedish citizen of Finnish origin in Stockholm,

⁴⁷ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 54.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 559–561.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 557–559, 570.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 633, 674, 648–652.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 653, 655–656.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 566–567.

who functioned as the official publisher of the Finnish-language newspaper *Viesti*. The letters contained reports of the situation and mood in Finland and were actually directed to Railo's organization.⁵³ *Viesti* was printed in Stockholm and published news from Finland and contributions by Swedish Left Socialists, such as Zeth Höglund and the Stockholm mayor Carl Lindhagen, and Social Democrats, such as Rickard Sandler.⁵⁴ It is not clear how much these contributors knew about the clandestine activities of the newspaper's publisher.

Some of the Red jägers remained in Sweden. Using the manuals of the Communist Party of Finland's military wing, they wrote training manuals for the Red Guard with innocuous cover names such as *The villagers' songbook* and *Guide to beekeeping*. These pamphlets were used to train Red Guards, and samples were also smuggled into Finland. Red jägers were confident that they had the support of the majority of the population in the north.⁵⁵ High hopes and external pressure made the Stockholm exiles produce ambitious plans. The Finnish leaders in Moscow still believed that revolution could be rekindled in their old country. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Finland sent member Lauri Letonmäki to Stockholm via Germany in January 1919. He appointed the Stockholm committee to organize a march into Finland and expected all troops in Sweden and Norway to be ready for action no later than 15 February. It is possible that travelling through a fervently revolutionary Germany convinced Letonmäki that world revolution was at hand.⁵⁶

The lagging preparations caused disagreements within the Communist Party of Finland. Only a few primitive exercises had been organized in Northern and Eastern Finland in the spring of 1919. Unsuccessful attempts to recruit comrades in Southern Finland led to several denouncements to the authorities. In April 1919, most of the involved jägers in Finland were arrested, but by lack of concrete evidence, only three of them were sentenced without parole.⁵⁷

Authorities in Finland were conscious of the threat from the North. The Third Department of the General Staff, the military intelligence bureau of the Finnish Army, gathered claims from various sources that an attack on Finland was imminent, because the Communists of Sweden – and of the

⁵³ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 659.

⁵⁴ Arvo Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling: Itä-Karjalan suomalainen rakentaja* (Helsinki: Otava, 1976), 114–115. Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 643.

⁵⁵ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 663–664.

⁵⁶ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 110–112.

⁵⁷ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 665–671.

whole North – were prepared for wide-scale action. The border crossing over Tornio River, between Haparanda on the Swedish side and Tornio on the Finnish side, was frequented by smugglers, fugitives and other trespassers. Special passports gave locals the right to travel freely across the border, and authorities supplied them quite indiscriminately, at least in the opinion of military intelligence officers.⁵⁸

Authorities could also be misled by rumours and their own prejudices. There was ideological resistance against the notion that Northerners could be revolutionaries. When the Red jäger affair in Helsinki was revealed, the chairman of the local jäger office, Major Erik Heinrichs, was disturbed by the amount of “Swedes from Ostrobothnia” among the politically suspect jägers. Heinrichs emphasized that these were generally good people, “although stubborn and disobedient.”⁵⁹ The case inflamed the already rampant conflict between pro-German jägers and Russian-educated officers in the Finnish Army.⁶⁰ When the Detective Central Police (*Etsivä Keskuspoliisi*, *Detektiva Centralpolisen*) took over intelligence work in August 1919, it was barely able to grasp the special nature of the Northern problem until former jäger activists, with personal experiences of clandestine political activities across the border, took over leading positions. Esko Riekkö, formerly a jäger recruiter himself, was leading the Tornio section in February 1920 and warned that “Red jägers” were infiltrating the lumber fields to agitate the workers.⁶¹ Riekkö’s familiarity with the border region improved the Detective Central Police’s results in the North once he became its chief in 1 September 1922.⁶²

The “Swedish Battalion of the Red Guard of Finland” and the Nordic War Plan

The Communist Party of Finland adopted the idea that the Bolsheviks had succeeded because of their clandestine strategy. The military wing of the party saw a lack of training personnel as the chief reason for the failure of the Finnish revolution.⁶³ These analyses inspired the creation of an organization called the “Swedish Battalion of the Red Guard of Finland”

⁵⁸ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 21–23.

⁵⁹ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 671.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 672–673.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 676.

⁶² Cf. Matti Lackman, *Esko Riekkö – jääkäriväriväri, Etsivän Keskuspoliisin päällikkö, SS-pataljoonan luoja* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2007).

⁶³ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 647.

(*Suomen Punaisen Kaartin Ruotsin pataljoona*) and the “Nordic War Plan” (*Pohjoinen sotasuunnitelma*), a grand scheme of a revolutionary military campaign in Northern Norway, Sweden, and Finland, produced by the Stockholm committee.⁶⁴ The controversial documents, including the plan and despatches of the Battalion, were used as evidence in a widely publicised spy case against Finnish and Swedish Communists in 1921.⁶⁵ The actual author of the Nordic War Plan was Jussi Railo under the pseudonym “Mäntymäki” while Gylling wrote the comments appearing on the right-hand side of the document.⁶⁶ The different surviving documents detailing the plans contain contradictory claims, numbers and concepts, which probably reflects rapidly changing external circumstances. Geographical designations for “Scandinavia” and “the North” are used interchangeably by Railo and Gylling.

The strategically most important areas for the activities of the Battalion, also outlined in the Nordic War Plan, were in the North. Many social and economic reasons prepared the ground for a revolution in the forests dominated by the timber industry. Many Finns also worked in the iron ore fields of Norrbotten. The labour movement in the North had radicalized after the general strike of 1909, and the local workers tended to support the radical Left Socialists that had split from the Swedish Social Democratic Party in conjunction with the 1917 revolutionary movements in Sweden.⁶⁷ Railo’s plan was to dislodge the White forces from Murmansk and Karelia with troops consisting of Finns in Sweden and trustworthy Swedes and Norwegians.⁶⁸ The Nordic War Plan required several shock troops of 100–150 men each to be formed in different locations in the Tornio River valley. This part of Railo’s plan most likely referred to the “Swedish Battalion of the Red Guard of Finland.” The troops would pass clandestinely through the wilderness of North Finland to Karelia, joined by sympathetic Swedes, Norwegians, and veterans from the Murmansk legion. After a week’s rest, the troops would take control of the Murmansk railroad and

⁶⁴ The first despatch of the Swedish Battalion of the Red Guard of Finland is dated 1 April 1919 and is quoted in part in Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 105–106. The Nordic War Plan in its entirety is quoted in Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 350–355, and Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 118–123.

⁶⁵ Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 104.

⁶⁶ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 111; Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 108.

⁶⁷ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 28.

⁶⁸ Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 350–355.

stop the Whites from retaking it. A troop of 40–50 men from Finnmark in Norway was also expected to intercept the Whites on the Kola Peninsula.⁶⁹

After explaining that thorough intelligence gathering was necessary before such an endeavour, the author “Mäntymäki” (Railo) suggested – rather disappointingly – that it would be best to give up such an ambitious plan, because there were too many difficulties to be overcome. But if not, it ought to be taken as a serious suggestion for creating a “North European International Red Army” (*Pohjois-Euroopan internationalinen puna-armeija*) in cooperation with the Soviet Russian government, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Finland, its bureau in Finland, and the “revolutionary groups” in Sweden and Norway. In Gylling’s comments, he added that such a plan demanded “a kind of Scandinavian Red Army” (*Skandinaavinen Puna-Armeija*), which he estimated to be impossible to create in the required strength (“at least a war-strength battalion, approximately 3,000 men, well equipped”).⁷⁰

The draft of the Nordic War Plan was finished by Railo on 11 January on an urgent schedule – execution of the plan was to commence 15 January–15 February.⁷¹ Several vital organizations did not even exist yet, including the necessary Scandinavian volunteer army.⁷² One might ask why Railo and Gylling would concoct such an ambitious plan if they themselves admitted that it would be impossible to fulfil its goals. It was certainly dependent on very specific political circumstances that would change very soon. Awaiting further information, Red jägers were mobilized as military instructors.⁷³ Training was organized around Sweden and Northern Finland, possibly even in Kristiansand and Sande in Norway, according to reports gathered by the Swedish police.⁷⁴ If these reports are correct, a very small amount of men participated in the training sessions, between 5 and 20 on every location, giving the sum of little more than 60 activists. A radiogram

⁶⁹ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 52–53. “This clearly proves that the idea of a Scandinavian Soviet Republic was a fact!” Lackman adds.

⁷⁰ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 53–54, 118–123.

⁷¹ Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 119. Lackman (*Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 52) interprets the plan’s dates as 15 January–15 February 1920, but the exact year is not specified in the text. Saarela (*Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 111–112) interprets the dates as 15 January–15 February 1919 and connects the Nordic War Plan with the incursion of the Red jägers in Finland later that year. However, the military training commenced on a less urgent schedule in spring 1919, as the dates of the remaining despatches show (Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 105–106).

⁷² Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 111–112.

⁷³ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 663.

⁷⁴ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 28, 30–31.

from Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov to People's Commissar of Foreign Relations, Georgy Chicherin, reporting on the arrival of Finnish military instructors to Petsamo, confirmed that the Russian Bolsheviks were aware of the activities in Northern Scandinavia in the winter of 1919–20.⁷⁵

In the summer of 1921, the Swedish police arrested several Swedish and Finnish citizens who were accused of acting against the constitution, conspiring for treason, and attempting to found “a Swedish Soviet Republic and a dictatorship of the proletariat.”⁷⁶ The Stockholm police had already been conducting surveillance on about 400 political refugees of Finnish origin. Many of the Swedish suspects were originally from the borderlands between Sweden and Finland with a historically Finnish-speaking population. The trials were intensely publicized, and the accused received some support from well-known Socialists, such as Ture Nerman of the Social Democratic Left and Georg Branting of the Social Democratic Party. On 28 October 1921, the prosecutor presented his most incriminating evidence: “The Nordic War Plan,” which at that point was thought to have been written by Edvard Gylling.⁷⁷

The documents and interrogation protocols from this trial show that Communist activity was rife around the whole Cap of the North, including the far north of Norway, Sweden, and Finland. This region clearly played an important role in the revolutionary plans concerning Scandinavia. The police files indicated there was a kind of military organization by the Finnish Reds centered in North Sweden in 1919–21. The Finnish Communists in Sweden also maintained a motorboat connection to Murmansk via Vardø in Norway.⁷⁸ One of the arrested claimed that the plan to create a “Swedish battalion of the Red Guards of Finland” was already conceived in Finland during the civil war of 1918. The battalion was to function as a counterweight to the brigade of Swedish volunteers on the White side.⁷⁹

The storm unleashed by the trial soon died down. By the time the war plan was discovered by the Swedish authorities, the international situation had changed completely. External pressure on Soviet Russia had eased while world revolution seemed less and less feasible.⁸⁰ Many activists had

⁷⁵ Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerna*, 462–463. Financing alternatives suggested by Gylling: “a) 2 million Swedish kr. b) 5 million Finnish mk. c) 5 million Czar roubles. Where do we get it?” Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 354.

⁷⁶ Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 102.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 101–104.

⁷⁸ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 38.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 48.

moved on to other tasks. One Red jäger, who was training troops in Norway, remarked bitterly that 70–80 of his best men had left to work in Spitsbergen.⁸¹ Possibly the Finns in Stockholm had felt the noose tighten long before the case became public. Railo, the ambitious organizer in Stockholm, had suffered from depression and committed suicide in late January 1920.⁸² Gylling had escaped in April 1920 to Soviet Russia.⁸³ His few Swedish friends and supporters included the Stockholm mayor Carl Lindhagen and Hugo Sillén of the Swedish Social Democratic Party's Youth League. Implication of public figures kept the Swedish newspapers interested in the spy trial for some time, but when no proof of actual damage to Swedish interests could be found, and many of the Finnish Reds had already left the country, the case dried up. In the absence of leaders, two persons were sentenced to a few years each in prison – one Finn, Henrik Johan Paulin, in whose wardrobe the Nordic War Plan had been found, and one Finnish-speaking Swede from Norrbotten, William Jacobsson-Heikkinen, who had helped the Finnish refugees together with a Norwegian woman, Agnes Enbuske.⁸⁴

The identities of these two and their accomplices only hint at the potential Nordic network behind the revolutionary movement. The Communism of the Cap of the North enjoyed transnational support across the borders in Finland, Sweden and Norway.⁸⁵ This provided some help for the activities of the newly-formed Communist Party of Finland, as these neighbouring countries maintained peaceful relations with Finland. Finnish was also widely spoken on the Swedish and the Norwegian sides of the border, and many Communists had local ties in the area. Therefore, it is understandable that the “Scandinavian Soviet Republic” was imagined to cover the whole Cap of the North. However, national differences also hampered cooperation, as those Finns who had remained in Finland after 1918 were reluctant to take up arms again. Rumours about the Nordic War Plan deepened the divide between the Communists and the reformist Social Democratic Party of Finland. Perhaps Railo had created the whole plan trusting solely

⁸¹ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 34.

⁸² Markku Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehallinnosta* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2000a), 74; Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 49–54, 118–123. Lackman connects Railo's suicide to the spy trial, although the latter took place more than a year later.

⁸³ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 24–25.

⁸⁴ Yläräkköla, *Edvard Gylling*, 111–113.

⁸⁵ Saarela, “Nordic communists,” 88–95.

in the energy and activism of the Red jägers, who failed to mobilize discontent among their peers in Finland.⁸⁶

The plans for a Scandinavian Socialist Republic were not completely scrapped. From his Stockholm exile in early 1920, Gylling penned a new plan: the foundation of a Karelian Labour Commune.⁸⁷ His experiences of territorial negotiation with Soviet Russia for the Finnish People's Delegation in 1918 gained new relevance. One way to convince the Soviets to accept self-rule for the labour commune was to appeal to the possibility of a Scandinavian revolution.

Negotiations in 1920: the Karelian Labour Commune

Already in the negotiations with Soviet Russia in late spring 1918, as the defeat of the Finnish revolution became imminent, Gylling had planned to evacuate the Red Guards to Soviet-controlled Karelia and found an autonomous labour commune.⁸⁸ Before the Fenno-Soviet peace negotiations in Tartu, Gylling sent a new proposal for a Karelian Labour Commune, written at some point during his stay in Sweden from autumn 1918 to spring 1920, to Yrjö Sirola, chairman of the Communist Party of Finland in Moscow.⁸⁹ Sirola belonged to those Red leaders who had escaped to Petrograd in April 1918. Gylling's plan was translated for the use People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, or Narkomindel, the Soviet Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, on 24 March 1920.⁹⁰

Gylling's original proposal presented the Karelian Labour Commune both as a model state and a bulwark protecting Soviet Russia.⁹¹ Without direct involvement of the Soviet Russian central government, "it could carry out revolutionary agitation and [...] ideologically prepare the ground for the Finnish revolution." But not only for Finland: in the proposal, Gylling stated that Karelia geographically belonged to Scandinavia: "In the northern parts, its borders are very close to Sweden, Norway, and Finland.

⁸⁶ Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 113–114, 117.

⁸⁷ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 54.

⁸⁸ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 74; Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 55–60.

⁸⁹ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 75; Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 109ff.

⁹⁰ Kangaspuro 2000a, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 75, note 29; Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 111. This version of the proposal differs slightly from the German-language version, possibly a draft, found in Stockholm during the trials in 1921.

⁹¹ Quoted in its entirety in Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 347–349. Translated into Finnish by Pentti Pärssinen from the original German.

It is a strategic starting-point to revolutionize Scandinavia. From there, it is possible to direct revolutionary activities in all of these states. We could gather comrades from these countries there, for economic labour, or directly into military formation.”⁹²

The Cap of the North was an especially interesting region for an internationalist project because its borders did not correspond to the distribution of inhabitants. Gylling did not mention the Saami people, but those nations that supplied the majority of the local proletariat had an active role in his scheme: “There, we could create Finnish, Swedish, and Norwegian regiments equally. Both Northern Norway and Northern Sweden provide a sound basis for this kind of activity. The coming revolution in Scandinavia would gain both material and moral protection from a Karelian Commune. Thus, it would become a Scandinavian test case, and together with the other Scandinavian countries, part of a Scandinavian Soviet Republic. The left socialist movements within Scandinavia and the Scandinavian group in the Third International already form an ideal basis for a Scandinavian Soviet Republic.”⁹³

Even more ambitiously, he envisioned Scandinavia as a trailblazer for the rest of the world as a “Scandinavian Soviet republic” would “dictate its will” to the capitalist West through the creation of a powerful timber monopoly. “[...] there could be a revolution in Scandinavia independently from the world revolution, because of the existence of a Scandinavian Soviet Republic with Russia as its economic and military backup, and it would not be possible to attack militarily, and economically this republic could even control the timber and paper production in Europe, and thus dictate its will also to the capitalist Western states. The Scandinavian Soviet Republic would also be an important stepping-stone on the path to world revolution.”⁹⁴

This implied the conquest of the Finnish timber industry, which had just started to recover and expand after the disastrous wartime slump. The post-war world was reconstructing itself and forestry products from lumber to paper were in high demand. The devaluation of the Finnish mark led to increased sales and enormous profits for the sawmill owners while their wartime loans diminished.⁹⁵ The disappearance of Russia from the timber market meant another opportunity for expansion, which the Finns indulged

⁹² Quoted in Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 349. My translation.

⁹³ Quoted in *ibid.*, 349.

⁹⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 349. Both letters are also quoted in Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 21.

⁹⁵ Kuisma, *Metsäteollisuuden maa*, 677–682.

in by underbidding their Swedish and Norwegian rivals “ruthlessly.”⁹⁶ A “Scandinavian Socialist Republic” would unite the Scandinavian competitors into a massive monopoly on the market.

Gylling envisioned the Karelian Labour Commune as an independent economic unit, with full rights of self-administration of internal affairs and education. Independently from Russia, it would unite the Finnish nationality, protect East Karelia and the Murmansk railroad, and create a “safe gate” to the North-West via the Arctic Sea. Gylling emphasized the administrative autonomy of the Commune. Its leadership was to consist of persons who supported national autonomy unconditionally. Gylling wanted at least 50 per cent of the population to consist of Finns and Karelians. A certain degree of “Karelian nationalism and Finnish ideology” was to be allowed as a counter-measure to White Finn agitation. This would constitute a positive influence on Finnish smallholder farmers, who would be in a key position in a coming revolution beyond the borders.⁹⁷

Economic and geographic factors made Karelia a member of the Nordic countries and Gylling intended it to stay that way. Therefore it would join them after the revolution in a new Socialist Soviet Republic. As is evident from the quote cited above, Gylling believed that the revolution could be realized in Scandinavia independently from any European developments. Because the Nordic countries were protected by Soviet Russia, the West would be deterred from intervention – unlike Germany in Finland after Brest-Litovsk in 1918.⁹⁸

Even the NKVD entertained the idea of a Scandinavian revolution. When the Politburo of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) discussed the East Karelian question in May 1920, the deputy leader of the NKVD supported Karelian autonomy, as long as the goal was Scandinavian revolution.⁹⁹ Other examples of similar usage of ethnic or national *irredenta* existed at the time. The West Ukrainians in Poland were invited to join a Soviet Ukraine, and Moldavian autonomy was founded to impress the Bessarabians. Romania had invaded Bessarabia in the First World War, and Soviet Russia never accepted this loss. The Moldavian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic was founded in 1924 to bring revolution to Bessarabia, and the language spoken by Bessarabian Moldavians became its

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 687–688.

⁹⁷ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 75–76.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 78–82.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 78. Kangaspuro quotes his name as “M. F. Vladimirk,” which I have not been able to confirm.

official language.¹⁰⁰ The choice of Finnish as the official language instead of Karelian followed a similar logic as the choice of the dialect spoken by the urban, Russian-influenced population of central Uzbekistan, while local nationalists supported rural variants of the language.¹⁰¹

Gylling met Vladimir Lenin in May 1920 to make his case, and left a favourable impression: “He would make a good prime minister for any country whatsoever,” Lenin wrote after the meeting.¹⁰² Lenin accepted Gylling’s proposal, and Narkomindel passed a decree ratifying the position of East Karelia as an autonomous labour commune on 7 June 1920.¹⁰³ In August, the Communist Party of Finland was still confused about the implications of the foundation of the Commune. Verner Forstén, who had years of experience in the Finnish organizations within the All-Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks), asked the newly-arrived Gylling if he was serious about the possibility of administrative autonomy. Gylling assured him that the political situation made such liberties possible. The revolution had not yet succeeded in the Nordic countries, and therefore Karelia was needed as an example of Finland and Scandinavia.¹⁰⁴

On 8 June 1920, the All-Russian Central Executive Committee in Moscow issued a declaration that a regional unit, the Karelian Labour Commune (*Karel’skaia trudnaia kommuna, Karjalan työkansan kommuuni*), was to be formed in the Karelian-populated areas of Olonets and Arkhangel’sk. Edvard Gylling was appointed as its Chairman of the Council of the People’s Commissars. Historian Nick Baron points out in his book on Soviet Karelia how the lack of further detailed instruction in purpose, status and territorial extension “is a measure of the contradictions, conflicting aspirations and countervailing tensions of ideology and exigency” prevalent in early Soviet state building.¹⁰⁵ This enabled both the theoretical expansion of the revolution beyond Soviet borders in the early 1920s and the actual territorial expansion of the autonomous republic of Karelia in 1922–24. However, it had no constitutional guarantee for its protection.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ Terry Martin, *The affirmative action empire: nations and nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press), 274–275.

¹⁰¹ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 101.

¹⁰² Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 22–23.

¹⁰³ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 75, note 29; Yläraakkola, *Edvard Gylling*, 111. This version of the proposal differs slightly from the German-language version, possibly a draft, found in Stockholm during the trials in 1921.

¹⁰⁴ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 91.

¹⁰⁵ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 51. Markku Kangaspuro, “Nationalities policy and power,” 119.

Edward Gylling argued that Soviet Karelia was ideal as a base for a Scandinavian revolution because the long border made a speedy revolution possible – first in Finland, then in the other Nordic countries.¹⁰⁷ In February 1921, Gylling penned a note on Karelian autonomy where he stated his aim to create a “Scandinavian revolutionary centre” in Karelia by means of collaboration with Scandinavian socialist parties.¹⁰⁸ Another task of the Commune was to provide a safe haven for Finnish communists.¹⁰⁹ The Finnish exiles maintained contacts with their old homeland, either directly or via Sweden and Norway. They also assumed the position of an intelligentsia with the task of leading the Karelian nation. “Red Scandinavianism” provided a sense of purpose for the exiled Finnish revolutionaries, who attempted to rebuild their lost Red Finland within the borders of Soviet Karelia.

The sense of urgency diminished as the hopes for a German revolution were dashed in 1923. Joseph Stalin’s 1924 speech on “Socialism in one country” put the first nail in the coffin of the original *raison d’être* of Karelian autonomy.¹¹⁰

Why the Karelian Labour Commune? Security, economic power, nationalism

The Soviet leadership’s acceptance of Gylling’s plan has usually been explained in terms of geopolitics, security policy and economic necessity. Bolsheviks needed to make peace at the north-western border to protect the Murmansk railroad. Karelia was in dire need of peace for development, as it lacked basic infrastructure, telegraph lines, roads and means of transport.¹¹¹ The borderlands between the Arctic Sea and the Gulf of Finland had witnessed constantly flaring conflicts during 1918–20, involving various interventionist forces, the British, White Russians, Karelian separatists, White Finns, Germans, Americans, Poles, and even a smattering of French and Serbian troops supporting the British in the Arkhangelsk campaign.¹¹² Lenin and Chicherin were ready to solve the Karelia question

¹⁰⁷ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 75–76; Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 21.

¹⁰⁸ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ Edvard Gylling, “Suuret rauhan viestit” (Great messages of peace) *Karjalan Kommuuni* 9.10.1920; Anonymous, “Neuvosto-Karjalan vuosipäivänä” (On the anniversary of Soviet Karelia) *Karjalan Kommuuni* 7.6.1923.

¹¹⁰ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 28–29.

¹¹¹ Kangaspuro, “Nationalities policy and power,” 120–121.

¹¹² Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 25–26.

due to the unrest in the region.¹¹³ Most importantly for Gylling's case, the Soviet leaders had more pressing concerns around its borders – including the Polish counter-offensive in the spring of 1920.

As Chicherin had disclosed in communication with Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern and Petrograd party chairman Grigory Zinoviev, the first negotiations between White Finland and Soviet Russia had proven that unless the Karelian question was solved in a satisfactory way for the local population, it would be impossible to make a peace treaty with Finland.¹¹⁴ Karelia as a base for revolutionary activities in Finland and Scandinavia was an intriguing idea to the Soviet leadership, but it was more urgent to find a solution for the border question at the peace negotiations with Finland in Tartu. Finland insisted that the peace treaty would contain a statement on the rights of autonomous Karelia and its native population. The Fenno-Soviet treaty of Tartu was signed on 14 October 1920 amidst loud protests from the Finnish right wing. The Soviet declaration “Concerning Self-Government for East Karelia,” which was attached to the treaty, was partly based on Gylling's outline. The Finnish negotiators interpreted “East Karelia” differently from the Soviets; since the “Karelian Labour Commune” was not mentioned by name, they avoided giving formal recognition to it.¹¹⁵

The national question was also ideologically central to the development of the Soviet state. Although the Bolsheviks thought of nationalism as a “masking ideology,” hiding the actual class interests of the bourgeoisie, Lenin and Stalin concluded that by granting national self-determination to oppressed peoples, the class conflict would emerge when the struggle for nationhood had been fulfilled. Therefore, Finland was granted independence in 1917. National consciousness was also seen as a consequence of the capitalist mode of production and thus an unavoidable historical phase towards higher levels of development; therefore, by developing the national consciousness of the “backwards” Karelians, Finns could serve the revolution in the long run. In Stalin's words in 1929, “We are undertaking the maximum development of national culture so that it will exhaust itself completely and thereby create the base for the organization of international socialist culture.”¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 84.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹⁵ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 22–23; Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 84–85.

¹¹⁶ Martin, *The affirmative action empire*, 2–6.

Both Red Finns and Soviet leaders agreed that Karelian national identity was to be developed in a Soviet-friendly direction, but their goals were quite different. Soviet Russia was planning to place Karelia firmly under state control with the help of propaganda produced by the Finns while the Finnish intelligentsia intended to build a Socialist “Greater Finland” and ultimately a Socialist Scandinavia.¹¹⁷ In 1924, Gylling explained the importance of Karelia as an “advance guard” of world revolution as the effect of its location close to Scandinavia: “Whichever work is done there and whichever results are achieved, the news thereof will easily travel to the capitalist countries in the west and reach the proletarian masses. We have some experience of this already. Just the message of the foundation of the Karelian Commune inspired a wide response among workers, not only in Finland but generally in Scandinavia.”¹¹⁸

The strength of such an undeveloped region was its potential for economic development – its barely exploited natural resources. According to Gylling’s ambitious economic plans, the future Scandinavian Soviet Republic would build a timber industry monopoly in Western Europe.¹¹⁹ The development was to remain firmly in the hands of the leaders of the autonomous labour commune, and its forces would participate in the labour struggle on the capitalist side of the border. A Karelian Jäger Battalion was formed under the command of local Red Finns as a national army to protect its western borders.¹²⁰

Gylling’s revolutionary committee attempted to protect the economic autonomy by resisting certain aspects of the New Economic Policy (NEP), such as the plan of to allow “Finnish Capitalists” rights to exploit the Karelian forests. Gylling wrote to Narkomindel that this would increase “White Finn” influence on the Karelian population, extremely dangerous in a situation where the Karelians were only partly supportive of the Bolsheviks. The decision would also have a negative influence on the labour movement in Finland and Scandinavia. Karelians and Scandinavian workers had been told that the Commune had saved natural resources from the

¹¹⁷ Anna Laakkonen, “*Suomeen on Karjala sidottu, mutta ei lahtari-Suomeen...*”: *viholliskuvan ja identiteetin rakentaminen Neuvosto-Karjalan suomalaisessa sanomalehdistöissä 1920–1929*, Master’s thesis, Department of History and Geography (Joensuu: University of Eastern Finland, 2010), 35.

¹¹⁸ Edvard Gylling, “Karjalan tehtävästä vallankumouksen etuvartiona” (On the task of Karelia as an advance guard of the revolution), *Punainen Karjala* 5.7.1924. Quoted in Laakkonen, “*Suomeen on Karjala sidottu*,” 35, my translation.

¹¹⁹ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 21.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 50.

capitalist plans of conquest. A policy of concessions would reduce all credibility. Gylling reported that a Norwegian engineer was currently planning a reorganization of the Karelian timber industry, and asked for permission and means to recruit experts from Finland and Scandinavia directly.¹²¹

Red Karelianism or Red Scandinavianism?

After the October Revolution, many Western visitors to the border between Finland and Soviet Russia waxed lyrical about its gloomy mystique, essentially dividing two “worlds.”¹²² In contrast, the leader of a teachers’ seminar for Finns in Karelia described the land as a bridge connecting and uniting “the workers’ Finland of the future to the Union of Soviet Republics.” Since the working class in Finland was on a higher state of development “in the sense of working-class education,” they would play a key role, unlike the Karelian people “hidden away in the wilderness.”¹²³ Nothing in the Soviet Karelian newspaper articles revealed the fact that the Finns constituted merely a minority among the inhabitants of the area.¹²⁴

The cultural policies of the Finnish leaders in East Karelia could be characterized as culturally imperialist on a local scale. The Finnish language was imposed on the Karelians as a language of civilization. On the other hand, Gylling emphasized the interrelations of Finns and Karelians in the tradition of national romantic “cultural Karelianism.” The “tribal” brotherhood was extended to Scandinavia to include the historical friendship and understanding between Scandinavian countries.¹²⁵ The first step towards Scandinavia went via Finnish culture, and the assimilation of Karelians into Finnish culture was a frequent cause for debate in the editorials in the newspapers of the Labour Commune of Karelia, for example, the question of the Finnicization of surnames.¹²⁶ To the journal *Kommunisti*, Gylling explained that Finland’s historical duty was to aid the economic and cultural development of less developed “tribal brothers,” including not only Karelians but more distant Finno-Ugric minorities. An unpublished

¹²¹ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 93–94. Kangaspuro refers to a “H. Langstedt,” probably Håvard Langseth, a Norwegian engineer and Labour Party (later Communist) politician, who visited the Karelian Labour Commune in 1921, as reported by Anonymous, “Neuvosto-Karjalan taloudellinen tulevaisuus,” *Vapaus*, 16 February 1921.

¹²² Engman, *Gränsfall*, 97–99.

¹²³ Laakkonen, “Suomeen on Karjala sidottu,” 36, 77.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 84.

¹²⁵ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 143.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

version of the article contained even more blatant proposals of a Greater Red Finland.¹²⁷ The Finnish-language Soviet Karelian newspapers also described its historical task to defend the border as infinitely important, and this justified its very existence. Historian Anna Laakkonen finds that “practically the same arguments” were used to motivate hatred against Russians in 1920s Finland.¹²⁸

Gylling’s vision for Karelia’s future was orientated toward the North. Already in the negotiations between the Finnish People’s Delegation and Soviet Russia, he had insisted on including Petsamo and the route the Arctic Sea in his Greater Finland, following Voionmaa’s example. In 1917, Voionmaa had as senator in charge of communications commissioned a report promoting Finland’s access to the Arctic Sea. Voionmaa began to write his definitive work on the Petsamo question, *Suomi Jäämerellä* (Finland at the Arctic Sea), in January 1918, as a parliamentary planning committee convened to discuss border claims. The tensions escalating towards a civil war in late January interrupted the committee’s work, but the People’s Delegation resumed it. Some of its members (e.g. Gylling and Otto Wille Kuusinen) had already participated in the previous committee. During the negotiations in Tartu 1920, suspicions were voiced that Voionmaa had personally assisted the People’s Delegation in the planning of the proposed border treaty and its maps. This contribution arguably enabled Finland to continue justifying its territorial demands.¹²⁹

Baron identifies the Karelian double peripherality as directed towards the Soviet Russian centre and a future Scandinavian socialist centre in “the west.”¹³⁰ The general use of “west” in this context seems misleading. Gylling envisioned “the West” as the target of Soviet Scandinavia’s economic power. I would prefer to describe Gylling’s geopolitical orientation as “Nordic.” In the nationalist ideology of independent Finland, the country’s great historical task was to be a bulwark of the West against Soviet Russia.¹³¹ The “Fennoscandian shield,” rising against the eastern plains provided a striking geological metaphor.¹³² However, Finland’s northern position and its access to the Arctic distinguished it from Western Europe. Gylling defined

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 146–147.

¹²⁸ Laakkonen, “*Suomeen on Karjala sidottu*,” 34.

¹²⁹ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 127–133.

¹³⁰ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 241.

¹³¹ Oula Silvennoinen, “Kumpujen yöhön – eli kuinka historiallinen muisti vääristyi,” *Luvattu maa – Suur-Suomen unelma ja unohdus*, ed. by Jenni Kirves and Sari Näre (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga – WSOY, 2014), 24–25.

¹³² Raivo, “*Karjalan kasvot*,” 22, 26.

the purpose of Karelia's nationality policy as paving the way for collaboration between the Nordic peoples in a future socialist Soviet republic, but also the utilization of specifically Nordic resources and industries in the region of the Cap of the North. The conquest of the "New Soviet North" was an equivalent idea from the Soviet Russian perspective.¹³³

Arguably, Karelia had a much stronger mythological value in nationalist thinking in the Republic of Finland than Petsamo and the Arctic. The former represented the nation's golden age in addition to its natural wealth; the latter was merely a wilderness to be civilized and exploited – often disregarding the interests of its native inhabitants. Both of these exoticizing tropes of colonialism were important elements in the construction of a Finnish national identity. The double function of national myths about Karelia, promising both the wisdom of the past and the wealth of the future via the timber industry, reveal the double-edged sword of the auto-exotism or self-Othering by an intellectual elite, identifying with a "people" yet conscious of its position apart – the people in the present are subjected to the potential people of the past and the future, which only the elite can identify.¹³⁴ The Red Finns in Soviet Karelia could not romanticize the bourgeois Finland that they had left behind, but even for them, Karelia was merely a stepping-stone on the path of a greater future project. In Soviet Karelia, they would redeem the chance that they had lost in 1918.

In the early 1920s, Finnish-language papers published in Soviet Karelia depicted the area as a part of a Socialist Greater Finland and Scandinavia. Karelia would serve as a pivot for the revolution in Finland. This was illustrated with the nineteenth-century national romantic idea of Karelia as the birthplace of Finnish culture. Mythical Karelia belonged to no-one else but Finland. On the other hand, Red Finns felt allegiance to the Soviet state and the greater family of Soviet peoples. The Central Committee guaranteed the privileges of the Commune and its peculiar nationality policy.¹³⁵

The Red Battalion of the North strikes back

The Civil War of 1918 had disappointed both the victorious and the vanquished sides in the struggle. The wounded nation could only be invigorated

¹³³ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 76.

¹³⁴ Tepora, "Heimoveljiä, valkobandiitteja," 71–72. For auto-exotism, cf. Elmgren, *Den allrakäraste fienden*, 166–168; for self-Othering, cf. Silvana Patriarca, "Indolence and regeneration: tropes and tensions of Risorgimento patriotism," *The American Historical Review*, 110:2, (2005), 45–46.

¹³⁵ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 51.

through reconnecting with its primordial roots in Karelia. While Communists were planning to light the spark of a Scandinavian revolution, some White activists were determined to do their part to crush Soviet power in the same spot. The first incursion of *heimosoturit* (“tribal warriors,” in solidarity with the Finno-Ugric “brother nations” in the east) in Olonets 1919 was not enthusiastically received by the local population. After signing the Treaty of Tartu, the Finnish government was obliged to stop such volunteers from crossing the eastern border. In exchange for Petsamo, Finland had agreed to allow Soviet Russia to occupy the municipalities Repola and Porajärvi at the eastern border. A local uprising in East Karelia with the support of Finnish volunteers broke out in the autumn of 1921, and in December Repola, Porajärvi, and large parts of White Sea Karelia and Olonets were under the control of the rebels.¹³⁶

The East Karelian revolt was framed as a struggle for independence, but it had in the eyes of its supporters only one self-evident outcome: the unification of East Karelia with Finland.¹³⁷ Opinion in Finland was divided and the revolt was not supported unconditionally. Even a staunch anti-Communist such as Esko Riekkö, chief of the Detective Central Police in Tornio, wrote that the financial support to the Karelian uprising came from Finnish timber companies that were actually preparing the ground for radicalization in Finland by exploiting their own workers.¹³⁸ However, some elements of the right wanted an escalation. As the Minister of the Interior, Heikki Ritavuori of the liberal National Progressive Party, attempted to curb the border traffic, he was murdered in the street outside of his own home in 14 February 1922. The investigation of the murderer’s political connections was never completed.¹³⁹

In the autumn of 1921, there had been only 700 Soviet troops in East Karelia. As the rebels took control of the region and defeated the ill-prepared defenders, the People’s Commissar of Military and Naval Affairs, Leon Trotsky, issued a command to “liquidate the white Karelian bandits.”¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Saarela 1996, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, 249. Yläräkkö, *Edvard Gylling*, 150.

¹³⁷ A French-language map published by the Karelian exile government founded by the 1922 rebels depicted the distribution of nationalities in East Karelia. Only two nationalities were shown to exist in this region, Finns and Russians, although the text of the document promoted the Karelians’ right to independence and self-determination. *Le droit de la Carélie*. Publié par le gouvernement central de la Carélie (Helsinki: Juusela & Levänen Oy, 1922).

¹³⁸ Lackman, *Esko Riekkö*, 141.

¹³⁹ Cf. Risto Niku, *Ministeri Ritavuoren murha* (Helsinki: Edita, 2004).

¹⁴⁰ Matti Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen – läskikapinan johtaja: poliittinen elämäkerta (1881–1938)*, Scripta Historica XX (Oulu: Acta Societatis Historicae Ouluensis, 1993), 41.

The First Party Secretary of Karelia, Vasily Kudzhiev, took the opportunity to criticize the autonomy policy severely. Kudzhiev pointed out that the purpose of the Commune was to advance a revolution in Finland and Scandinavia. Nothing had come of it, and the revolt proved that the Commune had no future as autonomous region. Kudzhiev's opinion represented the Left Opposition's line in the question of the right of self-determination for minority nations in the All-Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) at that time.¹⁴¹ However, the Finns managed to defend their position and the ethnic Karelian Kudzhiev was replaced as party secretary with an emigré Red Finn in 1922.¹⁴²

The Petrograd International Military School mobilized its Finnish and Karelian students, including former "Red jägers," to form a volunteer ski battalion.¹⁴³ The battalion's leader was the young but experienced fighter Toivo Antikainen.¹⁴⁴ This special force managed to turn the tide of the conflict in a few weeks. Stories about its battles became a recurring feature of Soviet Karelian memory culture.¹⁴⁵ Another campaign, which was being prepared simultaneously, was to be less celebrated. In January–February 1922, the military wing of the Communist Party of Finland dusted off the Nordic War Plan in the hopes of kindling a revolt in Northern Finland with the support of the Bolsheviks.¹⁴⁶ However, the execution of the plan leaves doubts about the full extent of the support.

In early February 1922, a small ski patrol consisting of around 70 men, led by the Red Army Commissar "Jahvetti Moilanen" (a *nom de guerre*), crossed the border and entered Finnish territory in the area of Kuolajärvi and Savukoski.¹⁴⁷ On 2 February, they approached the lumber workers in the

¹⁴¹ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 79, 94.

¹⁴² Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 38.

¹⁴³ Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 678.

¹⁴⁴ When Antikainen later entered Finland clandestinely to reorganize the local party apparatus, he arrived via Sweden in Tornio. Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 83.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. *Neuvosto-Karjalan puolesta. Taistelukuvaauksia pohjoiselta rintamalta*, ed. by Toivo Antikainen (Leningrad: Suomalainen kustannusosuuskunta "Kirja," 1927); *Kansalaissota Karjalassa. Kansalaissodan historiaa Karjalassa koskevien materiaalien kokoelma, omistettu banditismien likvidoimisen 10-vuotispäivälle. Inen osa*. ed. by L. Letonmäki et al. (Petroskoi: Valtion kustannusliike Kirja, 1932); *...Mutta taisteluun olemme valmiit – Kymmenen vuotta Karjalan bandiittikapinan kukistamisesta*, ed. by Jalmari Virtanen et al. (Leningrad: Valtionkustannusliike Kirja, 1932); Toivo Vähä, *Suomalaiset punikit. Muistelmia* (Petroskoi: Karjala-Kustantamo, 1974).

¹⁴⁶ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 115–116.

¹⁴⁷ Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen*, 49–51. "Jahvetti Moilanen" was born as Frans Johan "Janne" Myyryläinen in Viipuri 1881. He had been a worker and organizer in the timber

forestry company Kemi Oy's work camp in Värriö and attempted to incite them to join a "Red Guerrilla Battalion of the North."¹⁴⁸ This campaign later acquired the derisive name "pork revolt" (*läskikapina*), as Moilanen reputedly held a rousing speech standing on top of a food crate.¹⁴⁹ The "pork revolt" took timber companies and border guards by complete surprise. The battalion, with newly recruited members, withdrew to the Soviet side of the border on 7 February.¹⁵⁰

Nationalist historiography depicted the "pork revolt" as a punitive expedition of the Communist Party of Finland as a retaliation for the East Karelian uprising.¹⁵¹ Researchers leaned towards this interpretation.¹⁵² However, Soviet sources hint at bigger plans. In early 1921, the Comintern had advised Communist parties around the world to take more effective action for world revolution. The Communist Party of Finland had reserved a considerable sum for "expected struggles in the lumber forests of Lapland."¹⁵³ According to Moilanen's own memoirs, he had been selected at Petrograd International Military School for a "certain top secret task" in 1922.¹⁵⁴ Moilanen's notes imply that the expedition was unable to accomplish the planned task, although its nature remained unclear. Not until 1937 did he specify that "it was decided that if we accomplish a broader revolt in Northern Finland, the battle will be continued on Finnish soil, but if we fail, we move on to Soviet Karelia and continue the struggle for workers' power there."¹⁵⁵ Years later, anti-Communist writers did not hesitate to draw their conclusions about the true purpose of the Red Guerrilla Battalion of the North – full-scale Scandinavian revolution, not merely local retaliation.¹⁵⁶ In the summer of 1922, the Detective Central Police managed to discover the connection point in Tornio that the northern Communists had been

industry and escaped imprisonment by the Whites to Soviet Russia in 1918. In Soviet Russia, he used the name Juuso Matero.

¹⁴⁸ Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen*, 52.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 58–59.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 60–65, 67.

¹⁵¹ Jussi Niinistö, *Heimosotien historia 1918–1922* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2005), 232.

¹⁵² Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen*, 43–44.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 44, 47.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30, 33–34, 38.

¹⁵⁵ *Elämäkertaselostus Juuso Materolta: entiseltä nimeltä Janne Myyryläinen*. 23.3.1935, quoted in Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen*, 52–53.

¹⁵⁶ Örnulf Tigerstedt, *Vastavakoilu iskee: Suomen taistelu neuvostovakoilua vastaan 1919–1939* (Helsinki: Otava, 1943), 56; Arvo Tuominen, *Kremlin kellot: muistelmia vuosilta 1933–1939* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1957), 24.

using to communicate and to supply comrades with materials and money.¹⁵⁷ Another blow to Communist activities was struck in the summer of 1923 when Finnish authorities suspected that another “pork revolt” was being prepared. Finland’s Socialist Labour Party, hitherto functioning legally, was prohibited, and hundreds of its members were arrested. Finnish authorities also followed the considerably more open activities of the Swedish Communists in the 1920s, looking for evidence of Scandinavian Red Guards.¹⁵⁸

The decline of the “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia”

Thanks to Gylling’s persuasive skills, Soviet Karelia initially enjoyed special status and autonomy in its nationalities policy and in economic administration. The borders of the Karelian Labour Commune in 1920 corresponded with Gylling’s ideas of economic realism and national idealism. In the mid-1920s, the region expanded to include Russian-majority areas. Gylling saw this as a temporary setback to the balance between the nationalities in the region, but a small price to pay for a greater future gain in the form of a Scandinavian Soviet Republic.¹⁵⁹ In this sense, Gylling’s “Red Scandinavianism” was closer to the geopolitical views of Väinö Voionmaa’s inspiration, Rudolf Kjellén, who argued that expansionism was a natural and necessary way of self-preservation for the state.¹⁶⁰

During the first years of the Karelian Labour Commune, its newspapers had depicted the region as a bulwark of Soviet power against bourgeois Finland and the capitalist world, with the task to spread revolution to the west.¹⁶¹ In the second half of the 1920s, Soviet Russian leaders paid more attention to the control of border regions. No longer was Karelia seen as a potential gateway for revolutionary expeditions, but as an increasingly vulnerable target to enemy attacks.¹⁶² The idea of a Scandinavian revolution was abandoned. The region was now expected to protect peace and stability.¹⁶³ Starting in 1928, enforced collectivization was a blow to its economic autonomy, subjecting the farming production completely to the needs of the timber industry.¹⁶⁴ Ever-growing labour camps provided the industry

¹⁵⁷ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 62.

¹⁵⁸ Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta*, 71, 76–77.

¹⁵⁹ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 51.

¹⁶⁰ Lähteenmäki, *Väinö Voionmaa*, 106.

¹⁶¹ Laakkonen, “Suomeen on Karjala sidottu,” 34.

¹⁶² Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 51.

¹⁶³ Laakkonen, “Suomeen on Karjala sidottu,” 76.

¹⁶⁴ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 183–187.

with cheap workforce.¹⁶⁵ Gylling's plan to use economical power lived on: in 1930, Soviet representatives hoped to "force Finland into total economic dependence" by timber exports, among others.¹⁶⁶

A final rhetorical resurrection of the Scandinavian revolution was witnessed in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, as Soviet Karelia started to receive an influx of immigrants from Finland and North America. Thousands of Finns, Finnish-Americans and Finnish-Canadians were willing to bet on Soviet prosperity at the onset of the Great Depression.¹⁶⁷ Kustaa Rovio, first secretary of the regional committee of the All-Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) in Karelia, convinced Stalin to order the Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU) and Narkomindel to accept the immigrants. He argued that immigration would help Karelia to develop into a "truly exemplary socialist republic, which would revolutionize by its example also the neighbouring countries, Finland and the other Scandinavian countries."¹⁶⁸ As continued centralization policies tore down Karelian autonomy, the persuasive power of the "stepping-stone" argument was weakened. In his struggles against centralization in the early 1930s, Gylling stubbornly appealed to Karelia's special rights as a "forepost of Soviet power in the North" or "forepost in the Soviet north-west" as guaranteed by Lenin.¹⁶⁹ The OGPU increasingly suspected the Finns to be agents of "bourgeois nationalism."¹⁷⁰ The Red Finns did not hesitate to use the early phase of the purges for their own purposes, targeting ethnic Karelian officials who opposed their nationality policy.¹⁷¹ When Andrei Zhdanov used his position as First Secretary of the Leningrad Obkom to investigate local conditions in Soviet Karelia, he accused the Red Finns of selfishly aspiring for leadership positions in a future Soviet Finland.¹⁷² Scandinavia was not mentioned. Gylling and Rovio were released from their duties in 1935.¹⁷³

The Great Terror escalated in 1937–38. Within one year, the NKVD arrested almost 10,000 people, one third of whom were Finns – out of 2.5 per cent of the total population. Over 83 per cent of the arrested were

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 204, 209–213.

¹⁶⁶ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 91.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 92; Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 247–248.

¹⁶⁸ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 247.

¹⁶⁹ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 112–113, 167.

¹⁷⁰ Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 248.

¹⁷¹ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 166.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁷³ Markku Kangaspuro, "Neuvosto-Karjalan suomalainen kausi," *Yhtä suurta perhettä – Bolševikkien kansallisuuspolitiikka Luoteis-Venäjällä 1920–1950-luvulla*, ed. by Timo Vihavainen and Irina Takala (Helsinki: Kikimora, 2000), 161–162.

sentenced to death.¹⁷⁴ Gylling was arrested in Moscow on 25 July 1937, and expelled from the Communist Party of Finland in September.¹⁷⁵ NKVD chief of Karelia, Karl Tenison, composed a conspiracy theory of the various international connections of Gylling's Finnish nationalists, inverting the "stepping-stone" argument into a threat against the Soviet Union, only twenty days before his own dismissal and a few months before his death following an "interrogation."¹⁷⁶

Undoubtedly, Rovio and Gylling were working on behalf of a "Finnicization" of Karelia. Initially, they had the full support of the Bolshevik nationality policy.¹⁷⁷ As late as 1928, Gylling celebrated the "first treaty between Socialist republics," namely the 1918 agreement between the Finnish People's Delegation and Soviet Russia, which allowed the border between the two countries to follow national lines.¹⁷⁸ This nationalist self-confidence was noted in right-wing circles in Finland. Urho Kekkonen, later President of the Republic, published a tongue-in-cheek column in the student magazine *Ylioppilaslehti*, where he as a future dictator of Finland declared a state alliance with the Soviet Republic of Karelia and cultivated a personal friendship with Gylling.¹⁷⁹ Only three years earlier, Gylling had been deemed such a sensitive subject for the Finnish public that the Finnish translation of popular Swedish cartoonist Albert Engström's travel report from Soviet Russia had left out a cartoon and a paragraph describing the man "with an utterly rare career behind him."¹⁸⁰

Moscow had supported Red Finnish nationalism, as well as the Scandinavian plan, but by the mid-1930s, the past was irrelevant – except as a political weapon.¹⁸¹ There were no longer any nuances between bourgeois and

¹⁷⁴ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 211.

¹⁷⁵ Kangaspuro, "Neuvosto-Karjalan suomalainen kausi," 168. Decisions of the foreign bureau of the Communist Party of Finland in the cases of Edvard Gylling, J. K. Lehtinen and Matti Stein, quoted in "*Kallis toveri Stalin!*" *Komintern ja Suomi*, ed. by Natalia Lebedeva *et al.* (Helsinki: Edita, 2002), 355.

¹⁷⁶ Baron, *Soviet Karelia*, 211–212.

¹⁷⁷ Antti Laine, "Venäjän Karjala 1900-luvulla," *Karjala – historia, kansa, kulttuuri*, ed. by Pekka Nevalainen and Hannes Sihvo (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 1998), 214–215; Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 229–238.

¹⁷⁸ Edvard Gylling, "Ensimmäinen sosialististen tasavaltain välinen sopimus," *Punainen Karjala*, 1.27.1928.

¹⁷⁹ Tepora, "Heimoveljiä, valkobandiitteja," 117.

¹⁸⁰ Albert Engström, *Moskoviter* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1946 [1923]), 164. The Finnish translation is missing a paragraph on the corresponding page. Albert Engström, *Ryssiä* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1925), 189.

¹⁸¹ Cf. the patriarchal and teleological instrumentalization of history under Stalin, in Klas-Göran Karlsson, *Historia som vapen*, (Stockholm: Natur och kultur, 1999), 69, 74–76.

working-class nationalism. Since Finland was a bourgeois state, all Finnish nationalism was bourgeois. Since Russia was a socialist state, Russian nationalism equalled Soviet patriotism.¹⁸² The connection to Finland was used by Soviet authorities as proof of “bourgeois nationalism” among other Finno-Ugric minorities in Russia.¹⁸³ Although Karelians were also targeted in the persecutions, some policy changes were introduced in favour of the Karelian language after Rovio and Gylling were ousted in 1935.¹⁸⁴

Changes within the Comintern also revealed a turn against international “Red Scandinavianism” in the mid- to late 1920s. As Communist parties started to develop their activities in other parts of Europe, the Comintern no longer supported the special position of the Scandinavian Committee in Stockholm.¹⁸⁵ Its activities waned, although the pro-Comintern parties of the Nordic countries continued to hold Nordic meetings in 1922 and 1924. In the 1924 meeting, the argument for Nordic cooperation was a defensive one: as the Nordic employers’ organizations were establishing closer contacts, the Nordic workers should form a united front. However, this “Scandinavian federation” was soon *de facto* disbanded. In late 1927, a Scandinavian regional secretariat was founded in Moscow and adopted the Moscow-centred perspective of the increasingly centralized Comintern: it dealt with each country as a separate case, and it did not include Finland.¹⁸⁶

In the 1920s, Finnish Communists were often appointed to instruct Scandinavians, and many Finns nourished a superior self-image as trailblazers of the revolution after the experiences of 1918. The regional secretariats were suppressed in 1935, and the leaders responsible for activities in Scandinavian countries were generally nominated from other European regions towards the end of the 1930s. There were many possible reasons to separate Finland from Scandinavia, including Soviet Russian security policy, the economic and political similarities between Finland and the Baltic countries, and the fact that their Communist parties all had their leadership residing in Moscow due to their illegality in their home countries.¹⁸⁷

Fenno-Scandinavian cooperation was thus not supported by the Comintern’s organizational structure. Another obstacle appeared in the form of ideological developments in the Nordic countries themselves. In the

¹⁸² Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 309, 333.

¹⁸³ Walter Kolarz, *Russia and her colonies* (London: George Philip and Son Ltd, 1953), 54.

¹⁸⁴ Tepora, “Heimoveljiä, valkobandiitteja,” 122; Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu*, 340ff.

¹⁸⁵ Saarela, “Nordic Communists,” 93; Kan, *Hemmabolsjevikerina*, 455–460.

¹⁸⁶ Saarela, “Nordic Communists,” 93–94, 96.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 95–97.

mid-1930s, the Social Democratic parties in the Nordic countries, particularly Finland and Sweden, introduced a new concept evoking Nordic cooperation: “Nordic Democracy.”¹⁸⁸ This could be described as a way of co-opting bourgeois nationalism against the rising tide of Fascism in Europe. In December 1935, the centre-right government of Finland also adopted a “Scandinavian orientation” as foreign policy.¹⁸⁹ These Social Democrat and Liberal uses of the Nordic region, however loosely defined, did not inspire adaptation by the Comintern. Conservative and radical nationalists in Finland nevertheless saw a pacifist or even Marxist threat in the leftist-liberal Scandinavian or Nordic orientation in their own countries.¹⁹⁰

Echoes of the “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia”

Many Red Finns lost their lives in uncertain circumstances in the Great Terror. Many confessed to crimes they had never committed, and many died without knowing what they had been condemned of. One of these countless victims was the officer who had led the “Red Guerrilla Battalion of the North” as “Jahvetti Moilanen”; he was accused of “counter-revolutionary activities” in the same “gang” as Gylling, Rovio and others.¹⁹¹ The diverging fates of the Red jägers is a case study in the arbitrariness of the persecutions.¹⁹²

After the mass murders, any mention of a “Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” seems to have disappeared from the publications of Finnish Communists. Otto Wille Kuusinen, a member of the Finnish People’s Delegation in 1918 who gained a high position in the Comintern, reputedly dreamed of becoming “Proconsul of Scandinavia,” but this seems to have been nothing but a vengeful boast.¹⁹³ During the Winter War 1939–40, Kuusinen was appointed to lead a Soviet puppet government, supposedly representing a revolutionary uprising in Finland, which was to be united with Soviet Karelia in exchange for complying with territorial demands.¹⁹⁴ Accord-

¹⁸⁸ Kurunmäki, “‘Nordic Democracy’ in 1935,” 37, 42–43.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 52–53.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 58–59. For examples, see Elmgren, *Den allrakäraste fienden*, 103–105, 117–119, 120, 124, 246.

¹⁹¹ Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen*, 90–91.

¹⁹² Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?* 678–679.

¹⁹³ Aino Kuusinen, *Jumala syöksee enkelinsä: muistelmat vuosilta 1919–1965* (Helsinki: Otava, 1973), 334.

¹⁹⁴ Timo Vihavainen, “Otto Wille Kuusinen. Elämänvaiheet,” *O. W. Kuusinen ja taistelu Stalinin perinnöstä*, ed. by Timo Vihavainen (Helsinki: Suomen kirjallisuuden seura, 2003), 12.

ing to Soviet propaganda, it was not at war with Finland but helped the Kuusinen government to defeat “White bandits” – a reference to the unrest in Karelia in the 1920s.¹⁹⁵

The spectre of Gylling’s great plan haunted the anti-Soviet propaganda of the war years. To justify Finland’s participation in the Barbarossa offensive in the summer of 1941, the so-called “Continuation War,” the plan’s outlines appeared in articles and books revealing Soviet espionage. A widely circulated article after the conquest of Petrozavodsk in 15 July 1941 claimed that the Soviet Union had purposefully constructed East Karelia as a huge military base, intending to use it as a stepping-stone towards the conquest of Finland and entire Scandinavia. By occupying the region, Finland would do a great service to the Nordic countries and Europe.¹⁹⁶

In his 1942 bestseller on “Finland’s struggle against Soviet espionage,” Swedish-speaking poet and journalist Örnulf Tigerstedt resurrected the Stockholm spy trials of 1921.¹⁹⁷ Tigerstedt favoured a form of Scandinavian unity – the “Old Realm,” Sweden and Finland united as one kingdom. He hoped that Hitler’s Germany would help recreate this unity by rekindling old values of national idealism and ending Swedish neutrality.¹⁹⁸ Tigerstedt’s descriptions of Communist spy cases were detailed and based on police resources, and his colourful prose provided the necessary indignant context. Explaining the relevance of the Nordic War Plan, he stated that it should never have been hidden away in the archives: “[It] ought to have been printed in hundreds of thousands of copies, and, framed behind glass, hung visibly in every school hall in the Nordic countries, and especially on the walls of those people, who stubbornly in their simple faith trusted that the Bolshevik state’s intentions towards the surrounding world were as pious as a lamb’s. Perhaps many a thing would have been different in the Nordic countries when the decisive crisis broke out 20 years later.”¹⁹⁹

Tigerstedt aimed to convince the Scandinavian neighbours, two of which were under German occupation, that Finland was fighting for their common interest. To him, the 1921 Stockholm spy trials and the 1922 “pork

¹⁹⁵ Vihavainen, “Otto Wille Kuusinen,” 12–13.

¹⁹⁶ Anonymous, “Miksi vielä taistelemme” (Why We Still Fight), *Pilven Veikko*, 1.10.1941. Quoted in Helena Pilke, *Korsu-uutisia! Rintamalehtien jatkosota* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), 138.

¹⁹⁷ Göran G:son Waltå, *Poet under black banners: the case of Örnulf Tigerstedt and extreme right-wing Swedish literature in Finland 1918–1944* (Uppsala: Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Uppsala Universitet 31, 1993), 122–125, 134, 136–137.

¹⁹⁸ Waltå, *Poet under black banners*, 127, 133.

¹⁹⁹ Tigerstedt, *Vastavakoilu iskee*, 31.

revolt” were closely connected cases. The exiled Red Finns conspiring in Sweden and the raid on the timber camps were “nothing but the beginning and end of the same plan”: to “Bolshevize the Nordic countries.”²⁰⁰ Tigerstedt described the alleged club pin of the veterans of the Murmansk legion who left British service to join the border guards of Soviet Karelia: decorated with red enamel, it showed a map of Finland between North Russia and North Sweden, with an arm stretching over it from the east and grabbing the hand of another, shackled arm, reaching from the west. “This sign, too, leads the thoughts to Gylling’s memorandum [the Nordic War Plan] and the Swedish Battalion of the Finnish Red Guards’ dealings in Sweden,” Tigerstedt reminded the readers. Still, he could not – or would not – explain why the Reds in the North decided to abandon the plan of a “Scandinavian Soviet Republic.”²⁰¹

Although Tigerstedt mocked the pompous declarations of the Communist leaders that lead to “a few weapons exercises, a hasty courier action and a lot of speeches to a handful of lumberjacks,” he speculated that if the timing of the “pork revolt” had been better, it would have shown the world “what a dreadful danger had actually loomed over Northern Scandinavia.” If the Red central command in Stockholm had been able to launch an attack across the border, and if the Reds of the Tornio river valley, Rovaniemi, Oulu and Kajaani, together with the Reds of Swedish Norrland, had managed to unite in a common front with the victorious Bolsheviks in East Karelia, “we do not know how the fate of the Nordic countries would have turned out.”²⁰² Tigerstedt’s scenario seems far-fetched. In February 1922, there was no Red Battalion in Sweden, because many of its former leaders had already travelled to Soviet Russia. Despite the ifs and buts, a sober conclusion would not have captivated the reader’s imagination.

The story of the “Scandinavian Soviet Republic” briefly reappeared in Finland before the Finnish-Soviet cease-fire in September 1944, via the Norwegian pro-Quisling newspaper *Aftenposten*, which had unearthed documents related to the Stockholm spy trials in 1921. *Ajan Suunta*, the organ of a pro-Fascist party in Finland, published the *Aftenposten* findings on 14 June 1944, as Finland had initiated armistice negotiations with the Soviet Union. The stories were entitled “Scandinavian Soviet Republic: Red Imperialism Does Not Abandon Its Demands Even in the North-West,”

²⁰⁰ Tigerstedt, *Vastavakoilu iskee*, 49.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 56–57.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 60.

and “New Proof of the Aims of Bolshevist Imperialism.”²⁰³ Evidently, the goal was to keep Finland fighting by Germany’s side, but the newspaper was soon prohibited along with other “Fascist” publications to comply with the armistice demands of the Soviet Union.

Tigerstedt’s involvement in pro-German propaganda caused not just a career setback but a personal disaster when cease-fire was proclaimed between Finland and the Soviet Union on 4 September 1944.²⁰⁴ With his wife, he left Finland illegally in a small motorboat and arrived in Sweden on 30 September 1944. A press campaign was launched against him in Sweden, and the authorities interned him in a prison camp. Even then, Tigerstedt could not understand the Swedish public’s indignant reaction to the German occupation of Denmark and Norway.²⁰⁵

“International in form, national in content” – Red Scandinavism as vision and reality

In 1935, as the Red Finnish leaders were being expelled from their positions, Soviet Karelian achievements were advertised to Finnish-American Communists in a publication celebrating “Soviet Karelia’s Journey of 15 Years.” Nothing in this publication hinted at any Scandinavian connection. The increasingly questioned nationality policies were still officially sanctioned with Stalin’s (originally Lenin’s) slogan: “National in form, socialist in content.”²⁰⁶ An inverted version of this slogan would have fitted Edvard Gylling’s Red Scandinavism: “Regionalist in form, nationalist in content.” As a historical stage, the imagined Nordic community of revolutionary Karelia, Finland, Sweden, and Norway – Denmark and Iceland remained peripheral – could have been justified as a more progressive developmental phase than parochial Karelian or Finnish nationalism. A “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” needed Karelia as urgently as the nationalist Greater Finland needed it, at least from the point of view of its own promoters. Eventually, both plans had to be abandoned, because the great external power necessary to realize them did not materialize. The foundation of a “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” was not the pri-

²⁰³ “Skandinavian neuvostotasavalta,” “Bolshevistisen imperialismmin tavoitteista uusia todisteita,” *Ajan Suunta* 14.6.1944.

²⁰⁴ Waltå, *Poet under black banners*, 143.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 155ff, 166.

²⁰⁶ *Neuvosto-Karjalan 15-vuotiselta taipaleelta 1920–1935* (From Soviet Karelia’s Journey of 15 Years) (New York: Finnish Federation Inc., 1935), 6; Cf. Lenore A. Grenoble, *Language policy in the Soviet Union* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003), 41–42.

mary or even secondary reason for the founding of the Karelian Labour Commune, and much less the reason for the demise of its leaders – Finnish nationalism was damnable enough.

As a curious footnote, the idea of a “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” was utilized again for political purposes in some anti-Soviet publications in Finland during the “Continuation War” in 1941–44. One might ask why these publications took the vague hints and the unrealistic scope of the Nordic War Plan and other documents of the early 1920s spy cases so seriously, when the recent experience of the Winter War could provide fresh arguments for a war of retaliation. A reason could be that in a worldview where the enemy had to represent absolute evil, every action of this enemy was not merely an act of expansionist geopolitics; it was a portent of the final apocalyptic struggle for existence, which was now being fought. National Socialism was primarily concerned with race, secondarily with space, in its genocidal war in Eastern Europe.²⁰⁷ Tigerstedt mirrored Nazi ideas about racial corruption, but also Spenglerian fatalism, when he claimed that the Soviet Union would destroy the “innermost substance” of the Finnish nation “in a system of annihilation without parallel in world history” when Finland agreed to sue for peace separately in 1944.²⁰⁸

The influence of Väinö Voionmaa and even Rudolf Kjellén can be traced in the geopolitical plans and proposals of the Finnish revolutionaries, particularly Edvard Gylling, in the negotiations that led to the foundation of an autonomous Soviet Karelia. The plans of the Red Finns paradoxically utilized a conservative, expansionist and nationalist geopolitical concept to make national autonomy for Soviet Karelia more palatable to the leadership of world revolution in Moscow and Petrograd. Because of the originally Fenno-centric perspective, this concept marginalized the Karelian population. However, the vision of a “Socialist Soviet Republic of Scandinavia” did not mention what role the Finns would play among other developed Nordic nationalities. Perhaps the Red Finns assumed that they would be able to keep a leading role in Red Scandinavia, thanks to their experiences in 1918, as they attempted to do in the Comintern’s Scandinavian organizations before the 1930s.

To paraphrase the Soviet slogan, Red Scandinavianism was internationalist in form, nationalist in content – if one by nationalism means the

²⁰⁷ David Thomas Murphy, *The heroic earth: geopolitical thought in Weimar Germany 1918–1933* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1997), 247. Gearóid Ó Tuathail, “Introduction,” *The geopolitics reader*, ed. by Simon Dalby *et al.* (London: Routledge, 1998), 22–23.

²⁰⁸ Waltã, *Poet under black banners*, 143.

promotion of Karelian autonomy and Finnicization policies; it was not in contradiction to early 1920s Soviet policies regarding minority nations. The Scandinavian and Nordic orientation served this purpose initially, because – as in the case of the Social Democrat concept of Nordic Democracy in the 1930s – the Nordic perspective was no contradiction, but rather a complement, to national policies.

AINUR ELMGREN (b. 1979) is a post-doctoral researcher in Political History, Network of European Studies, University of Helsinki.*

KOKKUVÕTE: *Skandinaavia Nõukogude Sotsialistlik Vabariik*

Oktoobrirevolutsioonile järgnenud aastakümnel rakendasid Rootsis, Soomes ja Nõukogude Karjalas eksiilis viibinud Soome revolutsioonilised poliitikutud oma rahvuslikud ja regionalistlikud geopoliitilised ideed kommunistliku maailmarevolutsiooni teenistusse. Ideed revolutsioonilise “Skandinaavia” ühendamisest Soome ja Karjalaga võib näha laialt levinud nn Suur-Soome projekti laiendusena.

Sotsiaaldemokraatlik riigimees ja geopoliitika teadlane Väino Voionmaa mõjutas 1918. aasta alguskuudel lühikese elueaga Soome revolutsioonilist valitsust (*Suomen kansanvaltuuskunta*) esitama territoriaalseid nõudmisi Nõukogude Venemaa vastu. Voionmaa mõju võib näha ka läbirääkimistes, mis viisid autonoomse Nõukogude Karjala loomiseni.

1918. aasta läbikukkumine sundis punasoomlaste liidreid oma rolli paguluses ümbermõtestama. Mõjutatuna kontaktidest Rootsi ja Norra radikaalsotsialistidega loodi ambitsioonikaid plaane, mis ressursside nappuse tõttu kunagi ei teostunud. 1918. aasta lõpul loodi Stockholmis “Skandinaavia Revolutsiooniline Komitee”, millelt pärines projekt “Soome punakaardi Rootsi pataljoni” loomiseks ning suurejooneline “Põhjamaine sõjaplaan”: kava “Skandinaavia Punaarmee” revolutsiooniliseks sõjakäiguks. Neid dokumente kasutati tõestusmaterjalina sensatsioonilises kohtuprotsessis Soome ja Rootsi kommunistide vastu 1921. aastal Stockholmis.

* Correspondence: Ainur Elmgren, Runeberginkatu 50 B 38, 00260 Helsinki, Finland. E-mail: ainur.elmgren@helsinki.fi

Edvard Gylling, endise Soome punavalitsuse rahvasaadiku mõte oli ka autonoomse Karjala Töökommuni loomine Nõukogude Venemaal. Gylling veenis Leninit nõustuma Karjala omavalitsusega, väites, et sellest saaks lähtekoht revolutsioonile Soomes ja Skandinaavias. Lõpuks pidi Karjala muutuma osaks suuremast Skandinaavia Nõukogude Sotsialistlikust Vabariigist, mida ühendanuks kultuurilised, geograafilised ja majanduslikud faktorid. See “punane Skandinaavia” pidi monopoliseerima puidukaubanduse ning haarama majandusliku võimu Lääne-Euroopa üle.

Karjala Töökommun loodi karjalastega asustatud aladel Olonetsis ja Arhangelskis 1921. aastal. Gylling nimetati Rahvakomissaride Nõukogu esimeheks. Rõhutud rahvastele rahvusliku enesemääramise õigust lubades lootsis bolševikud käima lükata ajaloolist protsessi, mis kulmineeruks klassisõjas ja proletaarses revolutsioonis.

“Arenenud” rahvad pidid seejuures näitama eeskujuna “vähemarenenutele”. Soomlaste ja karjalaste hõimuvendlust laiendati hõlmamaks ka Skandinaavia rahvaid. Seejuures piirdusid tegelikud transnatsionaalsed revolutsioonilised aktsioonid vaid üksikute ekspeditsioonidega üle piiri, nagu nn Pekimäss (*Läskikapina*) 1922. aastal

Skandinaavia revolutsiooni idee jäeti sinnapaika 1920. aastate keskkel, nagu ka maailmarevolutsiooni oma. Sundkollektiviseerimine Karjalas allutas põllumajanduse metsatööstuse huvidele ning järjest paisuvad sunnitöölaagrid pakkusid odavat tööjõudu. Kuna Karjala liidrid jätkasid autonoomia kaitsmist, nägi OGPU neis “koodanliku natsionalismi” agente. Edvard Gylling koos paljude teistega eemaldati võimult 1935. ja tõenäoliselt hukati 1937. aastal.

Viimaseid viiteid Nõukogude Skandinaaviale võib leida nõukogudevastastest propagandast, mis pidid õigustama Soome osalemist Barbarossa pealetungis 1941. aasta suvel. Selleks otsiti uuesti välja 1921. aastal Stockholmis kohtuprotsessil avalikkuse ette toodud “Põhjamaade sõjaplaan” kui tõend bolševike vallutusplaanidest Skandinaavias.

Edvard Gylling kasutas Skandinaaviat regionalistliku mõistena, et teha Nõukogude Karjala mõtet vastuvõetavaks maailmarevolutsiooni juhtkonnale Moskvast ja Petrogradis. Vaatamata multirahvuselise Skandinaavia idee potentsiaalsele laiahaardelisusele marginaliseeris fennotsentriline vaatenurk Karjala rahvastikku. Punane skandinavism oli vormilt internatsionaalne, kuid sisult rahvuslik. See oli mõeldud pakkuma lohutust ja eesmärki paguluses viibivatele punasoomlastele ning võimalust neile taasvallutada Soomet Nõukogude Karjala piires.