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FINLAND

COMPLICATED COEXISTENCE

"Finlandization" has become an epithet, but the Finns have remained remarkably free while reaching accommodation with the Russians

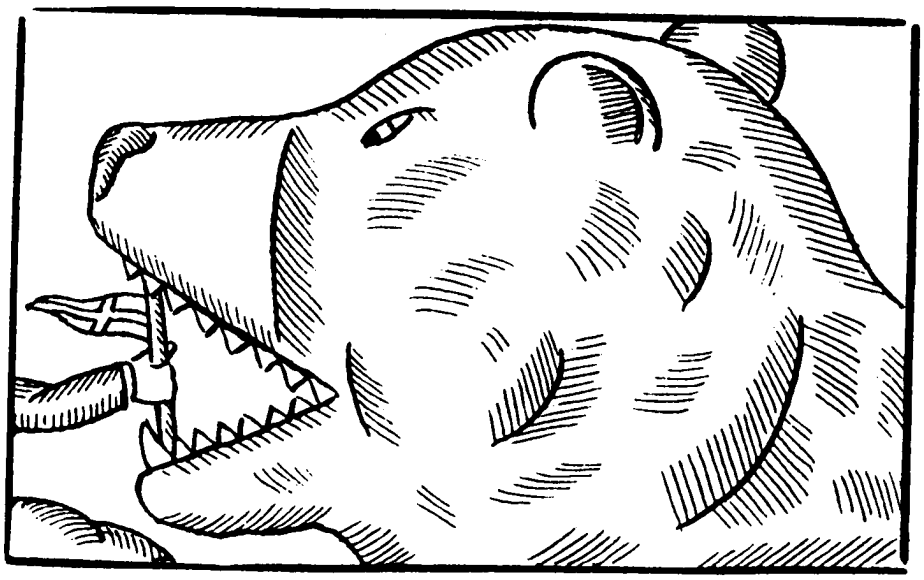
NOT MANY COUNTRIES have acquired the status of metaphor. But Finland has—or, at least, had: in truth, "Finlandization" has been less a metaphor than an epithet, used by people who knew little about Finland to describe policies they disliked. The eminent German political scientist Richard Löwenthal is generally credited with having invented the term in the early 1960s, but there is little agreement on what it means, since the purposes of those who have used it have been more polemical than analytical.

If the term means anything, it means a state's anticipatory accommodation to the interests of a powerful state nearby—in the case of Finland, the Soviet Union. The rub, of course, is that weak states inevitably have to make some accommodation to strong states in their neighborhood, like it or not. One man's realpolitik is another man's trimming sails to the Soviet wind. To complicate matters, writers such as Walter Laqueur began talking in the mid-seventies of "self-Finlandization," a term picked up by Zbigniew Brzezinski when he was President Carter's assistant for national-security affairs. For Brzezinski, the target of the epithet was Western Europe, especially West Germany under Chancellor Helmut Schmidt. But the term is at best redundant, because any notion of Finlandization implies anticipation by the weak state more than actual coercion by the strong.

Charges of Finlandization have been hurled across the Atlantic less frequently in the past several years. The accession to power in West Germany of the Christian Democrats, under Helmut Kohl, has been reassuring to official Washington, at least temporarily. But more important, the issues facing the United States and its allies in Western Europe—the intermediate-nuclear-force deployments, for example—are so serious that gratuitous name-calling has become too damaging to contemplate. Nevertheless, it seems worth looking at how "Finlandization" applies to the country itself. The occasion for my recent visit was a conference in Helsinki on nuclear weapons and Nordic security, especially the prospects for a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic area.

The end of President Urho Kekkonen's long (1956 to 1981) tenure in office has not meant a change in Finnish policy toward the Soviet Union. His successor, Mauno Koivisto, was quick to identify himself with the postwar policy developed under Finland's two previous presidents—the so-called Paasikivi-Kekkonen line. Although the Soviet-Finnish Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) still had five years to run, at a Moscow summit last June Koivisto and Yuri Andropov extended it by twenty years, in large part to commit themselves personally to it. Koivisto, a Social Democrat, had not been regarded as the Soviets' favorite candidate. Nevertheless, he has pledged to continue the intense diplomacy with Soviet leaders that Kekkonen made a tradition.

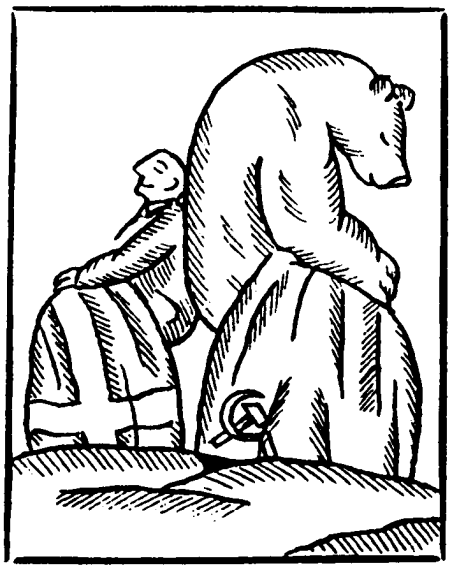
Accommodating the Soviet Union has allowed the Finns a surprising amount of internal discretion. The country has a stable parliamentary democracy and a free press. Eighty percent of its econo-



my is privately owned, a much higher figure than those for many nations in Western Europe. Its per capita income is well into the world's top twenty. Finland shows very few signs of Soviet cultural influence, but has trappings of the West—Scotch, jeans, and Burger King. It bears almost no resemblance to an Eastern European state. It is perhaps unsurprising that few Finns oppose existing arrangements with the Soviet Union. A 1974 poll, for example, found that 80 percent of Finns thought the Soviet-Finnish friendship treaty was favorable to their international position, and only 4 percent thought it was unfavorable.

Yet the approval derives from a shared awareness of how few options Finland has and the memory of the consequences of other attitudes. Most Finns regard Finland's near-arrogance toward the Soviet Union between the world wars as a grave error, one for which they paid dearly, both in the Winter War of 1939–1940 and in the so-called "continuation war" of 1941–1944. In the armistice ending the latter, Finland lost parts of its eastern region, Karelia, a loss that entailed the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of refugees. As one Finnish analyst put it to me years ago: You have to understand, we tried fighting them and we lost; you can't blame us for trying some other approach.

SOME OF THE costs of Finland's peculiar ties to Moscow are plain enough. Despite its need, Finland refused Marshall Plan aid after Moscow signaled that accepting would be considered a hostile act. Finland's arrangements with the Common Market are balanced by parallel links to Comecon—which were made largely for cosmetic reasons—and its policy of neutrality rules out full membership in the Common Market. Political refugees from the East are normally returned. The FCMA treaty obliges Finland to cooperate with Moscow if the Soviet Union is attacked through Finland, though the Finnish interpretation holds that mutual consent would be required for Soviet troops to enter Finland. There are treaty limits on Finnish military forces. Although those forces are well trained and some are deployed in the north, they are inadequate to defend the Soviet border. Finland spends on defense less than half the percentage of GNP spent on it by Sweden or Norway. Finland buys major arms from the



Soviet Union, though many of its Soviet items, such as aircraft, have been modified with Western electronics. Large purchases from the West, such as the recent acquisition of American anti-tank missiles, are balanced by comparable purchases from the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union provides virtually all of Finland's oil and natural gas, and two thirds of its total energy. Before the energy crisis of 1973, Finland was able to keep its trade with the Soviet Union at its target of one fifth of all trade, but that share has since risen: exports to the Soviet Union, primarily of manufactured goods, reached 27 percent of total trade in 1982, with imports from the Soviet Union, mostly of raw materials, at 25 percent. Since the trade is conducted on a kind of barter basis, Finland's large "surplus" with the Soviet Union means that it must either sell less or look for more to import. There is no question, however, that Finns regard the trade arrangements as beneficial. Though the Finns look to a recovery in the West to reduce their reliance on trade with the Soviet Union, that trade has cushioned the impact of the global recession on Finland.

The marks of deference to the Soviet Union on Finland's politics and public life are harder to find. Certainly *Pravda* and *Izvestia* do not refrain from expressing opinions about Finnish politics, and Finnish analysts are devoted Kremlinologists, seeking tiny clues to Soviet attitudes. To exert influence on Finnish politics, the Soviets use the pro-Soviet faction of the Finnish Communist Party, which has frequently been part of postwar coalition governments. (In practice, however, Communists are excluded from the diplomatic service and the officer corps.)

In 1973, the Finnish parliament extended President Kekkonen's term by four years, and two years later all political parties announced that they would support him in 1978. Both actions reflected Finnish sensitivity to Soviet indications that better relations between Finland and Western Europe would be acceptable only if a firm hand remained on the rudder—leading one observer to call Finland "Kekkoslovakia." Yet in the 1982 elections the candidate preferred by the Soviets was rejected by Kekkonen's own Center Party, despite signals from *Pravda*. The ultimate winner, Koivisto, is a man without strong ties to the Soviet Union—a lack that was interpreted as contributing to his victory.

Self-restraint sometimes borders on self-censorship. Kekkonen successfully pressured Finnish publishers not to issue a local edition of *Gulag Archipelago*—though a Finnish translation was published in Sweden and distributed in Finland. Finnish leaders seldom criticize the Soviet Union, especially about "domestic" matters like human rights (they seldom criticize the U.S., either), and the press follows suit. The silence reflects the wide consensus, in and out of government, that existing arrangements ought not to be jeopardized. Thus, while the Finnish trade surplus with the Soviet Union will be noted, it will be played down, lest it be embarrassing to Moscow and complicate future trade negotiations. One government source says that in discussions of the communiqué to accompany the prolongation of the bilateral treaty in June, the Soviets pressed for stronger language concerning the Finnish media. Finland resisted, the source says, holding to a vague formulation acknowledging the "responsibility" of the press not to provoke tensions.

Many of Finland's current problems are shared by other industrial countries. Economic growth will be slight this year, unemployment remains high, and inflation, at 9 percent last year, threatens to gain momentum. A previously impressive growth in exports—led by metal and engineering goods, which had come to equal exports of traditional wood products—halted in 1982, despite the increased trade with the Soviet Union. Growing government deficits are not yet a problem on the scale of that in the U.S., but they will nevertheless compel

unpleasant and politically divisive cutbacks in social spending.

More important over the long term, there are signs of cracks in Finland's remarkable political and social consensus. With four operating nuclear reactors, (two supplied by the Soviet Union), Finland has managed to produce a high proportion of its domestic electricity from nuclear energy. There is growing opposition to a plan for a fifth reactor, which is nonetheless attractive to Finnish industry: buying another big-ticket item from the East means selling more back. Most politicians I spoke to predicted that the reactor will never be bought. Finnish "Greens" (radicals, environmentalists, and anti-nuclear activists) captured two seats in parliamentary elections this year. The Greens are beginning to have effects on internal politics—especially on the previously impressive unity of the Social Democrats—that are reminiscent of dissension in West Germany, one right-wing Finnish Social Democrat explained to me. Some of his colleagues, he said, are tempted to try to co-opt support for the Greens by moving left on issues like nuclear power and budget-cutting.

THE CONFERENCE ON a Nordic nuclear-free zone was a good chance to observe Finland's internal politics and its relations with neighbors. The conference commemorated the twenty-fifth anniversary of the proposal for the zone, which was supported by Kekkonen in 1958. It is not a very good idea. The Nordic countries already constitute a de facto nuclear-free zone, since Sweden and Finland have forsworn nuclear weapons, and the Nordic NATO members, Norway and Denmark, do not permit them to be stationed within their boundaries in peacetime. The Nordic region is adjacent to the Kola peninsula, which is the base for an enormous array of Soviet conventional and nuclear weapons, including a large fraction of the Soviet nuclear-missile-carrying submarine fleet. The Nordics hope and trust that the missiles are intended to go over their heads to the United States. Still, it would be hard to pretend that they did not exist during any negotiations over a nuclear-free zone. The Soviets, who are quite content with the idea of a nuclear-free zone that does not include them, have hinted that they might make concessions to accommodate one. These would probably mean some constraints on shorter-range systems on the Kola. But even given Soviet concessions, there would remain great problems in defining and negotiating a nuclear-free zone in the Nordic region. Merely ratifying the existing state of affairs would gain the Nordics little, and doing so would be awkward for Norway and Denmark, because it would separate them still further from NATO's nuclear umbrella.

Yet not all ideas are useful primarily for their substance. I sensed that many Nordics who support the idea while it is under discussion would not like to see it become a reality, for the reasons suggested above. Discussing the nuclear-free zone has increased consultation among the Nordic countries on security matters—indeed, at the conference I sometimes felt as if I were listening through a keyhole to a private discussion. One Finnish political scientist could not resist the temptation to play to the Soviet gallery, by suggesting that the Soviet-Finnish friendship treaty could serve as a model for a nuclear-free-zone agreement. He embarrassed most of his Finnish colleagues, but it is helpful to Finland to keep the idea alive.

The best capsule description of Finland's attitude toward the Soviet Union that I have heard was provided by a foreign diplomat: It's not courageous but it's effective. And, Finns would add, the costs of courage are too high for a country of 4.8 million people. Maybe, one Finn said, we will be able to afford other options when the Soviet Union disintegrates into fifteen semi-independent republics, but we can't now.

Finlandization has little value as a metaphor. Finland derives impressive benefits even as it incurs costs. Its approach is the product of too many singular facts; bedfellows make peculiar politics. If Finland as a model has any relevance, it is not to the West but to the East. Turmoil in Eastern Europe may one day force Moscow to contemplate giving the nations there something like Finland's autonomy in domestic, economic, and political affairs—provided they show special deference to Soviet security needs. No doubt Eastern Europe would be more than happy to be Finlandized in that way.

—Gregory F. Treverton