

POLITICAL

FINLAND

*Finland: Soviet Subs*

KOIVISTO DOWNPLAY OF SUB REPORT DISAPPOINTS SWEDEN, NORWAY

Doubts Baltic Situation Has Changed

Helsinki HELSINGIN SANOMAT in Finnish 19 May 83 p 10

[Text] In President Mauno Koivisto's opinion, the recent submarine incidents on the Swedish and Norwegian coasts have not yet been definitively explained. "There is a lot in this affair that appears to be regarded as explained, but which, when more closely examined is not at all," Koivisto said in an interview transmitted by the LEHDISTO news service.

"Apparently, it is now widely felt to be obvious that a sizable increase in military interest in the Baltic has occurred. These are matters that it is very hard to understand. It is difficult to see why a Baltic nation would have any reason to try to worsen the situation that prevails in that area," Koivisto said.

The president does not feel it necessary to establish a new foreign policy debate forum in the Nordic countries nor to discuss the security policy at a session of the Nordic Council. The chairman of the Norwegian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee recently proposed the founding of an organization for the discussion of the [Nordic] parliaments' foreign policy.

*Nordic balance cooperation*

"If members of these parliaments feel that discussion of security policy is warranted, they have opportunities for doing so annually in many other forums than the Nordic Council. I have not noticed that there is any need for a new forum," Koivisto said.

In the interview Koivisto also raised the issue of the recent government negotiations. In his opinion, the new majority government was created in a normal situation and there is no need for the president himself to go into the subject of the ways in which it was handled any further.

"I in principle believe there is reason to think that the national president should not raise the question of the formation of the government any more than is necessary. I feel that this was done in accordance with parliamentary procedures and principles," Koivisto said.

Koivisto describes the reporting assignment received by speaker of Parliament Erkki Pystynen during the early stages of the government negotiations by noting that it was a matter of the speaker's turn, not the sort of reporting assignment Conservative Party chairman Juha Rihtniemi got after the 1970 elections and Harri Holkeri got in 1979.

"Pystynen did his job thoroughly. He certainly presented his observations on a very general level," Koivisto said.

#### Sharp Reaction from Norway, Sweden

Helsinki HELSINGIN SANOMAT in Finnish 20 May 83 p 8

[Text] Stockholm (Vesa Santavuori)—Finnish President Mauno Koivisto's cautious statement on the military situation in the Baltic was received in Sweden with almost tumultuous amazement.

Radio and television reported the matter all day Wednesday to the tune of "Koivisto doubts" the validity of Sweden's statements on the submarine.

The conservative SVENSKA DAGBLADET joined the chorus on Thursday. It started off its editorial with the headline "Koivisto, the Doubter."

The newspaper wrote that Koivisto had announced that it was "hard for him to understand" why there should be an increase in ever more challenging violations of territorial waters by Soviet subs, the still somehow significant military interest, thinking in terms of Swedish territory.

"It is hard for us too to understand how the president of Finland can permit himself to make statements as broad and slippery as the one he issued to the LEHDISTO news service."

That is how the well-known conservative SVENSKA DAGBLADET expressed its vigorous conservative opinions on Thursday.

In his statement Koivisto did not mention submarines any more than he did Sweden or the Soviet Union.

He stated that not all the beliefs relating to the whole affair were necessarily indisputable based on the clearcut truth.

"Do we hear the voice of the master of the house in the background?" Sweden's Television Channel 1 asked on Wednesday evening.

Written about the same time, an appraisal was published in SVENSKAN on Thursday which intimates the same thing.

"As long as Koivisto does not know what the submarine commission has left unpublished, the Finnish president ought to refrain from making such statements.

"The only ones who can regard the matter with gratitude are those in power in Moscow."

According to SVENSKA DAGBLADET, since the dispute over the sub incidents, Moscow has treated Sweden "in a more and more arrogant and aggressive fashion."

"Hard to Understand"

(Erkki Pennanen)—President Mauno Koivisto's comment during an interview about the fuss that has been raised over the sub incidents off the Swedish and Norwegian coasts, which gave the impression of being rather harmless and unimportant, has caused a considerable stir among our neighbor Sweden's news media — and not only among them.

In Finland they did not see anything strange in the fact that the president, in his typical philosophizing style, stated in the course of a LEHDISTO news service interview that there was a great deal in the whole affair "that seems to be regarded as explained but which, when more closely examined, is not at all so."

What did Koivisto really mean with his doubtless to a certain extent enigmatic philosophizing?

He himself went on to say: "It is now apparently widely considered to be obvious that a sizable increase in military interest in the Baltic has occurred. These are matters that are very hard to understand. It is difficult to see why a Baltic nation would have any reason to try to worsen the situation that prevails in that area."

In the Swedish news media this reply has been understood to mean that the president of Finland directly or indirectly questions the validity of the submarine commission's entire thorough report. This is not a matter of just any old report since both the Swedish Government and the Foreign Affairs Committee, which operates under the chairmanship of the king, have approved it. Basing itself on the findings of the report, the Swedish Government has presented a note of sharp protest to the Soviet Government.

Sources close to the president have hastened to dispel the notion that Koivisto might have meant the report itself in his statement as a misinterpretation. It is emphasized that he was referring to the military policy situation in the area concerned.

At the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs they assure us that they understand the president, but that they are also somewhat surprised at the statement and request that adjustments be made in the language of the text.

On close examination, Swedish interpretations of Koivisto's reply can be shown to be misinterpretations. Koivisto apparently made no mention of the report's nuclear issue or evidence of Soviet sub activity inside Sweden's territorial waters. He is simply not ready to without further ado accept the conclusion that some Baltic nation (the Soviet Union) would have any reason to try to worsen the situation that prevails in that area.

### Carefully Considered Indecision

This time the president's indecisive philosophizing, which has in different respects given rise to surprise, seems to be carefully considered. He had real difficulties in formulating a reply that would have met all the demands of the situation. Finland has been forced into a perplexing corner on an issue on which the official views of the neighboring countries of Sweden and the Soviet Union are diametrically opposed.

When Finland some time ago heard the findings of the Swedish submarine report, the initial reaction was, as we know, one of considerable amazement. The findings and conclusions of the report produced an impression of downright disbelief. Since, however, the Swedish Government and like-thinking Parliament believe them, it was inconceivable that they would not also be taken seriously in Finland.

Later, the Soviet Government in its own reply to the Swedish note rejected the charges that had been made "as untenable claims" and as a hostile act. They said that the Swedish Government had added grist to the mill of those who have promoted a provocative propaganda campaign against detente.

From the standpoint of the commentary on the matter, the situation is reminiscent of the one Koivisto got into on his visit to Stockholm as prime minister in February 1980. At that time he had to reply to the question as to whether he was concerned over the establishment of NATO heavy armament storage depots in Norway.

An affirmative reply would have meant an overt demonstration of lack of confidence in the Norwegian Government and his admission that a change was taking place in the stable situation in Northern Europe. After hesitating for a moment, Koivisto finally decided to answer "no," the result of which was the appearance in many newspapers of the headline, annoying to him: "Koivisto Not Concerned Over NATO Depots in Norway."

This time too, Koivisto tried to place the best interpretation on matters, namely that there was no need for changes to occur in the Northern European situation. This had been the attitude stressed by the other Nordic countries too, at least up until the submarine report.

While the Swedish Government may indeed assume that Finland takes its official views seriously, Koivisto's message seems to be: The drawing of very far-reaching conclusions on sub activity may lead to still more serious consequences in the Baltic than those the conclusions of the submarine report perse might warrant.

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