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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE  
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RUMORED SOVIET TERRITORIAL DEMANDS FROM FINLAND

During recent weeks rumors of Soviet territorial demands on Finland have persistently circulated within that country and Sweden despite official denials from the Finnish Government. The Soviet Union has reportedly asked for all of Finnish Lapland north of the 68th parallel. Finland, in exchange, would regain the city of Viipuri and its surrounding area which was ceded to the USSR under the 1947 peace treaty. (See Map)

At least some of the rumors have been traced to exiled Karelians in Finland who would favor exchanging the barren, unproductive territory in northern Finland for their former homeland. On one occasion the American Legation in Helsinki definitely established that a then current rumor involving territorial exchanges with the USSR was traceable to an Agrarian member of Parliament who had large land holdings in former Finnish Karelia.

No formal Soviet demand on Finland for such a territorial exchange is known to have been made thus far. It is possible, however, that the Soviet Union might make some proposal along these lines in the event that a change in the relationship of Norway and Sweden with respect to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization appeared imminent.

If such an offer were made, the Finnish Government would be faced with a decision which would cause much internal dissension regardless of the final outcome. The Karelians and the more nationalistic Finns who have strong emotional and sentimental attachments to Karelia would urge acceptance. On the other hand, probably an even larger segment of the population would demand rejection of the proposal on the grounds that acceptance would merely be a preliminary to greater demands which would further jeopardize Finnish independence. Sweden and Norway would almost certainly exert strong pressure on the Finnish Government to reject the offer.

State Department review completed

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If a territorial exchange were made, Sweden would share a common boundary with Russia and Soviet forces would be within 70 miles of the northern Swedish iron ore fields. In addition, existing Swedish defense plans for the area would be further complicated. Norway's northern frontier with the USSR would be considerably extended and the already weak and exposed Norwegian defenses in the province of Finnmark would be further threatened. Occupation of the enclave of Finnish territory extending between Sweden and Norway would advance Soviet territory to less than 30 miles of the Arctic Ocean in the Tromsøe area.

The Soviet Union has made no serious attempt at large-scale resettlement or rehabilitation of Viipuri or the surrounding area. This lack of activity has served to strengthen speculation that the Soviet Union intends to retain the area as a future bargaining point. On the other hand, it would be strategically disadvantageous for the USSR to move the Finnish border nearer Leningrad unless Soviet control over Finland could at the same time be strengthened.

