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RUSSIAN AND SOVIET STUDIES IN FINLAND

Ilmari Susiluoto

1 Introduction

The terms Russian and Soviet studies, Sovietology, Soviet area studies or Communist studies are not frequently used in Finland. Finnish scholars have not been eager to identify themselves with Western research of Communism. This neutral orientation is partly due to “academic” and partly to political considerations.

The intellectual background to Finnish studies of Russia and the Soviet Union has been mainly the “domestic academic milieu” and its scientific criteria. According to these criteria the study of foreign countries, especially Russia and the Soviet Union, has not stood in high estimation. These criteria have emphasized a “finnocentric” attitude and thus Russian and Soviet studies have not been influenced very much by Western traditions of studies of totalitarianism, sovietological models, kremlinological methods or the latest, behavioral revolution.

Political reasons have, however, been more important than the ‘academic’ considerations above. Russian and Soviet studies in Finland have reflected changing political relations between these two countries.

Finland has always had close contacts with Russia and the Soviet Union. This closeness extends back to the pre-socialist era of 1809–1917 when Finland was part, though an autonomous part, of Russia. The first contacts between independent Finland and the new Bolshevik regime were ambiguous: Soviet Russia was the first nation to recognize Finnish independence but she also felt solidarity with and gave assistance to the socialist and losing side in the Finnish Civil War in 1918. Finnish bourgeois nationalism and hate of Russia coincided with fear of socialism. Consequently the period 1918–1939 was an era of mutual hostility between the victorious Finnish bourgeois regime and the new socialist government in the East. Hostility between Finland and the Soviet Union led to the two wars of 1939–1940 and 1941–1944.

During the “period of hostility” few studies were produced about Russia and the Soviet Union. Historically and humanistically oriented scholars were harnessed to a large extent to the servies of the Finnish nationalistic and anti-communistic cause: the main research areas being Finnish or Finno-Ugrian minorities in the Soviet Union, especially in East Carelia.

The period since the wars has been a time of continuous reconstruction of Finnish-Soviet relations based on the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (1948). This treaty can be characterized as a consultation-based defense treaty which takes into account Finland’s status as a neutral country. It guarantees the security of the North-West border of the Soviet Union and good relations between
Finland and the Soviet Union.

The Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance is, however, only a basis of Finnish-Soviet norm system. Between these two countries there are numerous treaties, commissions and working groups in political, economic and cultural fields.

Though political relations between Finland and the Soviet Union were already organized in the new way in 1948, research from a broad unbiased perspective started only in the 1960's. There was a period of hesitation out of consideration for potential misunderstandings which could open the old wounds. The present situation is characterized by growing interaction between Finland and the Soviet Union. This interaction has for its part also created more favorable conditions for research.

II Main research areas

There are three distinguishing features of Russian and Soviet studies in Finland: the great attention being paid to Finnish-Russian and Finnish-Soviet relations, the domination of the historical sector, and relatively late entrance of the social sciences in the field.

The great emphasis laid on Finnish-Russian and Finnish-Soviet relations may be explained by the fact that those relations have been central to Finland's political development. The scarcity of research personnel has to be taken into account, as well as the need to concentrate specialists in the most important areas. This is why we have numerous high-standard treatises of Finnish-Russian and Finnish-Soviet relations but actually no general studies of Russian history or the Soviet political and economic system.

The domination of the historical sector is due to two factors, "the academic milieu" and historical data available in Helsinki.

History has traditionally been a discipline for foreign policy research and when the study of Russia and the Soviet Union came to the fore after the wars, historians were the only scholars competent and qualified to penetrate into complex relations between Finland and its eastern neighbour.

The second factor is the historical data available in Helsinki. As a part of the heritage of Finnish contacts to the East, Finland has a great collection of materials which dates back to the pre-socialist era. Helsinki University Library has for instance one of the largest collections in the world of nineteenth 19th century Russian literature, periodicals, legal codes and publications of various institutes. This material has made intensive research possible.

The late development of the social sciences, the third feature of Finnish Russian and Soviet studies, reflects the fact that sociology, political science etc. have been newcomers to the Finnish "academic milieu." This holds true especially for the study of international politics. The main trend of Finnish Soviet studies in the 1970's seems to be, however, gradual expansion of the social science sector.

The following survey deals only with history, economics and political science,
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because they are the disciplines where Soviet studies are mainly carried out in Finland. Russian language, literature and Slavic studies are set aside.

History

Historical studies may be divided into two groups: those works dealing with the Czarest and those with the Soviet period.

During the "hostility period" it was almost an official doctrine that Finland and Russia were—and had been—"eternal and natural" enemies. The studies by Kauko Joustela, Erkki Pihkala and Sune Jungar,(13,29,14) which deal with the economic and cultural relations between Finland and Russia in the 19th century, however, prove that Finnish-Russian relations were largely based on mutual "utilitarian" considerations. Joustela and Pihkala have studied the composition and trends of trade between these two countries from 1809 till 1917. Jungar has, for his part, analyzed Finnish emigration to Russia, especially to St. Petersburg. One result of his studies is the observation of the exceptionally high status which Finnish officials hold in the Czarist army and bureaucracy.

Though Finns were in high positions in the army they could hardly influence Russian military policy toward Finland, which by the end of the 1800's became a threat to the autonomous position of that country within the Russian Empire.

A pioneering study of Russian strategy in the North-West boundary area of Imperial Capital, St. Petersburg, is the study by Tuomo Polvinen "Die finnischen Eisenbahnen in den militärischen und politischen Plänen Russlands vor dem ersten Weltkrieg."(30) In his study Polvinen analyzes the plans of the Russian government and the general staff both in military and political terms. The question then at issue was: how could the railway system be used to draw the boundary country more firmly into the Empire? The answer lay, according to Polvinen, in the railway policy of Russian Governor-General Bobrikov, Russification of railway personnel, caution in the building of new railways and improvement of connections with the East.

The policy of russification based on military calculations would have meant—if it had been effectively realized—the end of Finnish autonomy. Because of the active and passive resistance on the part of the Finns and favourable (favourable from Finland's point of view) international events, especially the war between Czarist Russia and Japan and World War I, Finland could maintain its autonomy and create conditions for its later independence.

The peculiar autonomy of the Grand Duchy of Finland has been studied especially by two scholars, Keijo Korhonen and Osmo Jussila.(15,19,20,22) Korhonen has analyzed the administrative organization of autonomous Finland and the image this autonomy had in Russian political thought. Jussila has attached his interest to the Finnish constitution and how Finns used their constitution as a political weapon trying to convince the Russians of the legal basis of their autonomous position.

Finland's peculiar position within the Russian Empire was not without interest for the Russian revolutionary movement either. Finnish separatists and Russian
revolutionaries “found each other” in the beginning of 1960 though their cooperation was far from easy. This theme has been thoroughly studied by an American-Finn William Copeland in his dissertation “The Uneasy Alliance.”(6)

The beginning of the Soviet period in Russia and the early history of independent Finland has aroused considerable interest among Finnish historians. One may mention the works of Tuomo Polvinen, Mauno Jääskeläinen and Jukka Nevakivi as examples.(17,26,32)

The starting point for Tuomo Polvinen's two-volume work, Russian Revolution and Finland, is the February Revolution in Russia. That revolution did not yet mean a change in Finland's position as the protective wall in the northwest for Petrograd. The situation changed rapidly after the October Revolution, which was soon followed by Finland's declaration of independence. Civil War in Finland and the German landing on the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland meant a serious crack in the northwestern “protective wall” of Soviet Russia. After the defeat of Germany, Finland was for a short period of time in 1918-1919 in a strategic position, as it could openly threaten the former Imperial Capital, Petrograd. After the collapse of the White armies and unsuccessful Allied interventions, Finland and Soviet Russia settled their relations in the Peace Treaty of Dorpat in 1920.

The same period has been studied from a more narrow and “Finnocentric” aspect by Mauno Jääskeläinen. He has examined the birth of a national expansion policy and the attempts to accomplish it in East Carelia in 1918-1920. Jukka Nevakivi has for his part analyzed Finland's attitude towards the Allied intervention in the North of Russia and towards the so-called “Murmansk Legion.”

The “hostility period” from 1920 to the beginning of the Winter War in 1939 has been studied by Keijo Korhonen in his two-volume work “Finland in the Soviet Diplomacy from Dorpat to the Winter War.”(21,23) The Security system of the Soviet Union and that of Finland were connected (Finland being the dependent part) though Finns were not eager to admit this. When the security system of the Soviet Union became threatened, it almost automatically meant a collapse for the Finnish security system, too. This development lead, according to Korhonen, to the Winter War.

The war period from 1939 to 1944 has been much discussed in Finland though much of this discussion has not been of an academic character, i.e. memoirs, political speculation etc. Among historical treatises one may mention the works of S. R. Hurme, Max Jacobson and Helge Seppälä.(10,11,35)

The post-war period has not been studied much by historians because of the lack of archive materials. The study of this period has been the task of economists and political scientists.

Economics

Together with history, economics was the first area to develop after the two wars. The first studies were concerned mainly with the “contractual obligatory trade
pattern” between Finland and the Soviet Union, i.e. Finnish war reparation deliveries to the Soviet Union after 1944. These studies were in the main concerned with the consequences to Finland of those deliveries, the economic burden, its distribution, its impact on the economy in general and offer only incidental information about Soviet motivation, diplomatic orientation and economic goals.

The transformation of this “contractual obligatory trade” into “voluntary contractual” trade meant that Finland became the leading capitalist trade partner with the Soviet Union in the 1950’s and 1960’s. It lost this exceptional status gradually but is still among the most important capitalist trade partners of the Soviet Union. Finnish-Soviet economic co-operation has continuously become more versatile. Among the latest development one may mention big construction projects in the Soviet Union using Finnish technical “knowhow” and skilled manpower.

The experience gained so far, as well as the position of Finland as a pioneer in commercial-economic relations with the Soviet Union has not been reflected in academic treatises. Most economic studies about Finnish-Soviet trade as well as the economic system of the Soviet Union belong to the category which could be called “practical knowledge.”

Recently a number of short descriptions about Soviet economic reforms as well as Finnish-Soviet economic relations have come out (see f.e. 27) and governmental bodies have attached importance to this field of knowledge.

Political science

In the historical studies reviewed above the main emphasis has been on detailed examination of unique phenomena, especially the behaviour of individual leaders. Political science oriented studies, which begun to come out in the 1960’s, have been more general in their nature and favoured theories, models and ideal types, the use of which mean study of events that are thought to be recurrent.

The first large and systematic political science study on the Soviet Union was Klaus Törnudd’s dealing with Soviet attitudes toward non-military regional co-operation. This pioneering work is still, ten years after its publication, of current interest because of the European Security Conference and steadily increasing interaction between capitalist and socialist countries.

One of the first models about Finnish-Soviet relations is Göran von Bonsdorff’s analysis of “fixed” and “variable” factors of foreign policy. Von Bonsdorff’s point of departure is that, insofar as environmental, capacity and perception factors are concerned, one has to take into account comparatively permanent influences, on the one hand, and influences of a more temporary sort, on the other. The interpretation of these factors by decision-makers is reflected partly in the system of treaties constituting an external frame of the nation’s international existence and partly in statements and actions, which can be characterized as the content of foreign policy. Simultaneously, the treaty system and the foreign policy pursued react upon environmental, capacity and perception factors.
Using these concepts von Bonsdorff analyzes four historical situations, namely, the situations around the years 1918, 1939, 1944 and 1967.

If von Bonsdorff's model of a classificatory nature, the studies by Raimo Väyrynen represent a more theoretical and dynamic approach to Finnish-Soviet relations. His object of study is the action system between these two countries which he examines using the sanction-theory as his point of departure. The purpose of Väyrynen's latest study is to investigate the conflict factors which have appeared in Finnish-Soviet relations in the periods 1948-1949, 1950-1959 and 1961-1962. The aim is to carry out a detailed analysis of the causes of sanctions applied by the Soviet Union against Finland, the functioning of sanction mechanism and influence techniques and finally the effects of sanctions on the Finnish political and social system, especially on the relations between the political parties.

The debate over Finnish security policy, where relations with the Soviet Union play a crucial role, has created a considerable amount of more or less "Finnocentric" research (see f. e. F).

Almost all of the above mentioned works one concerned with foreign policy. There is emerging, however, a more comparatively and theoretically oriented research interest, too. This trend is connected with the fact that interest in the Soviet Union itself, its political and economic system, as well as social structure and planning, culture and language etc. is growing in Finland. Scientific studies in these fields have been slow in emerging, but the argument that their relative share will be greater in the 1970's is not without foundation. And as knowledge about the Soviet Union becomes deeper, foreign policy studies may lay their foundation on a sound basis.

III Research institutions

Research centers in the fashion of several American and West European institutes are not found in Finland and so most academic research is done within traditional disciplines in the universities. Prominent among Finnish universities is the Helsinki university with its huge Slavic collections. Its status as the leading university in Russian and Soviet studies is heightened by the fact that even other research facilities are concentrated in Helsinki, namely, the State Archives, the Central Military Library with its unique collection of 19th century Russian military literature, the Institute for Cultural Relations between Finland and the U.S.S.R., the Finnish Institute of International Affairs etc.. Some research is also done in the universities of Tampere and Turku. Tampere is famous for its security policy studies and Turku especially for political history.

The Institute for Cultural Relations between Finland and the U.S.S.R. is subordinated to the Ministry of Education and its functions may be said to be the following: the exchange of university teachers, students, specialists, and scientists between Finland and the U.S.S.R., participation in arranging co-operation between the Academy of Finland and the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, assistance to State
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authorities, organizations, committees, etc., production of translations and reviews and the maintenance of a library.

The Finnish Institute of International Affairs has had a research group for the study of the U.S.S.R. since 1965 and it publishes a mimeographed series about Soviet affairs and the “Newsletter of Nordic Studies on Soviet and East European Affairs.”

This review and the selected bibliography in the appendix does not pretend to be a thorough analysis of the state of Russian and Soviet studies in Finland. The only function of this short description is to give the reader some basic facts about Finnish Russian and Soviet studies, which usually take place behind an insurmountable language barrier.

Selected bibliography compiled by Heimo Vesala

1 Auer, Jaakko
   /A study about Finnish war reparations to the Soviet Union./

2 Blinnikka, Aulis
   /A journalist’s report on the activities and effect of the Russian-led Allied Supervisory Commission in Finland 1944-1947./

3 Bunsdorf /=Bonsdorff/, E. /=G. / fon /=von /
   Doverie, ravnopravie, sotrudnichestvo. (K 15-letju Dogovora o družbe, sotrudnicesce i vzaimnoj pomoči medju Sovetskim Soyužom i Finljandskoj Respublikoj).
   -Kul’tura i žizn’ 1963: 5 p. 23.

4 Bunsdorf /=Bonsdorff/, G. fon /=von/
   Iz praktiki mirnogo sosuščestvovanija. (O sovetsko-finljandskih otnošenijah).
   —Novoe vremja 1956: 35 p. 8–11.

5 Bonsdorff, Göran von
   /A model about Finnish–Soviet relations analyzing its “fixed” and “variable” factors./

6 Copeland, William R.

7 Hakovirta, Harto
   Soviet images of Finnish neutrality as factors influencing foreign policy
decision-making in Finland. Tampere 1972. 28 p. (Univ. of Tampere, Inst. of Pol. Sc., Research Reports 24.)
/A presentation of a set of historical examples relevant to and structured around present theories of image building in international politics./

8 Halsti, Wolf H.
/A mainly historical review of the relationship between Finland and Russia. Special attention is paid to the Agreement of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance of 1948. The writer is a former officer, who has been a foreign policy commentator./

9 Hannonen, Tapani
Eräitä havaintoja suomalaisten suhtautumisesta Venäjään vv. 1907-1912. Tampere 1970. 175 p. (Research Inst. of Tampere Univ., D 42.)
/A historical study of the second period of Russian oppression./

10 Hurme, S. R.
/A review of Soviet military literature dealing with Finland in the Second World War./

11 Jakobson, Max

12 Jakobson, Max

13 Joustela, Kauko
/A study about Russo-Finnish trade 1809-1865./

14 Jungar, Sune
/An introduction to problems, sources and earlier studies of Finnish emigration to Russia during the time when Finland was a part of Russia./

15 Jussila, Osmo
/A study of the autonomic situation of Finland during the period when the country
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was part of Russia./

16 Jussila, Osmo
/A study about roots of the Russian revolution./

17 Jääskeläinen, Mauno

18 Klinge, Matti
/This study includes a discussion about the birth and ideological background of antipathy toward Russia and its growth in Finland in the 1920's./

19 Korhonen, Keijo
Autonomous Finland in the political thought of nineteenth century Russia. Turku 1967. 99 p. (Annalis Universitatis Turkuensis B 105.)

20 Korhonen, Keijo
/A pamphlet about Russo-Finnish relations from 19 th century to the present./

21 Korhonen, Keijo
/A study of Soviet-Finnish relations between the Peace of Tartu and the Non-Aggression Pact: general attitudes and opinions on both sides are also discussed./

22 Korhonen, Keijo
German summary p. 442-460.
/A study about the administrative organization of autonomous Finland in the 1810's and 1820's./

23 Korhonen, Keijo
/Soviet-Finnish relations from the Non-Aggression Pact to the Winter War./

24 Kuhlberg, Svante

25 Kähkölä, Paavo & Ripatti, Aku-Kimmo
/A report on Finnish foreign trade and views of future developments and importance of trade with countries of Eastern Europe, especially with the Soviet Union./

26 **Nevakivi, Jukka**

/A study based on Finnish, British and American sources about Finnish Legion in the British army./

27 **Oksanen, Alpo**

/A condensed description of the latest phase in Soviet economic policy./

28 **Paile, Georg**

/A personal view of the development of Finnish-Soviet relations after the Second World War./

29 **Pihkala, Erkki**

/Finland's Russian trade 1860-1917./

30 **Polvinen, Tuomo**

Die finnischen Eisenbahnen in den militärischen und politischen Plänen Russlands vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Lahti 1962. (Studia historica 4.)

31 **Polvinen, Tuomo**

/A study about governor general Bobrikov and his role during the first years of Russian oppression of Finland./

32 **Polvinen, Tuomo**

/Russo-Finnish relations from February 1917 to December 1920./

33 **Rommi, Pirkko**

/The policy of the leader of the Compliants in Finland's fight to maintain her autonomy during the pre-1914 period of Russian oppression of Finland./
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34 Ropponen, Risto
Die Kraft Russlands. Wie beurteilte die politische und militärische Führung der europäischen Grossmächte in der Zeit von 1905 bis 1914 die Kraft Russlands. Helsinki 1968. 320 p. (Historiallisia tutkimuksia 74.)

35 Seppälä, Helge
/A study about the activities of Russian partisans in the rear of the German and Finnish lines and about the strategic and political importance of the partisan movement./

36 Seppälä, Helge
/A military and historical study of Finland in the Second World War, including the participation in the siege of Leningrad./

37 Setälä, Voitto
Finnish Eastern church policy during the years 1917-1944. Vammala 1971. 14 p. (Univ. of Helsinki, Orthodox Inst., Reprint Series 2.)
/A summary of the writer's study “Suomalaista kirkollista idänpolitiikkaa 1917-1944” (Helsinki 1970: Finnish Society of Church History, Research 82. 191 p.)/

38 Suomi, Juhani
/A study about the origins of the Winter War./

39 Susiluoto, Ilmari

40 Syrjö, Veli-Matti
/A study about Finnish military administration in East Karelia and its archival material./

41 Torvinen, Taimi
/A study of the Finnish historian’s political activity as one of the leaders of the policy of compliance during the period of Russia’s oppression of Finland before the First World War./

42 Törnudd, Klaus
43 Väyrynen, Raimo

44 Väyrynen, Raimo

45 Väyrynen, Raimo