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The Making of a Barrier between Two Worlds: Finnicization on the Finno-Russian Border in the 1910s-20s

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Abstract

An account and analysis from a Finnish viewpoint is given of the transformation of the multicultural, Russian-influenced border community of Terijoki into a "pure" Finnish area under the supervision of various government authorities. Situated only 32 km from St. Petersburg, Terijoki was Finland's principal frontier post on its boundary with Russia and symbolized the country's sovereignty and cultural integrity. Following the events of 1917, this boundary was projected on political, military and cultural grounds as a "border between two worlds", dividing the western races and cultures from those of the Slavs, the Lutheran religion from the Orthodox, the capitalist economic system from the socialist one and the Finnish national character from the Russian one. It has been customary to view Finland as a victim as far as its relationship with Russia or the Soviet Union is concerned, a small country that has had to adapt its internal and foreign policy to its situation as neighbour to a vast empire. This point of departure represents only one side of the coin, however. As is shown here, Finland practised a determined policy of ethnic cleansing in its border areas during the 1910s and 1920s.

Introduction

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, the end of the Cold War and the expansion of the European Union have had the effect of directing the interests of historians, social scientists and geographers within the last couple of decades towards a redefinition of borders and border areas within Europe.[1] The study of borders in Eastern Europe has similarly assumed a new paradigm in the course of these political upheavals.[2] Meanwhile border disputes that have assumed the proportions of major political issues[3] have aroused the interest of scholars in the fundamental alterations in relations

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[1] See David Newman, "The Lines that Continue to Separate Us: Borders in Our 'Borderless' World," *Progress in Human Geography* 30/2 (2006) pp.143-161; Michael Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 1998); Malcolm Anderson and Eberhard Bort (eds.), *The Frontiers of Europe* (London: Printer, 1998).

[2] See Silvia Marcu, "The Geopolitics of the Eastern Border of the European Union: The case of Romania-Moldova-Ukraine" *Geopolitics* 14/3 (2009) pp.409-432; Gabriel Popescu, "The Conflicting Logics of Cross-Border Reterritorialization: Geopolitics of Euroregions in Eastern Europe," *Political Geography* 27/4 (2008) pp.418-438; Ulrike H. Meinhof (ed.), *Living (with) Border: Identity Discourses on East-West Borders in Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004); Heikki Eskelinen et al. (eds.), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Integration* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999).

[3] For example Tony Halpin, "Analysis: why the Bronze Soldier is so controversial," *The Times Online*, April 27 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article1715134.ece accessed November 5 2010; Askold

between Russia and the former members of the Soviet bloc. The issues of the eastward expansion of the European Union and the ambitions of Russia's neighbours to join NATO have caused feelings to run high, and the whole question of the history of the borders between Russia and its neighbours continues to be a very delicate subject. It is symptomatic of this that President Dmitri Medvedev set up a special History Commission in 2009 to monitor research into the Soviet period carried out by historians in the former Socialist Republics.[4] The cases concerned have not always been a matter of questioning politically agreed boundaries but rather of efforts at redefining symbolic and cultural boundaries created in Soviet times.

The situation on the borders of North-West Russia has been peaceful in recent decades, but that does not make the area any less challenging in terms of border history. Russia has two neighbours in that direction, one of which is Norway, a NATO country with which it has 196 km of border adjacent to the Barents Sea in the north. This was last defined in 1826 and 1852, and since then the two countries have had a number of long-standing disputes, mainly over sea areas and fishing rights, which were finally settled in 2010.[5] Its other neighbour in the north-west is Finland, with which it has 1,270 km of border.[6] This is predominantly a line cleared through uninhabited forest, and currently constitutes the easternmost border of the European Union. The most recent border negotiations between Finland and Russia (the Soviet Union) took place in 1944, at the conclusion of the Second World War, the resulting border being ratified under the Treaty of Paris in 1947.

The events of the 1910s and 1920s marked a historical watershed in boundary relations between Finland and Russia (the Soviet Union), as it was then that the foundations were laid for political solutions to be reached by two independent nation-states, i.e. for negotiations over where the border should run and ideological arguments as to why it should run in the places advocated. After Finland had been separated from Sweden in 1809 to become an autonomous area of the Russian Empire, work continued well into the nineteenth century with the aim of marking the boundary between Finland and Russia accurately on the ground. This was particularly necessary since the high degree of autonomy granted to Finland meant that the normal passport and customs formalities applied at the border.

The question of the location of the border returned to the political agenda once more in

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Krushelnycky, "Crimean Peninsula Could be the Next South Ossetia," *The Independent*, August 28 2008, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/crimean-peninsula-could-be-the-next-south-ossetia-910769.html accessed November 5 2010.

[4] See James Rodgers "Russia Acts Against 'False' History," *BBC News*, July 24 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8166020.stm accessed November 5 2010.

[5] "Norway and Russia Sign Maritime Delimitation Agreement." *Barents Observer* September 15 2010, http://www.barentsobserver.com/norway-and-russia-sign-maritime-delimitation-agreement.4819173-131162.html accessed November 5 2010.

[6] For other research on borders in Finland and the other Nordic countries: Maria Lähteenmäki (ed.), *The Flexible Frontier: Change and Continuity in Finnish-Russian Relations* (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2007); Anssi Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of The Finnish-Russian Border* (Chichester: Wiley, 1995); Margareta Dahlström, et al. (eds.), *The East-West Interface in the European North* (Stockholm: Nordisk Samhällsgeografisk Tidskrift, 1995); Löfgren, Orvar, "Regionauts: The transformation of cross-border regions in Scandinavia," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 15/3 (2008) pp. 195-209.

1908-17, when Tsar Nikolai II attempted to transfer three border municipalities on the Karelian Isthmus in south-eastern Finland to the province of St. Petersburg in accordance with his general policy of pan-Slavism, his desire to Russify the border areas and his concern for the security of St. Petersburg. Tensions almost reached breaking point in this border region as a consequence of the political, military and cultural pressures exerted by the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent declaration of Finnish independence, the Finnish Civil War of 1918, the Civil War of 1918-20 in Soviet Russia and the First World War. The greatest tensions of all during this period were felt in the municipality of Terijoki, located between the Karelian Isthmus and St. Petersburg, which ended up being the only crossing point between Finland and the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s (Figure 1). This was in sharp contrast to the relatively peaceful and secure atmosphere that had prevailed there around the turn of the century, when Terijoki had been such a secluded area that numerous Bolshevik and Menshevik leaders had lived there, including Vladimir Lenin who took refuge there in 1906–07 when a warrant for his arrest had been issued in St. Petersburg.[7]

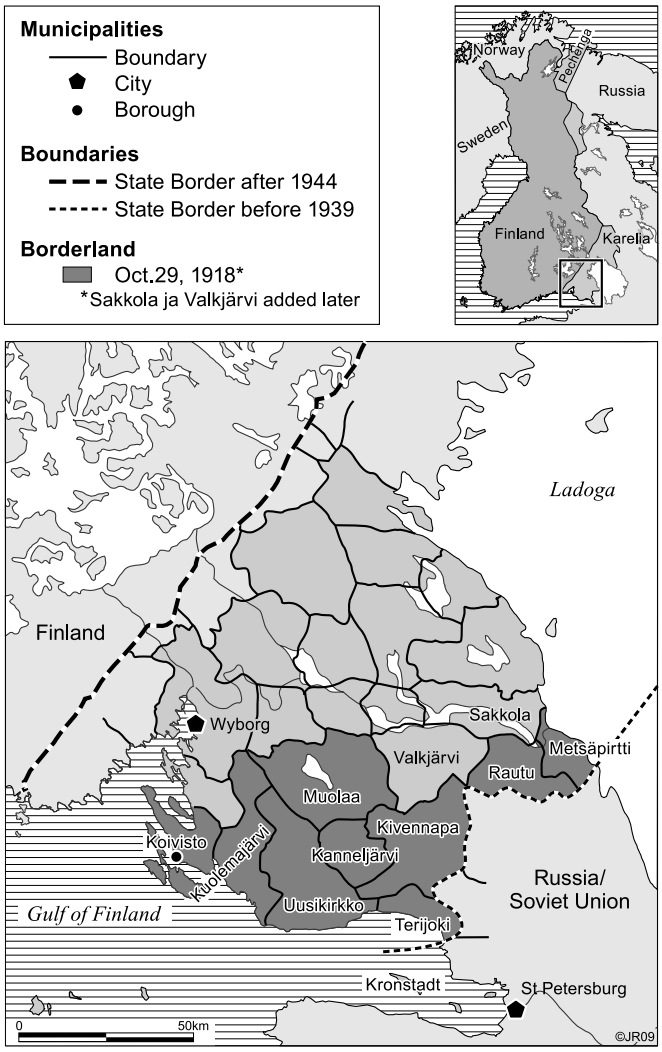
One theme in the study of borders throughout the twentieth century was the distinguishing of different types of borderlands.[8] Oscar Martinez, for example, has identified four types of border in his examination of the USA-Mexico frontier zone: a) alienated borderlands, separated by a physical barrier such as a fence, b) co-existent borderlands, c) interdependent borderlands, and d) integrated borderlands.[9] In this classification the border area of Terijoki could have been characterized as an interdependent borderland at the turn of the century, but had reverted to an alienated borderland by 1918, when the border itself ran inland from the Gulf of Finland for about 60 km along a narrow, shallow river known as Rajajoki (literally "Border River"). The rest of the line – also 60 km – was marked out through areas of relatively sparse forest interspersed with mires until the border reached Lake Ladoga. Both the small river and the sparse forest were of minimal defensive value, but the symbolic significance of this boundary line lay in the fact that the first border to be defined between Russia and the Kingdom of Sweden, in 1323, had followed the course of this same river.

The purpose of this paper is to describe and analyse the political pressures affecting the Terijoki borderlands in the 1910s and 1920s, the arguments that led to the closure of the border and the consequences of its closure from a Finnish point of view. The strategic position of this locality makes the discussion particularly interesting, as Terijoki was only 32 km away from St. Petersburg and all roads led to the metropolis. The populations on both sides of the border were almost entirely dependent economically on that city and the surrounding country districts, in a relationship of dependence and commercial interest that was of benefit to both sides. It was very common in the days

[7] Nadezhda Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin. St. Petersburg and Finland* (1933), http://www.marxists.org/archive/krupskaya/works/rol/rol10.htm accessed November 5 2010.

[8] See Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, "The State of Borders and Borderlands Studies 2009: A Historical View and a View from the Journal of Borderland Studies," *The Eurasia Border Review* 1/1 (2010) pp. 1-15; Ilkka Liikanen, "From Post-Modern Visions to Multi-Scale Study of Bordering: Recent Trends in European Study of Borders and Border Areas," *The Eurasia Border Review* 1/1 (2010) pp. 17-28; Anssi Paasi, "Generations and the 'Development' of Border Studies," *Geopolitics* 10 (2005) pp. 663-671.

[9] Martin Pratt, "The Scholar-Practitioner Interface in Boundary Studies," *The Eurasia Border Review* 1/1 (2010) p. 33.



The border demarcations between Finland and the Soviet Union from 1918 to 1944

Figure 1

before the Revolution of 1917 for the people of the villages on the Finnish side of the border to go to work in St. Petersburg, deliver goods there or sell their agricultural products there, while a fourth form of interaction was the custom by which the more well-to-do citizens of St. Petersburg would come to spend their summers on the beaches of Terijoki. It was easy enough to cross the border in either direction in spite of the formalities, and communication was assisted by the fact that the people of the borderlands had acquired a reasonable command of what was known as "kopek Russian" through their work and trading journeys. Indeed a positive diversity of cultures existed in Terijoki in the 1910s, as the local inhabitants included representatives of almost 30 nationalities. The Russian community was so prominent that an Orthodox church was built there in 1880 and an independent parish created in 1889. At that time there was a regular steamer service from Terijoki to the island of Kronstadt just off St. Petersburg, and the Russians had a number of schools, a hospital, chambers of commerce and a sailing club in Terijoki.

It is important that any analysis of interaction on the Finnish-Russia border in the 1910s and 1920s should proceed on at least three dimensions:

1) Mental and symbolic boundaries were constructed in people's minds between areas that did not essentially differ one from another in their physical conditions or in the ethnic background of their people. Terijoki was separated from the St. Petersburg area by the very narrow Rajajoki River, the districts on both sides of which were inhabited by people of Finnic descent who were bound together by both family and economic ties. The people on

the Terijoki side were Finns and those on the St. Petersburg side Ingrians, who formed a wedge between the Finnish and Russian populations.

2) Ideological boundaries gained an entirely new level of prominence in the 1910s, firstly through the aggressive Russification policies undertaken by the Russians in the borderlands and later through the collapse of the entire Russian Empire. This led, as a consequence of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, to the Finnish-Russian border that followed the Rajajoki River being projected in Finland as a "border between two worlds" and "the most important cultural boundary in the world," as was commonly said in the 1920s and 1930s. The Rajajoki border separated the western world from the world of the Bolsheviks, western culture from the culture of the Slavs, the Lutheran faith from Orthodoxy and the western economic system from the socialist one.

3) A more precise analysis of the mechanisms connected with the construction of the Finnish-Russian boundary is of importance and general interest from the perspective of historical border studies at the present time, particularly on account of the powerful nationalistic and chauvinistic movements that have arisen since 1990 in the former Eastern Bloc countries that gained independence with the fall of the Soviet Union,[10] which can very well be likened to the national movements that occurred in Europe in the 1910s and 1920s and the nationalistic uprisings that took place in "peripheral" areas. As Michael Keating pointed out, although borderlands are traditionally regarded as old-fashioned, boring, isolated and at variance with the mainstream of civilization, "regionalism and nationalism of the periphery are not atavistic throwbacks but rational responses to the growth of the modern state and can only be understood as such."[11]

This was the case on the borders of Finland, and most particularly in the Terijoki borderlands, which had been looked on earlier as an uncivilized locality far removed from the corridors of power in Helsinki and inhabited by petty criminals, but which now became the focus of the Finnish nationalist movement and the first wave of regional policy in the 1910s and 1920s, and thereby one of the cornerstones of the identity of Finland as a nation-state. We should also consider in connection with this observation what was the nature of the interaction that took place in the period between the regional and local nationalistic aspirations that arose in the peripheries and the nationalist programmes proposed in the centres of political and military power. This is in line with the exhortation of Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly that modern border scholars should ask "what role local political clout and local culture play in defining and shaping borderlands and boundaries."[12]

Russification as a source of anti-Russian feeling

The first step in the transformation of the Terijoki borderlands from an open, multicultural

[10] Liikanen, "From Post-Modern Visions," pp.24-25.
[11] Michael Keating, *State and Regional Nationalism: Territorial Politics and the European State* (London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1988), vii.
[12] Brunet-Jailly, "The State of Borders," p. 11.

trading community into a closed military zone took place in 1908, when Tsar Nikolai II began to impose a policy of Russification throughout Finland. This led the Social Democrats in Russia to publish a pamphlet entitled "Where are Finland's friends?" which aroused much controversy in the Duma with its accusations that it was the Russian right-wing movement together with the government that were behind the attempts to weaken the position of Finland.[13] The propagandist role of the press was particularly important for the implementation of the Russification programme, which included almost annual dissolutions of the Finnish democratically elected unicameral parliament, the introduction into Finnish legislation of references to the need for observing "the interests of Russia," an increase in military taxes that the Finns were obliged to pay and the introduction in January 1912 of "universal laws" which guaranteed Russians the same rights as Finns within Finland. In addition, there were plans to require the use of the Russian language alongside Finnish in government offices, it became permissible to appoint Russians to high public positions in Finland, and the Tsar commissioned a review of the location of the Finnish-Russian border. The Finns were well aware of what the aims of these measures were. The Tsar had determined once and for all to abolish Finland's autonomous status by 1914 and link the country more firmly with Russia. Fortunately for the Finnish nationalists, the process was cut short by the First World War.

The boundary review, which caused great alarm in the borderlands, was focused above all on the most important sector, that crossing the Karelian Isthmus, and led to the announcement of a plan to annex Terijoki and its two neighbouring municipalities directly to the province of St. Petersburg. It was well-known that Terijoki was Finland's most Russian municipality, but the original population was Finnish and these people had no desire to be incorporated into Russia. The Tsar's edict to this effect was nevertheless included in a new law promulgated in June 1910, arousing heated discussion and a storm of protests from the Finnish parliament.[14] At the local level, the people of Terijoki responded by holding a festival of songs and music in the summer of 1910, on the lines of the comparable political manifestations held in Estonia in the late nineteenth century. Another form of protest was an appeal made directly to the Tsar, for which signatures were collected.[15] The threat in itself gave the Finnish nationalists widespread support in the borderlands, where there had previously been little interest in their cause, and a nationalist group emerged among the local people, headed by a journalist and author together with the headmaster of a local secondary school.

Thus the Tsar's actions gave rise to a great deal of anti-Russian sentiment among the Finns, especially in the borderlands, where there were a lot of Russian inhabitants. The population of Terijoki, for instance, could be as high as 50,000 in the summer, whereas the regular population at

[13] *Missä ovat Suomen ystävät?* Social Democrat election pamphlet 14/1908 (Helsinki, 1908), pp. 1-16.

[14] Russia had attempted a process of Russification by the same means in 1899-1905, but it had failed because of internal problems that had arisen within Russia on account of the country's defeat in its war with Japan. On parliamentary discussions, see Session 24.2.1911, 76; Application 1911, Number 7, Appendixes, 3-11; Application 1912, Number 57, Appendixes, 84–89; Session February 3 1912, 6 in *Papers of the Finnish Parliament* (Helsinki: Suomen eduskunta, 1911-1912).

[15] *Guidebook to the Terijoki Festival of Songs, Music and Sports, 23.-26.6.1910* (Terijoki, 1910); Maria Lähteenmäki, *Maailmojen rajalla. Kannaksen rajamaa ja poliittiset murtumat 1911-1944* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2009), p. 83.

other times was around 4,000. However, it was impossible to write about this opposition in the newspapers, as they were strictly censored by the Tsarist authorities. Some nationalists defied the censorship, with the consequence that a number of journalists and others, including the speaker of the Finnish parliament, were accused of offending the person of His Majesty and deported to Siberia. Nevertheless, underground pamphlets, newspapers and books were passed around in profusion, which depicted a stereotype of the Russians as lazy, dirty and diseased individuals. On the strength of European racial doctrines, the Finnish nationalists branded the Russians as a "people of the east" who represented a lower level of civilization than the Finns. The question of race was nevertheless a somewhat sensitive one, as according to some Central European racial doctrines the Finns belonged to the Mongol race,[16] whereas one of the central hegemonic discourses of the Finnish nationalists was that the Finns belonged to the western race and espoused the western culture.

The main purpose of that particular campaign, however, was to emphasize the racial distinction between the Finns and the Russians, whereupon the defamatory way of speaking about the latter included accusations of polluting the border areas. Finnish nationalists did indeed campaign vociferously for the expulsion of Russians from Terijoki, and in this they were joined by local and regional nationalists, who maintained that in the new situation in which the country found itself the whole population of the borderlands was in a dubious position politically and was obliged to expose the negative effects of the Russian presence.[17] People who co-operated with the Russians were regarded virtually as traitors in these circles.

There was certainly a great deal behind the talk of intensive Russification in the borderland villages. Russian was commonly spoken in the streets of Terijoki, the street names and shop signs were in Finnish and Russian, and a large proportion of the shopkeepers were Russian or of other nationalities; in addition to which there was a good deal of Russian influence to be perceived in the manner of dress, eating habits and speech of the local Finnish people.

The new Equality Law that came into effect in 1912 inspired further antipathy towards the Russians, primarily because they were now entitled to take part in local meetings and have a voice in deciding upon even the most important of local affairs. Thus the ethnically loaded power struggle in Terijoki had escalated by 1916 to the extent that local Russian merchants and owners of holiday villas took over a meeting of the municipal assembly in the name of equality, and when the Finnish chairman objected he was accused of insubordination and dispatched to the Kresty Prison in St. Petersburg. For the duration of the First World War the whole police force in Terijoki was subordinated to the Russian gendarmerie in Kronstadt on the grounds of the country being at war,[18] and the Russians significantly tightened their control over the borderland area, leading to a further

[16] Cf. the German racial anthropologists Johann Friedrich Blumenbach in the early nineteenth century and Rudolf Virchow at the end of the century. Virchow visited Finland in 1874 to make skull measurements and concluded that the Finns were an inferior race to the Germans, which caused consternation in Finnish academic circles.

[17] Lähteenmäki, *Maailmojen rajalla*, pp. 77-86.

[18] "Minutes of Terijoki Municipal Assembly 1912-17," Archives of the Municipality of Terijoki. Mikkeli Provincial Archives, Mikkeli, Finland.

increase in the nationalist camp. All in all, relations between Finland and Russia were anything but good both on a national scale and locally in the border region in the years prior to the Revolutions of 1917.

As the community of Terijoki was located so close to St. Petersburg and beside a busy thoroughfare leading in that direction, it is understandable that the repercussions of the events of the Revolution should have escalated over the border. One obvious sign of this was the return of Vladimir Lenin to Terijoki, where he went into hiding for some time before crossing the border and setting out for St. Petersburg at the end of October 1917, with the well-known consequences.[19] At the same time steps were being taken all over Finland, including the border communities, to organize military groups representing both the Reds (the left wing) and the Whites (the right wing). Thus, by the time Finland declared independence on December 6 1917, the internal situation throughout the country was extremely tense, and it was not long before the bloody Civil War broke out between these two factions, at the end of January 1918.

Terijoki and the remainder of the western part of the Karelian Isthmus were occupied by the troops of the Reds in January 1918, whereupon they retained possession of the area for three months, until the Whites' offensive in April. The arrival of the Whites gave rise to a wave of terrorism, in which the first to be exterminated were the same Russian merchants and owners of villas who had insisted on their right to take part in the local administration in previous years, after which the leaders of the Reds and others suspected of compliance were executed. All these were in effect murders carried out before the official courts had even had a chance to examine the cases. The single objective of the victorious Whites in the borderlands was to destroy everything that was Russian and everything that belonged to the leftist organizational culture. Now that Russia had transformed itself into something still more ominous, a Bolshevik country governed by a system of soviets, a thorough ethnic and political cleansing of the border region was viewed as essential to Finland's security.[20]

The first task for the victors was to close the "border between two worlds," i.e. the border at Terijoki that now separated Finland from Soviet Russia. This was done as soon as the Civil War came to an end in May 1918. The Rajajoki Bridge in Terijoki was the only point on the border between the two countries where it was possible to cross, and it was tightly controlled on both sides and bore powerful signs of a policy of differentiation: even the bridge was painted white on the Finnish side, to symbolize the right-wing forces, and red on the Russian side, to symbolize socialism.

Terijoki: gateway to the west

In order to strengthen control over the border region, the Finnish government issued a statute in October 1918 setting up a Border Command to supervise the border that passed through Terijoki. "The Borderland" (Finn. *Rajamaa*) to be subordinated to this command was defined initially as

[19] Krupskaya, *Reminiscences of Lenin* (1933).
[20] *Rajaseutu* 2/1930: 33-35; *Rajaseutu* 6-7/1942, p. 92; *Karjalan Kannaksen komitean mietintö* (Helsinki, 1919), p. 23; *Rajaseudun matkaopas* (Helsinki: Suomen Rajaseutuliitto, 1927), p.1.

comprising ten municipalities in addition to Terijoki itself (Figure 1). In fact, even before this an emergency law had been passed in May 1918 granting extensive powers to the military authorities to ensure order and security in the country. With a state of war still officially prevailing in the border region, the principal task of the Border Command was to maintain control over border crossings in order to prevent undesirable and politically dangerous persons from entering the area, in addition to which it was expected to keep a check on the ever-increasing habit of smuggling, telephone connections, correspondence, newspaper articles, meetings and the passage of communist agitators over the border via remote communications routes. Particular attention was to be paid to all foreigners in the area, especially Russians. A certain xenophobia began to be disseminated deliberately among the population of the border region, mostly through the local and regional press, in which Terijoki was constantly referred to as the gateway to western culture and a window to the east, God's firm bulwark against the godless Bolsheviks.

As Terijoki was both militarily and ideologically a highly sensitive area, the Border Command alone could not guarantee its territorial integrity, and thus Terijoki itself was provided with an army garrison of its own, a regional customs office and reinforcements for its local police in September 1918, in addition to which the White Guards in the area (now considered as a civil defence force) were enlisted for supervision duties. A Terijoki unit of the secret police was set up in 1919: it was the largest unit of its kind after the headquarters in Helsinki. But in spite of everything the border leaked like a sieve. The authorities were distraught as it became apparent that everyone was engaged in smuggling: housewives, workers, servant girls, children and old people alike.

One background factor in this wave of smuggling was the economic crisis that the new situation had brought with it. The closing of the boundary with St. Petersburg had deprived many of the local people of their source of income, and in the end the hard times continued until the mid-1920s, when the Finnish government began to provide support for small-scale farming, fishing and holiday-making in the region. The local people were living in abject poverty, on the verge of starvation, and in these dire straits everyone who could tried to join in with the smuggling. The metropolis of St. Petersburg (Leningrad) was in a state of economic crisis, too, as imports of foodstuffs from Finland had come to an end and wartime operations were still on going. Everything possible was smuggled in from Finland: horses, cows, cloth, stationery, tools, seeds, medicines and building materials. Everything was in short supply as a result of the Revolution; there was a huge demand and prices were astronomical, so that even though a few smugglers were caught in the act and shot, the profits were so enormous that it was worth the risk. Payment was mostly made in jewellery and other items of value. Eventually the battle against the armed authorities led to the smugglers arming themselves as well, so that gradually their approach became more professional. In some cases whole families were engaged in this occupation and had their own contacts on the Russian side and often friends or relatives in the boundary patrols or among the customs officials, so that the smuggling proceeded in a highly organized and efficient manner.[21]

[21] "Report on the Situation on the Finnish-Russian Border in 1919," Fond 147, opis 1, no.60, Archives of an Inspector on the border with Russia. Lenoblogsarkhiv, Vyborg, Russia; "Etsivän Keskuspoliisin Terijoen

The disturbances and unrest on the Rajajoki border also created a number of refugees. In addition to some 6,000 Reds who fled to Russia after the Finnish Civil War of 1918, there were 8,300 Ingrians, people of Finnic family, who left the surroundings of St. Petersburg for Finland in 1920 to avoid the movements of population ordered by the Bolsheviks, and a further 6,400 or so Russians escaped from the fortress island of Kronstadt off St. Petersburg in spring 1921 following an unsuccessful mutiny. Another group consisted of Finnish people who had been working in factories in St. Petersburg who tried to return home, away from the confusion caused by the Revolution. Yet another group consisted of thousands of western diplomats and other people who crossed the Rajajoki bridge, the "window to the Isthmus," on their way home in June 1918, with a number of defecting officers from the Bolshevik army ensconced among them. The dignitaries who arrived in Terijoki that June included the Persian *chargé d'affaires* and his family, the British and French consuls in Moscow and the Greek consul in St. Petersburg, while 32 American consular officials from St. Petersburg and Moscow appeared in September, together with staff of the Bank of America and the American YMCA, a group of almost 100 persons in all.[22]

There were also spies on the move in Terijoki. The British secret service placed an agent there at the beginning of June 1919 to liaise secretly with contacts in St. Petersburg, while the best-known British secret agent of them all was Sidney Reilly, who entered the Soviet Union in a clandestine fashion via Terijoki and was later executed by the Russians near Moscow. During the days of the Civil War in Russia the British and French were trying to persuade various European governments to declare the Bolshevik leaders outlaws, but these governments were not prepared to adopt such an attitude for fear of reprisals against their own nationals in Russia.[23] All in all, the collapse of the Russian Empire gave rise to a huge wave of migration throughout Europe, as it is estimated that as many as three million people left Russia as a consequence of the Bolshevik Revolution.[24]

Active efforts were also made by Soviet Russia to disseminate communist propaganda in the form of pamphlets, newspapers and literature in Finland by means of couriers, and a number of secret communications routes, mostly through sparsely populated forest areas on the Isthmus, were constructed for this purpose. On the other hand, it is also known that Finnish communists trained at the University for Western Minority Peoples in Soviet Russia were smuggled back via an island route in the Gulf of Finland to carry out political work in their home country. In a few cases people suspected of being communists were summarily executed at the border. Even as late as 1932-36 the Finnish secret police intercepted 110 agents of the Finnish Communist Party at the Terijoki checkpoint, the majority of these (61%) being local people. In the end there must have been

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alaosaston raportit 1919-22,"Archives of the Finnish Secret Police. National Archives, Helsinki, Finland; Lähteenmäki, *Maailmojen rajalla*, pp. 167-182.

[22] Max Engman, ***Raja. Karjalankannas 1918-1920*** (Helsinki: WSOY, 2007), p. 383.

[23] Engman, *Raja*, 353, pp. 590-607.

[24] Helen Kopnina, *East to West Migration: Russian Migrants in Western Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell (eds.), *Homelands: War, Population and Statehood in Eastern Europe and Russia 1918–1924* (London: Anthem Press, 2004).

thousands of people who crossed the border illegally, as the number apprehended averaged about 50 a month.[25]

Dreams of an attack on St. Petersburg

The military situation in the Terijoki area, which bordered on the province of St. Petersburg, was especially tense in 1919, which has often been referred to as a "year of madness" in Europe. Geographically the area was shaped like a finger pointing at St. Petersburg, so that it would have been under pressure from Soviet troops in the south and east, with the fortress of Kronstadt off the coast in the west. Although the First World War had come to an end with the capitulation of Germany to the victorious Allied Powers in November 1918, a bitter Civil War was still raging in Russia in which the generals in command of the Whites were attempting to seize power in St. Petersburg from all directions. They also had the support of the British navy, which brought its warships to Kronstadt, so that they were in effect stationed off the coast of Terijoki.

The Finns also had troops stationed on the border at Terijoki and the whole border region was on wartime alert. The Finnish parliament nevertheless revoked the state of war in June 1919, which gave the Finnish military leadership cause to exaggerate the hostilities taking place on the Finnish-Russian border. The Finnish generals led by Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim would have liked to continue with the freedom of action that the state of war granted to the Armed Forces, since there might have been a possibility of launching the attack on St. Petersburg that they still had in the back of their minds.

As had been the case earlier in connection with the Russification of Finland in the 1910s, the Whites who had risen to power in the wake of the Finnish Civil War adopted the press as an efficient propaganda weapon in their effort to purge the border region of foreigners and communists. Thus *Helsingin Sanomat*, the most influential newspaper in the country, and the main regional paper, *Karjala*, became the principal instruments in shaping public opinion in 1919, with their news of border disputes on the Karelian Isthmus. In June of that year extensive, detailed coverage began of "battles" between the Russians and the Finns on the Rajajoki River. *Helsingin Sanomat* published its own column on the events on the eastern border, communicated by its own correspondent based in Terijoki. The paper reported "bitter fighting" beside the river in mid-June, in which the enemy had suffered considerable losses. Attempts to find evidence of these "battles" in the records of the border guards have nevertheless proved fruitless. There is nothing more than notes on minor skirmishes with a few shots fired, and they may well have been between Bolsheviks and Whites on the Russian side. As the Finnish newspapers had written of "battles," parliament nevertheless sent a delegation to evaluate "hostilities" in the border region. All was peaceful, however, and the members of parliament were able to proceed right up to the frontier. Similarly, there were no casualty figures to corroborate the reports of fighting. During the most critical period, from February to September 1919, the border

[25] "Circular from the Finnish Secret Police," March 24 1933, Appendix. Material on the Finnish Secret Police. People's Archives, Helsinki, Finland.

guards shot "only" 13 people, and they were Reds returning from Russia and smugglers, but no soldiers.[26]

There is no doubt that the newspaper reports of "battles" were intended as propaganda. The shooting carried out by the border guards was more of a demonstration than a reality. The Finnish military leadership also took advantage of the British manoeuvres off Kronstadt, especially in mid-June 1919, when the British mounted attacks on the island with their fast motor vessels and aircraft by night and day, starting numerous fires.[27] The Finns also capitalized on the news of internal unrest in Russia and the attempts at rebellion on the part of the Ingrians living on the Russian side of the border in May 1919. Eventually the Finnish military leadership achieved what it had intended with its exaggeration of the situation, namely a fresh declaration of a state of emergency in the border region, in June 1919, giving it more extensive powers to operate in the area.

This state of emergency suited the military leadership excellently. The General Headquarters under Mannerheim together with the leading right-wing politicians had had plans ready since April 1919 for an offensive directed at St. Petersburg, and all the details were in place by the end of May.[28] At the same time the newspapers were full of accounts of battles in the borderlands which they hoped would prepare the way for a government decision in favour of an attack, but the international situation had altered sufficiently by mid-June that the Finnish government was no longer willing to countenance such a policy. Hostilities continued in the surroundings of St. Petersburg until October 1919, when the Bolsheviks defeated the forces of the Whites, commanded by General N. Yudenits and supported by some Finns. The Finnish generals' dream of an offensive against St. Petersburg was finally quashed when the Russian Civil War ended in victory for the Bolsheviks in 1920.

The border region is closed to outsiders

One reason why the authorities in Finland were unable to seal off the border between Finland and Soviet Russia against smugglers, refugees and communist agents lay in the strained relations that existed between the various institutions responsible for border supervision. The duties of the secret police, the army garrison, the customs officers, the local police, the local voluntary troops and the Border Command overlapped to a certain extent, which led to confusion and conflicts. The local chief of police had no patience with the secret police and was of the opinion that the Terijoki branch of that institution should be disbanded altogether. Also relations were tense between the police and the military. The regional commander of the Armed Forces complained that the local policemen failed to salute army officers in the street and accused them of trying to appease the other side and acting as "henchmen of the Russians." The police were also accused of siding with the Reds

[26] *Helsingin Sanomat*, June 5, 6, 15 1919; Lähteenmäki, *Maailmojen rajalla*, Appendix 1, p. 458.

[27] News of these events was carried by all the most widely circulating newspapers in Finland and by the country's main illustrated magazine, *Suomen Kuvalehti*, June 18 1919.

[28] Martti Ahti, *Salaliiton ääriviivat. Oikeistoradikalismi ja hyökkäävä idänpolitiikka 1918-1919* (Helsinki: Weilin & Göös, 1987), pp. 147-161; Tuomo Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi 2* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1971), pp. 150-151.

during the Civil War, which was a heinous crime in White Finland, of helping smugglers and of general drunkenness. At one stage the local council was obliged to deal with complaints against the Terijoki police and came to the same conclusion as the military commander, that the police force was pro-Russian. The proof of this in the eyes of the council was in the fact that the chief of police could speak Russian.[29]

The same tendency could be observed throughout the country. Parliament passed ten laws in the course of the 1920s with the aim of preventing foreigners from owning land in Finland, tightening the conditions for the issuing of entry and residence visas and the related language requirements, and allowing the state to confiscate the property of foreigners who had left their place of residence – including hundreds of summer villas and plots of land.[30] This meant that around a thousand properties that had been owned by foreigners reverted to the state between March and December 1923, and that the state had gained an estimated 5.1 million Fmk and about 1800 hectares of land in this way by 1931.[31] Applications by foreigners for licences to work or trade in Finland were systematically turned down in border regions, and for instance in Terijoki all the names of streets, plots of land and houses were required to be in Finnish. Especial efforts were made to remove everything that was "alien" from the border region, and most particularly all signs of a Russian presence. The Orthodox church in Terijoki was placed under special surveillance, and a law on the administration of "church parishes with a majority of foreign nationals" was passed in 1925 that required even the Russian-speaking Orthodox parishes to keep the minutes of their meetings in Finnish. The municipal council of Terijoki was no longer allowed to provide support for the Russian school there, and a True Finnish Club was founded to maintain the purity of the Finnish language and culture. Teaching in all the schools proceeded in the same spirit, so that the schools in effect became arenas for the new ideological struggle and for opposition to everything that was Russian.[32]

Under these conditions the chief of the Border Command, Erik Heinrichs, began in June 1920 to revise the division of labour between the conflicting institutions responsible for preserving peace in the border region. He proposed the creation of a separate "border customs police force," allowing the soldiers to be released from border patrol duties, and also an extension of the powers of the authorities to allow them to declare smuggling an act of treason. Since even the efforts of five institutions had not been sufficient to prevent illegal crossings of the border, Heinrichs developed a new operational model in which the whole border area around Terijoki between the internal customs boundary and the national border was declared a closed zone. These proposals in their entirety, except for the designation of smuggling as an act of treason, were incorporated into a new statute that came

[29] "Minutes of Terijoki Municipal Council, February 23 1920" (with appendices). Archives of the Municipality of Terijoki. Mikkeli Provincial Archives, Mikkeli, Finland.
[30] *Finnish Statute Book 1918-1930* (Helsinki, 1919-1931).
[31] "Government Bill Regarding a Fund for the Karelian Isthmus," Document no. 28 (with appendices). *Papers of Finnish Parliament Session* 1931 (Helsinki, 1931); "Monthly lists of properties taken over by the state, 1923." Archives of the National Board of Housing commission for administrating the property of aliens, Mikkeli Provincial Archives, Mikkeli, Finland.
[32] Lähteenmäki, *Maailmojen rajalla*, pp. 246-253, 300.

into force in April 1920. This meant that the 4,000 or so inhabitants of Terijoki were registered and issued with passes which they had to show whenever they crossed the internal customs boundary, implying in effect that this area renowned for its free market conditions during the previous decade had now become closed off from the outside world. The area was not cleared of its inhabitants, however, but rather they had to go on with their everyday lives under conditions of strict control. Other restrictions included the fact that they were neither permitted to live within 500 metres of the border nor to move about in its vicinity, and that all the shops and cafés had to be registered and if possible closed down.[33]

Under the provisions of the peace treaty between Finland and Soviet Russia negotiated in Tartu, Estonia, that took effect at the end of December 1920, the border continued to follow its previous course on the Karelian Isthmus, whereas in the north Finland was granted the Petsamo (Russ. Pechenga) area, a strip of land that extended as far as the Arctic Ocean. On the other hand, Porajärvi and Repola, a part of Russian Karelia inhabited by Karelians, a people related to the Finns, remained within Soviet Russia to develop as part of the new socialist regime.[34] The treaty spoke in permissive tones with regard to connections between the two countries and possibilities for crossing the border. It is noted in article 33, for example, that the two parties should take steps at once to arrange for rail traffic across the border so that the time-consuming transfer of passengers and reloading of freight at the frontier would no longer be necessary. The document similarly laid down that the railway network between St. Petersburg and Terijoki was to be renewed to create a direct connection between the two countries. It was also set out clearly in article 35 that Finnish nationals in Russia had the right to return freely to their home country, as did Russian nationals living in Finland, and that any such persons who had been sentenced in their home country for rebellion were to be pardoned on their return.[35]

The liberal promises made in the Treaty of Tartu meant nothing in practice, however. On the same day that the treaty came into effect the Finnish parliament passed a new statute requiring the use of identity and travel passes in the border zone. All persons over 15 years of age were to carry these documents with them at all times. Finns could obtain them from the local chief of police and foreigners from the office of the provincial governor. Any person found not to be carrying these passes would be arrested and fined. New instructions were also issued for diplomatic couriers. Each country could send two couriers accompanied by one other person once a week between Moscow and Helsinki. They would be assigned a railway carriage of their own and could take with them only 10 kg of sealed diplomatic mail and five newspapers published in the courier's own country. In addition, the Russian couriers were to be placed in quarantine and examined by a doctor on arrival in Finland in order to prevent the transmission of infectious diseases.[36]

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[33] "Letters from Commandant Erik Heinrichs, January 13, 22 and February 14 1921," Fond 147, opis 1, no. 87. Archives of the Inspector of the Land Border with Russia. Lenoblogsarkhiv, Vyborg, Russia.

[34] *Finland and Soviet Government of Russia – Treaty of Peace,* signed at Dorpat, October 14 1920, http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/LNTSer/1921/13.html accessed November 4 2010.

[35] *Finland and Soviet Government of Russia – Treaty of Peace,* signed at Dorpat, October 14 1920.

[36] "Temporary Agreement on Travel by Diplomatic Couriers between Helsinki and Moscow," Fond 147, opis 1,

Thus it became much more difficult for people to move about in the border zone and stricter control was maintained over those living there. It is no wonder that the local people complained that the authorities were interfering with their lives and means of livelihood.[37] The internal system of passes and customs on the Karelian Isthmus was abolished only at the end of the decade, and even then the area was still granted special state protection and the community was subject to strict controls. Russians and other foreigners living in the locality, amounting to 430 persons in Terijoki in 1924, still had to be registered.[38]

Lying behind the Finnicization of the borderlands was the notion that all these areas, including some on the Russian side of the border, really belonged to Finland because they were inhabited by Finns or people of related ethnic origins such as Karelians or Ingrians. There was a strong desire to maintain close contacts with the members of Finnic groups there while drawing a clear distinction between these and the ethnically quite separate Russians. As historian Väinö Voionmaa explained in 1919, quoting the German ethnographer and geographer Friedrich Ratzel, the steeper the contrasts there are between the two sides of a border, the better the border serves its purpose. This was taken to imply that the best and most stable kind of border was a "racial border," followed by a cultural border and then a linguistic border. A politically negotiated national border came only in fourth place. Given this hierarchy, it was concluded that the borders of the newly independent state of Finland were of the weakest kind and the most vulnerable to political turbulence.[39]

The governmental and regional Finnish nationalist programmes paid a great deal of attention to the political education of the border population, in other words the purging of the country of communist influences. Parliament passed a series of laws in 1929 which effectively prohibited any form of activity that could be interpreted as communist, and around the same time the secret police carried out numerous arrests in all parts of the country and placed those found guilty of communist sympathies behind bars. These witch-hunts also took place in the borderlands, where some local politicians were removed from office on suspicion of being communists. One extremely important instrument in this ideological campaign was the school system. Teachers occupied a crucial position in the drive to educate children and young people to be "pure Finnish" citizens with politically right-wing opinions. This also took place in Terijoki, which had a secondary school from which young people could qualify for university. Most of the teachers at this school were members of the True Finnish Club and ran quasi-military youth groups in their spare time.[40] Militarism had forced its way into Finnish schools immediately after the Civil War was over and gained a stronger foothold during the right-wing trend around the late 1920s and early 1930s.

There were left-wing organizations in White Finland during the post-Civil War years, but

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no. 90. Archives of an Inspector on the border with Russia. Lenoblogsarkhiv. Vyborg. Russia.

[37] "Minutes of Terijoki Municipal Council," June 13 1921, February 15 1924, February 15 1926 and April 4 1939, Archives of the Municipality of Terijoki. Mikkeli Provincial Archives, Mikkeli, Finland.

[38] "Register of Aliens, 1924," Archives of the Terijoki Police. Mikkeli Provincial Archives, Mikkeli, Finland.

[39] Väinö Voionmaa, *Suomen uusi asema* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1919), pp. 55-56.

[40] *Kannaksen Lehti* March 6 and 13 1936, October 30 1936, February 26 1937 and April 14 1937.

their activities were carefully monitored and regulated. One sign of a relaxation in the political tension was the minority government of Social Democrats that held power in 1926-27, but it was only from the mid-1930s onwards that the situation within society at large began to normalize, so that the left wing was able to take some responsibility for government once again from 1936 onwards.

It says something of the tensions that existed between Finland and the Soviet Union that the local Finnish people built a barbed-wire fence across the whole of the Isthmus, a distance of 120 km, as a concrete manifestation of the border between the two countries, the project being completed in 1938. However, this was only symbolic, as when the Soviet tanks advanced over the border in November 1939 the construction had no defensive impact whatsoever. The reasoning behind the barbed-wire fence was that it would prevent the local people from straying over the border into the Soviet Union by accident, since the terrain was exactly the same on both sides, although the local people were also in favour of a fence because they claimed that Soviet aircraft had made a total of 11 incursions into Finnish airspace in the years 1932-37.[41]

Conclusions

The Finnish government and parliament together with the national political organizations that supported an ideology which emphasized the central role of an "ethnic border" and regional actors – such as the members of parliament elected to represent border areas and the citizens" organizations of a right-wing nature functioning in Karelia – implemented a highly determined programme of cultural and political elimination of left-wing influences. These ethnic and political purges were made possible by transforming the area between the national border with Russia and the internal customs and passport boundary into a closed military zone. This increased the influence of the army in the area and supported the plans entertained at the time for an offensive against St. Petersburg. Such an offensive never took place, however, as the international situation had altered in the meantime.

The various actors were differently disposed towards the formation of a closed border zone, as may be seen with respect to four major groups in the table below:

Arguments/Actors	Ordinary local people	Local ideological leaders	Regional actors	National actors
Political		x	x	x
Military		x	x	x
Economic	x			
Cultural	x			
Social	x			

The actors fell neatly into two groups at the grass-roots level, the ordinary people (workers) and the middle classes (teachers, journalists, larger farm owners, tradesmen, clergymen). It was from

[41] *Kannaksen Lehti*, September 24 1937.

the latter groups that a few of the ideological leaders arose, local nationalist spokesmen who conveyed the ideas put about by the national and regional actors and served as bridge-builders at the local grass-roots level. These people were particularly important in disseminating the intolerant "pure" Finnish way of thinking in this border area that had previously been multicultural in character. It is just this group of communicators, local ideological leaders, that are usually in a key position for the spread of ideological innovations from the national and regional centres at the local level. A fertile soil for this anti-Russian sentiment and ethnic cleansing had been created by the aggressive Russification of Finland advocated by Tsar Nikolai II in 1908-17, which had already given rise to a resistance movement at the local level and created a favourable climate for ideas verging on xenophobia.

Terijoki on the Karelian Isthmus was Finland's most Russian municipality and at the same time the country's main gateway to Russia. It was for this reason that it was the most tightly controlled of the border areas and had both a symbolic cultural significance and a function as an indicator of national sovereignty. It is therefore no wonder that the nationalistic educational effort in the pure Finnish spirit was focused intensively on this area. The fact that the "sense of place" that prevailed in Terijoki altered so quickly from that of an open, interdependent border area to an alienated one may be attributed above all to the fact that the desired ideology found active adherents at every hierarchical level in society: in the national arena, among regional leaders and in local circles.

Although the ordinary citizens of Terijoki attempted to speak up for cross-border economic, cultural and social interactive networks, their discourses soon became lost amongst the noisy political, ideological and military diatribes: local and regional interests were to be subordinated to national interests. Thus the local left-wing political activity that was still powerful in the 1910s and the local multicultural atmosphere were unable to combat the pressures exerted from the outside. Both were silenced by security policy arguments. The power of the national and regional media was of crucial importance for this alteration in the local profile, and the Finnish nationalists were able to set up a propagandistic local newspaper of their own that disseminated the products of a regionally and nationally generated policy of ethnic cleansing.

What, then, were the concrete methods by which the hated Russian element was weeded out from Finland's most Russian municipality? The strategies extended to almost all levels of society. One of the most important was the introduction of legislation that prohibited foreigners from owning land or villas in Finland and abrogated their existing rights of ownership in these respects, and others included the refusal to grant Russians work or trading permits or Finnish nationality, or to allow them to take part in the activities of citizens' organizations. A strict requirement was imposed that the Finnish language was to be used in all dealings. In addition, Russian schools were denied the financial support that they had been accustomed to receiving and the Russian language and Russian history were removed from the school curriculum. These measures were very efficient, and the Russian population of Terijoki was reduced to a few hundred persons within a short space of time in the early 1920s.

All in all, the closing of the area around the Finnish-Russian border on the Karelian Isthmus and the ethnic cleansing that took place within that area were an exemplary case of the building of an

iron curtain between the socialist and western worlds. But in spite of the systematic and successful Finnicization process that took place in the Terijoki border area in the 1920s and 1930s, the national position of the area was not a stable one. There still existed some leading persons in Finland in spring 1939 – including Mannerheim – who were willing to negotiate with the Soviet Union to exchange the Terijoki area for parts of Eastern Karelia. Discussions on a possible exchange of territories between Finland and the Soviet Union collapsed because of the fall of the Finnish government, since the new one was not interested in such exchanges. Mannerheim wrote in his memoirs that his ideas had failed to meet with any sympathy among members of the government, even though he tried to prove that many leading politicians had been prepared to give the Terijoki border region to Russia already in 1811. According to Mannerheim the Finnish ministers were afraid of public opinion, as the sovereign territory of Finland was popularly regarded as untouchable.[42] Finland's relations with the Soviet Union had reached such a state of crisis by October 1939, however, that the majority of the cabinet together with the president, Kyösti Kallio, were prepared to placate the Soviet negotiators by offering them a part of the Terijoki border region. But even then they made the most modest offer possible, to move the border 13 km into Finnish territory, whereas the Soviet side was demanding that it should be moved to a point 70 km away from St. Petersburg, to Koivisto[43] (nowadays Primorsk). Negotiations were broken off at that point, as neither side was willing to make any further concessions.

The details set out above concern the Finnish contribution to the cleansing of the border regions, but it must be said that ethnic cleansing assumed still more drastic forms on the Soviet Russian side of the border. The St. Petersburg area was cleansed of the Finnic Ingrians and the area had become a military zone by the early 1930s at the latest, while the border area around Terijoki remained in a state of political tension right up to November 30, 1939, when the Russian tanks made their incursion into Finland. When the Winter War came to an end on March 13 1940, Finland had lost the whole of the Isthmus. It recaptured the area during the Continuation War of 1941-44, but had lost it again by the end of that war. Under the Soviet rule all the place names on the Isthmus were Russified, so that Terijoki became Zelenogorsk and all the work that had been put into Finnicizing the area was consigned to history when the Finns were evacuated.

[42] Carl G. E. Mannerheim. *Muistelmat*. Osa 2 (Helsinki: Otava, 1952), p. 97.
[43] Väinö Tanner. *Olin ulkoministerinä talvisodan aikana* (Helsinki: Tammi, [1951] 1979), pp. 55-56.