

*Henry Oinas-Kukkonen*

## The Problem of the Finnish Separate Peace, US Initiatives, and the Second Front in 1943

### Introduction

“Throughout the remainder of 1943, the United States sought Finnish withdrawal from the war,” states the US Embassy’s book, *U.S.-Finnish Diplomatic Relations*, published in 1999.<sup>1</sup> Americans did try to push the Finns to switch sides after the United States (US) entered World War II in 1941. For example, US diplomatic representatives in Helsinki and US intelligence agents, such as the Photojournalist Thérèse Bonney, approached the Finns in 1942 and 1944 to put pressure on them.<sup>2</sup> However, in Finnish president Risto Ryti’s (1889–1956) memoir, published in 2012, he claims that secret information was received from a US official indicating that Finland should not establish a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union in the autumn of 1943.<sup>3</sup> This paper analyzes and explains this inconsistency and how it was linked to the Allied forces’ war effort prior to the D-day landing at Normandy.

Finland is a small country and was the only Western-type republican democracy in northeastern Europe during World War II. It was not occupied, but it was severely damaged after the 1939–1940 Russo-Finnish Winter War. The Finns wanted to restore the country’s territory that was lost in the Winter War. When Germany occupied Denmark and Norway in April 1940, Finland was surrounded by the Communist Soviet Union and Nazi Germany and had to negotiate diplomatically with these two dictatorships. It feared the Soviet Union and the threat of losing its independence.

<sup>1</sup> *U.S.-Finnish Diplomatic Relations / Suomen ja Yhdysvaltain diplomaattisuhteet*. Published by the United States Embassy Helsinki, Finland. 2nd ed. United States Information Service, Helsinki 1999, 32, 33, 68.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Oinas-Kukkonen, “High Variability in the US Estimates of the Immediate Post-World War II Political Transition in Finland and Japan”. *Nation-Building, National Identity and the Wider World – Japan and Finland in Transition, 1945–1990*. *Studia Historica Septentrionalia* 60. Edited by Olavi K. Fält and Juha Saunavaara. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2010, 93, 94; Henry Oinas-Kukkonen, “US-Finnish Relations Reflected in the “Photo Fighter” of True Comics”. *Faravid* 36/2012. *Acta Societatis Historiae Finlandiae Septentrionalis* XXXV. Pohjois-Suomen Historiallinen Yhdistys, Rovaniemi 2012, 156, 157.

<sup>3</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*. Editor Hannu Rautkallio. Kustannusosakeyhtiö Paasilinna, Espoo 2012, 307, 308. The memoirs were brought secretly by Hjalmar J. Procopé to the United States in 1945. These were held in the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, CA.



The resources Finland needed were dominated by the Germans, who also controlled the Finnish Sea routes. The Germans promised to protect the Finns from the Soviet Union and provide the armaments that Finland needed.<sup>4</sup> In November 1940 in Berlin, the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, demanded that the Chancellor of Germany, Adolf Hitler, allow the Soviet Union to wage war against Finland as had been originally agreed upon in the Treaty of Non-Aggression between Germany and the Soviet Union, known as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, on August 23, 1939. It was presented as a final solution to the Finnish question, to engulf Finland into the Soviet sphere of influence. As Hitler did not agree, Molotov concluded quite correctly that Germany was planning a war against the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> Finland was committed to join the next war when Germany began operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, and German troops marched from northern Norway through northern Finland to attack the Soviets in the Arctic. The Germans utilized Finland's territory and wanted to end the Finn's play-acted neutrality. In fact, the Finns had already planned to begin an offensive of their own and joined the war within ten days after the German offensive. The Soviet Union bombed 18 Finnish cities and airfields on June 25, 1941.<sup>6</sup>

To the Finns, the war declared against the Soviet Union was seen as their own and a separate 'Continuation War' of *revanche* in 1941–1944. Interestingly, Finland was the only democratic country on the German side, although there was a general distaste of Nazi ideology in the democratic country<sup>7</sup>. Even though Finland did not sign an official pact with Germany, nor was it willing to extend military efforts further than originally agreed upon with the Germans, the latter labeled all claims to

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<sup>4</sup> Pekka Visuri, "The making of Paris Peace Treaty: Military Strategy and British Policy towards Finland, 1944–47". *From war to cold war: Anglo-Finnish relations in the 20th century*. Edited by Juhana Aunesluoma. SKS Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki 2006, 48, 49; Osmo Apunen and Corinna Wolff, *Pettureita ja patriootteja: Taistelu Suomen ulko- ja puolustuspolitiikan suunnasta 1938–1948*. Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, Helsinki 2009, 90, 96–99; Henrik Meinander, "Finland and the Great Powers in World War II: Ideologies, Geopolitics, Diplomacy". *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations*. Edited by Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki. Brill, Leiden and Boston 2012, 56.

<sup>5</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmät 1939–1944*, 88–92; Jukka Nevakivi, "Finnish Perceptions of Britain's Role during the War, 1939–41". *From war to cold war: Anglo-Finnish relations in the 20th century*. Edited by Juhana Aunesluoma. SKS Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki 2006, 34–36; Visuri 2006, 48; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 106–107, 161.

<sup>6</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 124–125; Meinander 2012, 56.

<sup>7</sup> Henry Oinas-Kukkonen, "Finland's Relations with the Allied War Effort". *Unknown Conflicts of the Second World War: Forgotten Fronts*. Edited by Chris Murray. Routledge, London & New York 2019, 42, 43; R. Michael Berry, *American Foreign Policy and the Finnish Exception: Ideological Preferences and Wartime Realities*. SHS, Helsinki 1987, 235.

a separate Finnish war as false and traitorous. The Allied powers did not accept the notion of a separate war either and regarded Finland as a German satellite.<sup>8</sup>

The United Kingdom conducted an air raid from the aircraft carrier HMS Furious on the Finnish city of Petsamo (Petchenga) and German and Finnish merchant vessels in its Liinahamari harbor on July 30, 1941. Eventually, Finland joined the Anti-Comintern Pact on November 25, 1941, and the British declared war against Finland on the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its independence on December 6, 1941. The two countries were at war even though there were no longer any hostilities.<sup>9</sup> Stalin told the British that the Finnish issue would be solved by force; the Soviet Union would take control of Petsamo from Finland, and after the war, Finland would be bound by a military alliance for twenty years that would allow the Soviet army to operate from Finnish bases.<sup>10</sup> One day after the British declared war on Finland, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Germany declared war on the US on December 11, 1941.<sup>11</sup> When the US joined World War II, it did not declare war on Finland, but it encouraged Finland to end collaboration with Germany and pursue a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union.

The US ambassador to Finland, H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld (1889–1952), negotiated with Finnish President Ryti on December 14, 1942, without reaching an agreement. However, the Americans told the Swedes that they should determine where the Soviets stand and pressure Finland to make a separate peace agreement. The Swedish foreign office suspected that the US' tool for reaching the goal with the Finns would be a threat to break diplomatic relations with Finland.<sup>12</sup>

Instead, President Ryti warned the West about a Soviet 'leper's handshake' and placed his hope on the Americans, whom he believed would eventually win the war and dictate the future peace conditions. Finland placed its hope on the West, specifically the US and its economic might, political idealism, and consideration of the interests of small nations.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Henrik O. Lunde, *Finland's War of Choice: The Troubled German-Finnish Coalition in WWII*. Casemate, Philadelphia, PA and Newbury 2011, 2; Meinander 2012, 56; Visuri 2006, 49; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Oinas-Kukkonen 2019, 44, 45.

<sup>10</sup> Ohto Manninen, "War between Friends: Britain and Finland. 1941–44". *From war to cold war: Anglo-Finnish relations in the 20th century*. Edited by Juhana Aunesluoma. SKS Finnish Literature Society, Helsinki 2006, 46.

<sup>11</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 143.

<sup>12</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 163–164.

<sup>13</sup> Nevakivi 2006, 38–40; Manninen 2006, 42–46.

## The US' Diplomatic Initiative Dwindles

In January 1943, Robert M. McClintock (1909–1976), the Chargé of Affairs in Helsinki, Finland, stated in a letter to the US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull (1871–1955), that it seemed evident that the negative phase of US diplomacy in Finland was “rapidly reaching [its] end.” McClintock thought that instead of desiring to maintain “what may seem to them to be our unresponsive friendship” because the US gave the Finns “merely negative comfort and repeat[ed] that it is up to them to figure out their own salvation,” the Finns would become embittered and tempted to rely on the Soviet forces being exhausted prior to the Germans’ defeat. He thought that there was a need for positive measures if the course of a more positive policy would suit “the Department’s books.” McClintock proposed “a word of encouragement from us, a promise of food, almost any positive act,” which could make Finland switch sides during the war. He estimated that the most considerable effect would be a simple authorization to say straight to the Commander-in-Chief of Finland’s Defense Forces, Field Marshal, Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim (1867–1951) from some very high person in US Government that the Atlantic Charter (see image 1) means what it says and is also applicable to Finland.<sup>14</sup> In fact, Mannerheim contacted US intelligence representatives at the US embassy in Stockholm in January 1943 to ask whether Finland would get food aid if a separate peace agreement was reached with the Soviet Union. On January 21, 1943,<sup>15</sup> McClintock encouraged President Ryti to align Finland with the Allied forces. Ryti had said to him that Germany will lose the war, but he hoped that the Soviet forces would be exhausted before it occurred. McClintock gave Ryti copies of the Atlantic Charter and Declaration of the United Nations, which, in his personal, opinion might become a useful formula for Finland.<sup>16</sup>

The US Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Admiral William H. Standley (1872–1963), also had the Finnish situation on his agenda when he wrote to the US Secretary of State on January 19, 1943, that “unless the Department instructs me to the contrary,” he would broach the Finnish-Soviet relations in his next conversation with the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, Molotov, who was interested in the Finnish issue.<sup>17</sup> Ten days later, Molotov commented to Standley, “Unfortunately, the Finns were still on

<sup>14</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, January 11, 1943. *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers* (Hereafter *FRUS*) 1943: Vol. 3. The British Commonwealth, Eastern Europe, The Far East. United States Government Printing Office, Washington 1963, 214–216.

<sup>15</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 159, 178.

<sup>16</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, January 21, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 222; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 166, 168.

<sup>17</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Moscow, January 19, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 220, 221.

# THE Atlantic Charter

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

1. *Their countries seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other.*

2. *They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned.*

3. *They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self-government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.*

4. *They will endeavor, with due respect for their existing obligations, to further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.*

5. *They desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing, for all, improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security.*

6. *After the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling*

*in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.*

7. *Such a peace should enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.*

8. *They believe that all of the nations of the world, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained if land, sea or air armaments continue to be employed by nations which threaten, or may threaten, aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all other practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armaments.*

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

WINSTON S. CHURCHILL

August 14, 1941

Image 1. The Atlantic Charter as a propaganda poster. United States. Office of War Information. Division of Public Inquiries, 1943. University of North Texas Libraries, Digital Library. Public domain and fair use.

Soviet territory”, and the war must continue.<sup>18</sup> Secretary of State Hull sent orders to Standley on February 13, 1943: “We do not believe that it is desirable for you to seek at this time a special interview with Molotov in order to raise again the Finnish question”. If Molotov inquired about the Finnish issue, Standley was instructed to reply that the US had not “sounded out” the Finnish Government and would prefer not to express an opinion as to the possible reaction of the Finnish Government to peace negotiations or how serious the Finns were about withdrawing from the war before it had an opportunity to study the results of the Finnish elections scheduled for February 15, 1943.<sup>19</sup>

During the presidential elections, the Finns requested US officials’ opinions about Marshal Mannerheim as a candidate. The Americans had noted that the Swiss Minister in Finland had regarded the talk of his possible candidacy as important. However, when the US Under Secretary of State, Sumner Welles (1892–1961), was asked by the Finnish Minister in Washington, Hjalmar Procopé (1889 – 1954), his opinion, he commented that he would absolutely not comment regarding any individuals.<sup>20</sup> However, the Finnish president was the figurehead of foreign policy in the country.

President Ryti was re-elected, but his new government would try to change the course of the country.<sup>21</sup> The Finnish opposition group in eduskunta (the Diet) also wanted to reach a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union. This Finnish opposition collaborated with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), an American intelligence agency, in Stockholm<sup>22</sup>. The OSS promised US aid to Finland at the beginning of 1943 if the country would make a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, after the presidential election, an OSS agent and journalist, Albin Johnson, on his way to Finland, hinted to the Finnish Ambassador to Sweden, G. A. Gripenberg (1890 – 1975) in Stockholm that his journey was linked with the Allied landing in northern Norway. In Helsinki, he gave various promises. US Chargé Affair McClintock commented to the US Secretary of State Hull that the OSS should inform them about the movements of their agents. The OSS informed that Johnson did not have any official authorization to carry on negotiations with the representatives of the Finnish Government.<sup>24</sup> However, there had been previous OSS

<sup>18</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Moscow, January 31, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 230.

<sup>19</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Moscow, February 13, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 235.

<sup>20</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, January 15, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 218, 219. In 1944, when Finns eventually switched the side in the war President Ryti resigned and Mannerheim was elected instead.

<sup>21</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 175–176.

<sup>22</sup> Meinander 2012, 76; Berry 1987, 366, 367.

<sup>23</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, February 11, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 234–235; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 151–156, 160, 172–175.

<sup>24</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 179–182.

contacts and visits, and it was unlikely that this trip was made just for entertainment or simple information gathering.

Regardless of the circumstances, President Ryti took the discussions seriously. He sent an oral message through Johnson to US President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in February 1943. Johnson thought that Ryti was worried about how to switch sides without engaging in a dishonorable war against the Germans, and he had misjudged him to be ‘a cold fish,’ but Ryti was just calculating when to change policy. Finland was told to analyze and actively think about the “implications of the Atlantic Charter and Declaration of [the] United Nations.”<sup>25</sup>

In March 1943, the US Under Secretary of State Welles gave orders to Ambassador Standley to continue discussions with the Soviets, listen to their views, and tell them that the US could persuade the Finns to make a proposal if desired, but no information would be sent to the Finnish Government.<sup>26</sup> In the Soviet Union, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Molotov, repeatedly asked for a US evaluation of the Finns’ desire to withdraw from the war. Standley told him that the US had not fully assessed the new Finnish Government’s position but was prepared to do so and needed to know whether the Soviet Government would accept the US as an intermediary.<sup>27</sup> The Finns were told that the US was only bringing the Finnish and Soviet Governments into contact.<sup>28</sup> When Molotov gave the Soviets’ terms for the peace negotiations, the Americans were convinced that the Finns would not accept the terms and should not even be made aware of them. However, the withdrawal of Finland from the war was regarded as important to the Allied war effort, and the matter would not be completely dropped.<sup>29</sup> It seemed that the harsh Soviet policy placed the US “in the position we wish to avoid, i.e., acting as an intermediary.”<sup>30</sup> On April 9, 1943, Ambassador Standley was supposed to talk with Molotov and tell him

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<sup>25</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, February 19, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 237, 238; The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, February 20, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 240; Editor Hannu Rautkallio’s note. *Risto Ryti, Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 314.

<sup>26</sup> The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley). Washington, March 9, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 247–248.

<sup>27</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Moscow, March 13, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 249.

<sup>28</sup> The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Finland (McClintock). Washington, March 20, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 247–251.

<sup>29</sup> Memorandum by the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Atherton) to Under Secretary of State Welles and the Secretary of State. Undated, but received by Mr. Welles on March 29, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 257.

<sup>30</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Moscow, April 6, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 262.



that no further steps had been taken and make it clear that the Finnish Government's views regarding the terms had not been evaluated.<sup>31</sup>

The US had offered mediation, but the Soviets' terms were regarded as too harsh by both the Finns and the Americans. The US informed the Soviet Union that the terms would just cause Finland and Germany to align more closely with each other. From Helsinki, the US Chargé of Affairs, McClintock, wrote to the US Secretary of State, Hull, that the US policy seemed to have undergone a change between March 19<sup>th</sup> and April 9<sup>th</sup> of 1943. He stated to Hull that his outstanding impression was that Washington was "preparing the record" against the time when Finland and, probably, Sweden would frantically appeal to the Atlantic Charter (see Image 1.), and an explanation that Finland was given a chance but did not take it. He stated that Finland could not take the chance and the war against the Soviet Union continued.<sup>32</sup>

Hull gave orders to Standley to inform Molotov that direct contact between the Finnish and Soviet Governments was useless for the time being, and the US was to discontinue diplomatic relations with Finland by the withdrawal of its diplomatic representation in Helsinki.<sup>33</sup> President Roosevelt was advised of these orders and "fully approved" of the decision.<sup>34</sup> However, other international developments in Eastern Europe, including the discovery of mass graves in the Katyn Forest in Poland and the Soviet Government breaking off diplomatic relations with the Polish (London) Government, led to the postponement of American action against Finland.<sup>35</sup>

McClintock wrote to Hull in May and stated that he was inclined to believe that his previous assessment of the situation and the US policy had been "fairly close to the truth." He stated that the US' attempt had been characterized largely by the use of negative means, threats, warnings, and admonishment, and the one recent positive measure taking place in March went no further than the strictly technical definition of what "good offices" the United States offered to the Finns. He appealed to Hull for "one more chance" for the Finns. If some positive action was taken, it should be done, in McClintock's opinion, by a personal emissary because the Finns warned "rightly or wrongly" that the Germans had broken the codes of the US Mission.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley). Telegram 210, Washington, April 9, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 263.

<sup>32</sup> The Charge in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, April 12, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 265–266; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 196–199, 204–206.

<sup>33</sup> The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley). Telegram, Washington, April 12, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 266, 267.

<sup>34</sup> The Secretary of State to President Roosevelt, Washington, April 19, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 269; President Roosevelt to the Secretary of State, April 20, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 269.

<sup>35</sup> The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Finland (McClintock), April 26, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 273, see also footnote 69; Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmät 1939–1944*, 297, 298; Berry 1987, 286, 287.

<sup>36</sup> The Charge in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, May 6, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 274, 275.



The German Government had become alarmed at rumors or the possibility of a Finnish withdrawal from the war and began to assert strong pressure on the Finnish Government.<sup>37</sup> The Germans knew and were furious about the Finnish-US talks, and they demanded that the Finns stop the negotiations immediately. The Finnish Foreign Minister, Henrik Ramsay (1886 – 1951), traveled to Germany and stated to the Reich Minister for Foreign Affairs, Joachim von Ribbentrop, on March 26, 1943, that Finland wanted to act openly in its aspirations. Ribbentrop ranted for an hour that the Finnish move would be regarded as treason, and Germany would have the right to act against Finland as it wished.<sup>38</sup> To emphasize their view, Germany cut necessary food supplies to Finland for a month in May 1943.<sup>39</sup> It was, however, Soviet and US moves that steered the situation.

Secretary of State Hull answered to McClintock, who made a plea for “one more chance,” that his suggestions, in principle, were well made, but the US was not in a position to act on them, and there were no satisfactory grounds for reintroducing the Finnish problem with the Soviets. With regard to McClintock’s reference to the US’ responsibility in the situation, Hull stated that it did not involve any US responsibility for future developments.<sup>40</sup> Mannerheim instead commented to McClintock that the US’ “good offices” had been nothing more than “an offer to resume the game of the cat playing with the mouse.”<sup>41</sup> President Ryti stated to McClintock about the situation that “the Americans have offered us only words. The Germans have given us bread.”<sup>42</sup>

Eventually, Hull sent a clear message to McClintock to avoid any action, at this time, that would have the effect of interjecting the US into the “Finnish problem.”<sup>43</sup> The US diplomatic initiative had ended in no progress being made. In addition, there was a German threat of reprisal against Finland. However, the Finns were active in another arena, in Lisbon.

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<sup>37</sup> The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley). Telegram 212, Washington, April 9, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 263.

<sup>38</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 254.

<sup>39</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 204–205, 212.

<sup>40</sup> The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Finland (McClintock). May 7, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 275.

<sup>41</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, May 11, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 277.

<sup>42</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, June 3, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 280.

<sup>43</sup> The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Finland (McClintock). June 24, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 283.

## From the Pohjanpalo-Kennan Talks to the Finnish Proposal

President Ryti writes in his memoir that top secret negotiations were carried out between the governments of Finland and the US. Steps were taken to guarantee that the dispatches were untraceable<sup>44</sup>. The American counterpart was the Secretary of State Hull, and the route to him was found in Lisbon.<sup>45</sup>

The Finnish Chargé of Affairs in Lisbon, Taavi Pohjanpalo (1909 – 1986), had an American colleague as a golf companion, the Counselor of the Legation, George F. Kennan (1904 – 2005), who he had met in Berlin. Kennan was an American expert on the Soviet Union. They had long discussions about the international situation during the spring of 1943. Kennan stated that he understood the problem of the Finnish separate peace. He advised the Finns to continue relations with the US and wait. Pohjanpalo reported to Helsinki that Kennan had convinced him that “a sign will be given for it.” In June 1943, Pohjanpalo made a trip to Helsinki to meet President Ryti, and after his return to Lisbon, he consulted Kennan. Pohjanpalo stated that he had special instructions, which were known only by President Ryti and the Finnish Prime Minister, Edwin Linkomies (1894 – 1963). They believed that the Germans could read the diplomatic codes, and their oral message was important. Pohjanpalo delivered a proposal.<sup>46</sup>

Kennan considered that the Finnish proposal was suitable and decided that it should be forwarded. He visited Washington DC soon after talking with Pohjanpalo. Before his return to Lisbon, Loy Henderson (1892 – 1986) of the European Division in the State Department emphasized to Kennan that he had to tell Pohjanpalo that an official authorization from the Finnish Government was required before any kind of US moves were made concerning the matter. Kennan also received a list of questions to be asked of the Finns.<sup>47</sup>

The Pohjanpalo-Kennan talks were also linked with other discussions conducted in Lisbon. Taavi Pohjanpalo had another old friend there, US military attaché Lt. Col. Robert A. Solberg, who was from the Special Operations Branch of the OSS<sup>48</sup>. He convinced Pohjanpalo that the US would land in Norway in several locations and advised Finland to continue relations with the US.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Ryti writes that there was probably not a single document in the archives of the Finnish Foreign Ministry. Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 305.

<sup>45</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 304, 305.

<sup>46</sup> Hannu Rautkallio, *Mannerheim vai Stalin. Yhdysvallat ja Suomen selviytyminen 1939–1944*. Otava, Helsinki 2014, 213; Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 306; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 238–240.

<sup>47</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 240–241.

<sup>48</sup> Rautkallio 2014, 214; Editor Hannu Rautkallio's note and reference. Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 308.

<sup>49</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 306; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 236.

According to President Ryti, the Americans had explained to Pohjanpalo several times that they were planning post-war Europe, where Finland was placed in the 'northern group' of countries, which also included England, the Scandinavian countries, and Holland because of their development, mentality, and way of thinking. These northern group countries would reinforce Europe against both Bolshevism and Nazism.<sup>50</sup>

President Ryti wrote about the discussions between Pohjanpalo and Solberg<sup>51</sup>: "For the first time, I heard an American official state that Finland must not make a separate peace [agreement] with Russia because it is not in the interest of the Allies."<sup>52</sup> Solberg advised the Finns to keep their army strong and develop relations with the US because there would be an Allied landing in northern Norway. The greatest danger of all, for both Finland and the US, would be, in Solberg's opinion, a Soviet-German rapprochement.<sup>53</sup> Finnish Prime Minister Linkomies became skeptical of the Americans' intentions and believed that their list of questions was just a scam.<sup>54</sup> This was a not so far-fetched fear.

The Allies' decision to invade France the next year was made in January 1943 at the Casablanca Conference. In July 1943, the plan for Operation Overlord to invade Normandy was written. Soon, suboperations began for a major deception operation, Cockade. A suboperation, Tindall, carried out from the Scottish Command in Edinburgh until November 1943 was designed to increase the threat of an Allied landing in Stavanger, Norway. Wireless dummy devices and controlled information leakages were used as a means of deception.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps the fear of deception, which was actually going on, was something that Prime Minister Linkomies had in mind.

However, it was the Finnish War cabinet that decided to contact the US in early August 1943. President Ryti believed that the US would not leave Finland to be conquered by the Soviets, especially when US-Soviet relations were believed to be worsening at the time.<sup>56</sup>

Finnish Foreign Minister Ramsay gave orders to the Finnish Ambassador to Sweden, Gripenberg, on August 7, 1943, to contact the US Minister, Herschell Johnson

<sup>50</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 307.

<sup>51</sup> Editor Hannu Rautkallio's note and reference. Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 307.

<sup>52</sup> "Ensimmäisen kerran kuulin tänään virallisessa asemassa olevan amerikkalaisen lausuvan, että Suomen ei tule tehdä erikoisrauhaa Venäjän kanssa, koska se ei ole liittoutuneiden etujen mukais-ta." Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 307.

<sup>53</sup> Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 308–310.

<sup>54</sup> Edwin Linkomies, *Vaikea aika: Suomen pääministerinä sotavuosina 1943–44*. Otava, Helsinki 1996, 264–265; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 243.

<sup>55</sup> Roger Hesketh, *Fortitude: The D-Day Deception Campaign*. Overlook Press, Woodstock, N.Y. 2000, Ch. I, IV, VII & XIX.

<sup>56</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 237.

(1894 – 1966), in Stockholm and confirm that Pohjanpalo had indeed received his orders from Helsinki.<sup>57</sup> The Finnish proposal could be taken as an official one.

### **The US Secretary of State presents the Finnish proposal to the Chief of Staff**

The US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, wrote a letter to the US Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the US Army and Navy Admiral, William D. Leahy (1875 – 1959), on September 1, 1943.<sup>58</sup> Hull began his secret letter by convincing Leahy that he was going to share conversations that had been provided to him by a reliable source.<sup>59</sup> For reliability, Kennan had been ordered to arrange a check from Ryti, Linkomies, or Mannerheim through some independent channel of Pohjanpalo's authorization. In Finland, the Finnish Foreign Minister, Ramsay, was introduced to the matter as Ambassador Gripenberg was to confirm Pohjanpalo's position. Gripenberg also finalized the Finnish proposal and gave it to the American Ambassador in Stockholm for delivery to the US Secretary of State.<sup>60</sup> Hull explained to Leahy that the conversations in question were also known by the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs, who had authorized the acts of a Finnish diplomatic official. Hull informed Leahy that the Finnish Government expected to receive the US' response to their proposal.<sup>61</sup>

The US Secretary of State explained that the Finnish official had stated that the US Government erred in believing that the Finnish Government was unwilling to contribute whatever it could to the liberation of Europe. He claimed that the Finnish situation was simple: the greater part of Finland's food supply came from the Germans, who prevented Finland from building up vital stocks. Thus, Finland was

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<sup>57</sup> Editor Hannu Rautkallio's note and reference. Risto Ryti, *Sota-ajan muistelmat 1939–1944*, 310.

<sup>58</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure "B", Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3. United States National Archives (Hereafter NARA), Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Office of the Director of Plans and Operations. Top Secret "American-British-Canadian" Correspondence (Known as the "ABC File") Relating to Organizational Planning and General Combat Operations during the World War II and the Early Post War Period, 1940–1948, 336. Russia Sec. 1-A to 1-B, RG 165, NM 84 entry 421, box 250; Apunen and Wolff 2009, 242.

<sup>59</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure "B", Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>60</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 241, 243.

<sup>61</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure "B", Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

dependent on shipments from the Germans, who could easily, within a few days, create almost insurmountable food difficulties in the country. The Finns were certain that the Germans would not be “slow to punish” any demonstration of political independence on the Finnish side. However, the Finns saw one chance to reshuffle sides in the Northeastern theater of World War II in Europe. This time was at hand, and therefore, the Finns approached the US Government.<sup>62</sup> Also, the Swedes had appraised the situation similarly in January 1943. The major obstacle was that the flow of German supplies, especially food, would be cut if Finland was no longer aligned with Germany.<sup>63</sup>

Finland had made a trade agreement with Germany in March 1943 that guaranteed food supplies until the next harvest.<sup>64</sup> Kennan asked the Finns a question: What food supplies would Finland need in the future?<sup>65</sup> The Finnish foresaw that after the next harvest at the end of August or the beginning of September in 1943, Finland would temporarily have enough grain in its stocks to end its dependence on the Germans. The Finns presented this moment as a reason for their proposal.<sup>66</sup>

Kennan asked the Finns another question: How would Finland liberate itself from the German troops?<sup>67</sup> During the initial conversations, when the proposal was made, the Finnish official stated that the country was prepared to ‘cut off’ the German troops in northern Finland. In later conversations, he explained that the Finns would neither permit German troops to be supplied or reinforced from Germany nor give them an opportunity to return peacefully through the country back to Germany.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, the Swedes believed in January 1943 that the Germans would withdraw if Finland would make a separate peace agreement. They did not believe that the Germans would stay and occupy the country.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>63</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 162.

<sup>64</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, March 15, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 249–250.

<sup>65</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 241.

<sup>66</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>67</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 241.

<sup>68</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>69</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 160, 162, 165.

The Finns compared their situation concerning the Germans in northern Norway to a recent declaration made by the Swedes,<sup>70</sup> which restricted German movement and supplies.<sup>71</sup> Germans in Finland would end up in the same position, and they would, presumably, be compelled to withdraw.<sup>72</sup>

Kennan also asked Finns if Finland would fight against the Americans if they landed in northern Norway.<sup>73</sup> Secretary of State Hull was convinced that the Finnish Government was in a situation where it felt that the best solution to the political difficulties would be an American landing in Finland or even a British landing. The Finns were believed, without a doubt, to wish to make their offer contingent on Allied entry into northern Norway. The Finns were worried that, otherwise, it would become impossible for them to get supplies to Finland from the outside, and the country would remain at the mercy of the Germans if the Allied powers did not enter northern Norway. Hull foresaw that the Finns might anticipate that an American landing would also serve the purpose of ejecting or assisting in the ejection of German troops from the country.<sup>74</sup>

What the Finns seemed to hope for was some arrangement with the United Nations that would become operative if northern Norway were liberated from the Germans, although it would not bind the United Nations to any specific military action. Hull also foresaw that the Finns might anticipate that an American landing would offer some insurance against the threat of entry of the Soviet troops into Finland. In return for cutting off the Germans, Finland was known to wish for “some satisfactory assurances that such a step would not mean its ultimate destruction as a nation.”<sup>75</sup> Finland definitely wanted guarantees from the US that its independence from the Soviet Union would be assured.

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<sup>70</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>71</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 242.

<sup>72</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>73</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 241.

<sup>74</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>75</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3–5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

Hull thought that if the Finnish calculations were true, their proposal might well be found, upon further exploration, to contain the requirement that American or British troops land in northern Finland and northern Norway. However, he regarded it important that the Soviet troops would not make an American landing an occasion for operations against Finnish territory.<sup>76</sup> This could become a problem. Marshall Mannerheim had ‘grimly’ assured the US Chargé Affair, McClintock, that if any country in the world attacks the Finnish population or troops and attempts to occupy the country, they would fight against it<sup>77</sup>.

A larger Scandinavian aspect was raised by Hull when he stated that the Finnish proposal might be important in connection with Allied military operations anywhere in the Scandinavian area. The Finnish move could also change the continued neutrality of Sweden<sup>78</sup> towards the Allied powers. Defending their neutrality was also exactly what the Swedes themselves were worried about at the time.<sup>79</sup>

Instead of a broad political analysis, Hull focused on the Allies’ interests in the matter, primarily the proposal’s military aspects. In a letter, Hull stated the core of the Finnish proposal: the Finnish move would condemn the Germans to “eventual exhaustion and destruction” in northern Finland (i.e., in the Northeastern theater of World War II in Europe).<sup>80</sup> Secretary of State Hull stated to Leahy that the US representative had pointed out to the Finnish representative that “it was out of the question that our military authorities should consent to reveal in the course of such conversation anything whatsoever concerning our military plans,” with which he had agreed.<sup>81</sup>

Hull asked the Joint Chief of Staff (JCS) whether the Finnish proposal had “any substantial military interest in connection with the prosecution of the war” before

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<sup>76</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>77</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, May 11, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 277.

<sup>78</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>79</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 160.

<sup>80</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 3, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>81</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.



delving any further into the political implications of the proposal.<sup>82</sup> This was also in line with the instructions Welles had given to Standley in March 1943: “The chief interest of the United States in connection with this question is its belief that the withdrawal of Finland from the war would result in concrete and material advantages to the Soviet Union and to the nations associated with the Soviet Union.”<sup>83</sup> It was now the JCS’ task to decide.

### **The Joint Strategic Survey Committee Estimates the Allies’ Relative Net Gains and Losses**

A letter from US Secretary of State Hull to Admiral Leahy was referred to the Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC),<sup>84</sup> which recommended a reply to the US Secretary of State.<sup>85</sup> This was accepted by the JCS, and accordingly, Leahy sent a reply to Hull.<sup>86</sup> The JSSC’s first point was that the Finnish proposal would permit the withdrawal of seven German divisions consisting of 150,000 soldiers from Finland that could have been used on other fronts. This was interpreted as a net relative gain in Allied strength would be diminished by the same amount.<sup>87</sup> The number of German divisions equaled the number that the Finns had told the Americans.<sup>88</sup>

It seems that in the JSSC’s estimation, the Soviet forces that fought against Finland were thought to possibly remain behind the borders of Finland after the German withdrawal. An even worse scenario was also considered. The Allies’ net

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<sup>82</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>83</sup> The Acting Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley). Washington, March 9, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 247. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 247.

<sup>84</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 4. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>85</sup> Notes on JCS 113th meeting. September 7, 1943, 1415. AID TO FINLAND (JCS 469), 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>86</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “A”, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>87</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “A”, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>88</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, February 19, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 237.

relative gain in strength could further diminish if the Soviets diverted their forces to the military occupation of Finland<sup>89</sup>. However, the Allies tried to pin down German troops in Norway.<sup>90</sup>

The JSSC concluded that the Finnish offer of a contingent Allied entry into Norway had to be rejected by the US. This kind of commitment was considered unacceptable because using Anglo-American troops for the dual purpose of ejecting German troops from Finland and insuring against Soviet entry was regarded as “impractical from a military standpoint.”<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the Finns had informed the Americans that they could push the Germans out of the country by themselves.<sup>92</sup>

In the end, the JSSC pointed out that the important fact was that the Soviet Union was most concerned with the “solution to the Finnish question.” An Anglo-US military intervention in Finland was not regarded as a solution that was to be arrived at by other means whatsoever.<sup>93</sup> This rejection of the Finnish proposal was the JSSC’s recommendation to the JCS.

### The JCS’s Amendment Doubles the Disadvantage

The issue of aiding Finland was also placed on the agenda of the JCS’ 113th Meeting (JCS 469) on September 7, 1943.<sup>94</sup> It clearly pondered the number of fighting troops and balance of power affecting the forthcoming Second Front. The JCS was informed by Hull that the Finns would give German troops an opportunity to return peacefully to Germany through Finland.<sup>95</sup> At the time, the Finnish front was estimated by the

<sup>89</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “A”, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>90</sup> Michael I. Handel, “Introduction: Strategic and Operational Deception in Historical Perspective”. *Strategic and Operational Deception in the Second World War*. Edited by Michael I. Handel. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd, London, England & Totowa, N.J. 1987, 45, 46.

<sup>91</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “A”, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 1, 2. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>92</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Helsinki, May 11, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 277.

<sup>93</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “A”, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 2. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>94</sup> Notes on JCS 113th meeting. September 7, 1943, 1415. AID TO FINLAND (JCS 469). NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>95</sup> Notes on JCS 113th meeting. September 7, 1943, 1415. AID TO FINLAND (JCS 469), 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

Finns and the Germans to contain a Soviet force of approximately 450,000 troops.<sup>96</sup> The role of the German troops was a point that drew consideration and an alteration to the text prepared by the JSSC. General George Marshall (1880 – 1959), who was the US Army General Chief of Staff,<sup>97</sup> thought that the third paragraph of the letter prepared by the JSSC should be modified. The original paragraph stated,

*Inasmuch as the Finnish proposal would permit the withdrawal from Finland of the seven German divisions, aggregating about 150,000 men, for use on other fronts, the net relative gain in Allied military strength would be correspondingly diminished. It would be still further diminished if the Russians should divert forces for the military occupation of Finland.*<sup>98</sup>

The part that was to be modified in the third paragraph, in Marshall's opinion, is underlined in the excerpt above. It was to be replaced with the following:

*Inasmuch as the Finnish proposal would permit the withdrawal from Finland of the seven German divisions, aggregating about 150,000 men, for use on other fronts, the number of Russian troops that would be available for use elsewhere would be correspondingly decreased to about 300,000. This number would be still further decreased if the Russians should divert forces for the military occupation of Finland.*<sup>99</sup>

The part, which was to be the replacement in the third paragraph, in Marshall's opinion, is underlined in the excerpt above. The JCS' estimate that the Germans could withdraw 150,000 soldiers had not changed, but it seems that the Americans now concluded or had gathered information that indicated, in the situation in question, some 300,000 Soviet soldiers would remain behind the Finnish border

<sup>96</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure "A", Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250; Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>97</sup> Keith Grint, *Leadership, Management and Command: Rethinking D-Day*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York 2008, 24.

<sup>98</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure "A", Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 4, 1943, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>99</sup> Extract from Minutes. JCS 113th Meeting. Secret, September 7, 1943, Item 8. Subject: Aid to Finland (JCS 469). NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250; William D. Leahy to Cordell Hull, September 7, 1943. Enclosure B to JCS 469/1, 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

and unavailable for a shared Allied objective. The JCS also feared the worst case scenario: the Soviet occupation of Finland, which would tie down even more Soviet troops that were needed to fight against the Germans elsewhere. The decided hotspot for the European battles was already planned to be a landing in Normandy.

Marshall regarded the invasion as the only sure measure to defeat the German forces.<sup>100</sup> Surely, he would do his utmost to make decisions that achieve this goal. However, by September 1943 there were 610,000 American servicemen in the Mediterranean and some 700,000 fighting against the Japanese, but the number of troops in Britain available for a D-Day landing was only 361,000. These statistics meant that an invasion in 1943 was very unlikely.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the arrival of an additional force of some 150,000 or more experienced German veteran troops from reduced fighting in Northeastern theater to strengthen Hitler's Atlantic wall, perhaps precisely in Normandy, would be a major disaster in any case.

In Lisbon, US military attaché and an OSS officer Solberg convinced the Finnish Chargé of Affairs Pohjanpalo that a Finnish separate peace at that time would not serve the interests of the Allied powers in the long-term after the war, when the Soviet expansion would be resisted. The Finns were bewildered because this view was inconsistent with the statements of the US State Department, which they also checked with Chargé of Affairs McClintock.<sup>102</sup>

Some members of the Finnish Government were attempting to contact the Soviets through an unnamed 'channel' in Stockholm, but Foreign Minister Ramsay cooled down and decided against this approach and explained that a 'problem setting' needed to be done<sup>103</sup>. Later, President Ryti explained the stand, stating there was a secret channel open to the Americans that was unknown to the official system of diplomacy. This situation had informed the Finns' adoption of a four-point-program: 1) Finland must not get nervous and rush to make a separate peace agreement with the Soviet Union, 2) the Finnish army must be kept in good shape; 3) Finland must not get nervous even if the US breaks diplomatic relations; and 4) at the beginning of September, the Finns should be ready to make a decision regarding whether American troops would land in northern Norway or Finland.<sup>104</sup> Even in this setting, the Soviets' stand and the increased estimate of disadvantage were key factors, which the Americans eventually took into account.

After a discussion, the JCS concluded that the JSSC's reasoning appeared to be sound, particularly in the absence of a satisfactory understanding with the Soviet Union. The JCS concluded that the letter prepared by the JSSC could be approved

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<sup>100</sup> Richard Overy, *Why the Allies Won*. W. W. Norton & Company, New York and London 1997, 138.

<sup>101</sup> Overy, 139.

<sup>102</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 237.

<sup>103</sup> *Probleemin asettelu* (in Finnish).

<sup>104</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 238.

with only one alteration in the third paragraph.<sup>105</sup> Thus, document JCS 469/1 was created and sent to US Secretary of State Hull<sup>106</sup> explaining the US military interest “in connection with the prosecution of the war,”<sup>107</sup> which he had requested.

### The JCS's Rejection Explained to the US State Department

The JCS replied to US Secretary of State Hull<sup>108</sup> with message JCS 469/1 on September 7, 1943. The main fact affecting the decision was told to be the latest estimate of the Axis powers' strength on the Finnish front: the German forces had seven divisions and the Finns had thirteen divisions and seven brigades. This information was the foundation for decisions when it was placed on a scale with the Soviets' military power, which was estimated at approximately 450,000 men and two hundred planes.<sup>109</sup> At the time, the Swedes estimated that the Finnish front actually tied up thirty Soviet divisions.<sup>110</sup>

The comparison of actual military strength in the northeastern theater of World War II in Europe was the base upon which the Finnish proposal was set. Like General Marshall had proposed, the third paragraph of the JCS 469/1 message emphasized that the Finnish proposal would eventually permit the Germans to withdraw seven divisions of approximately 150,000 soldiers. Leahy again explained to Hull that the point was that these men could be utilized on other fronts. He also corrected and doubled the earlier calculation and pointed out that the number of Soviet troops that would be available for use elsewhere would be correspondingly decreased to about 300,000.<sup>111</sup>

<sup>105</sup> Notes on JCS 113th meeting. September 7, 1943, 1415. AID TO FINLAND (JCS 469), 1. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250; Extract from Minutes. JCS 113th Meeting. Secret, September 7, 1943, Item 8. Subject: Aid to Finland (JCS 469). NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>106</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>107</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-2, J.C.S. 469, September 5, 1943. Enclosure “B”, Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy. Secret. Washington, September 1, 1943, 5. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>108</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 242–243.

<sup>109</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 6. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>110</sup> Apunen and Wolff 2009, 162, 164.

<sup>111</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 6. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250; Apunen and Wolff 2009 243.

Leahy repeated the danger, which he had mentioned in his first letter to Hull: a possible Soviet diversion to occupy Finland. This was seen as a potential danger because a military occupation of Finland would further decrease the amount of available Soviet troops.<sup>112</sup> Obviously, it would strengthen the German defense in the forthcoming Western or so-called Second Front.

The Finnish offer of a contingent Allied entry into northern Norway was seen to propose a commitment, which the Finns doubtlessly wish for, but it was rejected by the US. Furthermore, the employment of Anglo-American troops to assist in the ejection of German troops from Finland and afford insurance against Soviet entry into the country was regarded as a militarily impractical task because of all the logistic challenges involved.<sup>113</sup> The Finnish front was relatively quiet at the time as the Finns had reported. It was concluded that the Soviet Union was “in the best position to evaluate the military benefit to Allied strength that would result from the withdrawal of Finland from the war.”<sup>114</sup>

The JCS regarded the Soviet Union as the Allied military power that would be most directly concerned with the solution of the Finnish question.<sup>115</sup> An estimate of what the Soviet Union was believed to want to conquer in Finland can be found in the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee document titled *Russian Intentions in North Norway and North Finland*, which was stamped as “most secret”. It made clear that the Soviet Union regarded the “Northern Ocean [the North Atlantic Ocean and the Arctic Ocean]” as their own preserve for several reasons. The military reason was that the Soviets were known to “wish to possess Petsamo, which would give them greater depth towards the West to cover their Kila Inlet naval base.” Therefore, if the Germans withdrew from northern Finland, it seemed almost certain that the Soviets would occupy Petsamo. If the Soviets would not do so for some reason, the Western Allies should inform the Soviets prior to landing, which could be carried out only

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<sup>112</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 6. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>113</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 6, 7. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>114</sup> The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Helsinki, January 21, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 223; Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 7. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>115</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943. Enclosure, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the United States Army and Navy Admiral William D. Leahy to Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Secret, September 7, 1943, 7. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

for military and operational reasons. The Soviets would also gain additional natural resources. Important nickel mines were located in the Petsamo area, in which the British had considerable interest. Furthermore, the Soviets had already informed the Allies that they would re-occupy Hangö, Finland, where they had had a base after the Winter War. Finally, the Soviets would undoubtedly try to secure some general control over Finland's policy under the cloak of a mutual assistance pact that Finland would be forced to sign.<sup>116</sup>

Eventually, the JCS concluded that the US' influence should be something other than an Anglo-American military intervention in Finland.<sup>117</sup> Like the US diplomatic initiative, the Finnish proposal of switching sides contingent on Allied forces landing in the Northeastern theater of World War II in Europe was declined in 1943. How was this policy conveyed to the Finns?

### **“Future of the Finns in Their Own Hands”**

US Secretary of State Hull wrote to US Chief of Staff Leahy on September 17, 1943, and told him that he had replied to the Finnish official, who had been a liaison. Hull quoted his response to Leahy:

*The American Government, for reasons of principle, cannot bargain or negotiate with the Finnish Government on the question of Finnish collaboration with Germany, responsibility for which must continue to rest with the Finnish Government.*<sup>118</sup>

It was clear that the US was not going to aid Finland in the matter. The reasons expressed were said to be based on principle. The US was not going to aid Finland, which was an enemy of its major ally, the Soviet Union. There was also a clear comprehension that the Soviet Union would occupy Petsamo in northern Finland and take political control of the country, and therefore, an operational landing that would face many logistic challenges could not result in relevant, permanent gain. The intentions of the Soviets and the fact that they did not want to make peace with Finland at the time were crystal clear to the JCS.

<sup>116</sup> Joint Intelligence Committee, Memorandum for Information, No. 4. Secret, September 17, 1943. Enclosure, Most Secret. J.I.C. (43) 356 (0) (Final), London, 4 September 1943. RUSSIAN INTENTIONS IN NORTH NORWAY AND NORTH FINLAND. Report by the Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, 1, 2. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>117</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-3, J.C.S. 469/1, September 8, 1943, 7. Enclosure, William D. Leahy to Cordell Hull, September 7, 1943. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.

<sup>118</sup> Joint Chiefs of Staff. Aid to Finland. Secret. 677-4, J.C.S. 469/2, September 21, 1943, 8. Enclosure, Cordell Hull to Admiral William D. Leahy. Secret. Washington, September 17, 1943. NARA, RG 165, e. 421, b. 250.



In fact, US Secretary of State Hull already knew the Soviets' viewpoint. A few days before writing the letter to Leahy, he had received a message from the US Minister in Sweden, Herschell Johnson, who urgently reported that the First Secretary of Soviet Legation in Stockholm, Konstantin Fedorovich Vinogradov, who was "keeping an eye on Finland" for the Soviet Legation and was "obviously to be speaking under instructions," had emphasized three times that the Soviet Government was not interested in peace with Finland. He had said, "We don't believe the Finns want peace. In any case, we are not interested." He also clarified his message by stating, "Perhaps we shall consider Finnish proposals when they come under a white flag at [the] front." Molotov stated to US Ambassador Standley that there was no use in the existing Finnish government approaching the Soviet Union.<sup>119</sup> At the same time, the American diplomats were convinced that the Finns would not surrender "as they felt that unconditional surrender would mean their national extermination against which all Finns would fight as long as physically possible."<sup>120</sup> The Soviet ally was more important to the Americans than the Finnish problem: the Finns were told that they were on their own.

## Conclusion

A claim that "throughout the remainder of 1943, the United States sought Finnish withdrawal from the war" can be refuted as the US clearly pressed Finland to make peace with the Soviet Union in 1942 and again in 1944, when Finland and the Soviet Union made a separate peace agreement after one bloody year of fighting. When the Finns approached the US regarding the matter in 1943, its Soviet ally, as well as its German enemy, were both against a Finnish separate peace, although it was for very different reasons. The US calculated the military input and gains to be achieved by the move, but these were seen as harmful to the Allies at that time.

On what is the view of "the Allied net relative gain" based? It seems more likely that it was mainly reasons of realpolitik and brute force than some of the principles in question. It was, perhaps, better to have Finland on the side of Germany, when some 150,000 German soldiers, in reality over 210,000, would stay away from more important war zones, such as the forthcoming second front that would be created in Normandy. Later, the Germans in the Arctic or the Northeastern theater of World

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<sup>119</sup> The Minister in Sweden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Stockholm, August 3, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 287; The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State. Moscow, August 17, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 292; The Minister in Sweden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State. Telegram, Stockholm, August 27, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 292.

<sup>120</sup> Memorandum by Mr. L. Randolph Higgs, of the Division of European Affairs, to Mr. James C. Dunn, Adviser on Political Relations, Memorandum, Washington, November 26, 1943. *FRUS* 1943: Vol. 3, 308.

War II in Europe would also tie-up considerable Soviet forces, which would not be able to accelerate the Soviets' advancement into Central Europe, for which the political conditions during the postwar era were already planned by US officials. In the autumn of 1943, it seemed more advantageous not to aid the democratic Finns to end collaboration with the undemocratic Germans, not for the reasons of principle or ideology, but despite these.

Furthermore, the reluctant Soviet ally, with its own war objectives, was "directly concerned in the solution of the question," and an American landing desired by the Finns was clearly seen to be out of the question. Therefore, the US did not seek Finland's withdrawal from the war at that very point. The Finns were made aware that they were alone with their problem.