

The Diplomacy of the Petsamo Question and Finnish-German Relations, January–June 1941*

I

On Christmas Eve, 1940, as they left Moscow after successfully having sought a temporary adjournment of the negotiations in the Finnish-Soviet mixed commission on the Petsamo question, Rainer von Fieandt and Berndt Grönblom were not inclined to believe that the respite they had won would be of long duration. Minister Karl Schnurre, anxious to complete his own economic negotiations with the Soviet government before the Finnish-Soviet Petsamo talks deteriorated to the point where German intervention on Finland's behalf might become necessary, had impressed upon Fieandt the need for the Finnish negotiators to stay away from Moscow until the German-Soviet trade treaty was signed.¹ He reiterated this advice categorically in a telegram to the Auswärtiges Amt early in the new year and suggested that the Finnish government could continue to blame the British for the delay.² The Auswärtiges Amt promptly instructed Minister Wipert von Blücher in Helsinki to do whatever he

* On the development of this question during the preceding ten months, see H. PETER KROSBY: *The Diplomacy of the Petsamo Question and Finnish-German Relations, March–December 1940*. Scandia XXXI: 2, pp. 291–330.

¹ Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945, Series D (1937–1945), XI (Washington 1960), p. 948. This series will hereafter be referred to as DOCUMENTS.

² Schnurre and Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 10, 3.1.1941, B19/Boo3946. Regarding the identification of unpublished German documents used in this article, see Scandia XXXI: 2, p. 293, note 4.

could to delay the return of the Fieandt delegation to Moscow,³ a reminder which was hardly necessary. By sending Dr. Henrik Ramsay to London for talks with the British Foreign Office and the Mond Nickel Company, and by appointing a committee of three men—Fieandt, Grönblom, and Dr. Erik Castrén of the Foreign Ministry—to study the legal implications of the Anglo-Canadian Petsamo concession, the Finnish government had provided itself with a plausible explanation for delaying the resumption of the Moscow negotiations, an explanation which there was every intention of milking dry.

Except for Minister Ivan Zotov's request to Foreign Minister Rolf Witting on December 30 that the Fieandt delegation return to Moscow, there was no Soviet pressure in the matter, however. Nothing more had been heard from the Russians by the time Schnurre's negotiations were concluded by the signing of the German-Soviet trade treaty on January 10.⁴ The day before, the American Ambassador in Moscow, Laurence A. Steinhardt, learned from the Swedish Minister, Vilhelm Assarsson, that the Petsamo question was "more or less quiescent."⁵ The day before that, Witting had told the American Minister in Helsinki, Arthur Schoenfeld, that Finland's "relations with the Soviet Union continue to be very quiet," although he feared that new difficulties might arise at any time.⁶

It was indeed an eerie quiet, like the lull before a storm, and nobody expected it to last. Schnurre had warned the *Auswärtiges Amt* on January 3 that the Finnish-Soviet Petsamo negotiations would certainly, "provided Finland does not capitulate in the matter, move into another acute crisis." He expected the

³ Clodius to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 4, 4.1.1941, 6441/Ho70015.

⁴ See DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1066–69.

⁵ Foreign Relations of the United States. Diplomatic Papers, 1941, I, General. The Soviet Union (Washington 1958), pp. 1–2. This series will hereafter be referred to as FOREIGN RELATIONS.

⁶ FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, p. 1.

Russians to insist on Finland's complete acceptance of all Soviet demands, and he did not believe that the Soviet government would commit itself to honor the existing Finnish-German agreements on delivery of Petsamo nickel ore.⁷

The first rumblings of the approaching storm were heard immediately after the conclusion of the German-Soviet trade treaty. On January 11, the Soviet Union opened another anti-Finnish propaganda campaign as the radio station in Petrozavodsk again beamed its powerful signal to Finland in a Finnish-language broadcast. Finland was "ogling [*geliebäugelt*] the Western Powers," it was claimed. At the same time, Finland was snuggling up to "a certain imperialistic great power" whose protection it sought in return for adopting "certain ideologies." There was also the usual line about how the suffering masses of the Finnish people were starving because of the criminally callous policies of their ruling clique.⁸

In those times of press censorship, the Finnish public had learned to determine the current status of Finnish-Soviet relations by what was said about Finland in broadcasts from Petrozavodsk. Now they knew that something unpleasant was afoot again. In Moscow, Minister Juho Kusti Paasikivi routinely connected the resurgence of the anti-Finnish propaganda with the protracted absence of the Fieandt delegation, and he urged its immediate return.⁹ The sudden imposition of an undeclared Soviet trade embargo on Finnish goods underscored Paasikivi's warning,¹⁰ as did the unannounced departure from Helsinki of Minister Zotov on January 18. It was assumed that "he might

⁷ Schnurre and Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 10, 3.1.1941, B19/Boo3946.

⁸ Memorandum by Press Attaché Hans Metzger of the German Legation in Helsinki, 14.1.1941, 6440/Ho67029; relayed by Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, 14.1.1941, tel. no. 17, 6440/Ho67028.

⁹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 13, 13.1.1941, 6440/Ho67035-36.

¹⁰ DOCUMENTS, XI, p. 1139.

be absent for some time."¹¹ The Soviet government was "no doubt exasperated by the Finnish government's protracted handling of the Petsamo question," suggested the German Ambassador in Moscow, Count Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg.¹² Witting noted laconically to Schoenfeld on January 21 that "there had been considerable trouble with the Russians lately."¹³ It was a mild understatement of the renewed Soviet pressure.

Deputy Foreign Commissar Andrei Vyshinsky had told Paasikivi on January 14 that the patience of the Soviet government was exhausted, and the Finns had better submit their reply to the Soviet Petsamo demands without further delay. Should they fail to accept an amicable settlement on Soviet terms, then the Soviet Union "would find ways to settle the matter."¹⁴ The next day Zotov repeated this in Helsinki "in rather strong terms" and demanded that a date be fixed for the renewal of the talks in the mixed commission.¹⁵ On January 21, Vyshinsky summoned Paasikivi again and insisted on an answer to the Soviet demands. He would listen to no more excuses, he declared. Paasikivi's explanation that the Finnish government was waiting for the results of Ramsay's mission to London was brushed aside by Vyshinsky with the sarcastic remark that Ramsay would probably be sent "right round the world, all the way to America," to avoid an early resumption of the talks. Unless an answer was given within two days, the Soviet government would have to conclude that the Finns refused to answer. Paasikivi

¹¹ DOCUMENTS, XI, p. 1139; FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, pp. 4-5.

¹² Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 154, 22.1.1941, B19/Boo3962.

¹³ FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, p. 4.

¹⁴ Finland Reveals Her Secret Documents on Soviet Policy, March 1940-June 1941. The Attitude of the USSR to Finland After the Peace of Moscow (New York 1941), p. 89. Hereafter referred to as BLUE-WHITE BOOK II.

¹⁵ Blücher, "Unterhaltung mit Aussenminister [Witting] am 15. Januar 1941," 6509/Ho73126-27; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 18, 15.1.1941, 6440/Ho67023-25.

advised Witting that the very least the Finnish government must do was to notify the Russians that Finland was ready to resume the negotiations. Witting agreed and issued the necessary instruction to that effect.¹⁶ Paasikivi informed Vyshinsky accordingly on January 23, and Vyshinsky appeared to be satisfied. He even implied that the Soviet government might be prepared to make certain unspecified concessions to the Finnish position.¹⁷ His attitude relieved the tension which had built up, but Witting realized that he had to send the Finnish negotiators back to Moscow at once, and he expected "strong Russian pressure" once the mixed commission reconvened.¹⁸

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Finnish and German government officials spent a busy two weeks preparing for the renewal of the Finnish-Soviet talks. Both Schnurre and Schulenburg had warned the Auswärtiges Amt that the Finns would face extreme pressure and the German interests in Petsamo nickel ore might be seriously menaced. Ministerialdirektor Emil Wiehl in the Wirtschaftspolitische Abteilung of the Auswärtiges Amt thought so too. By January 19, he believed that the crisis was about to move into an acute stage,¹ a natural enough conclusion to draw in the light of the events of the previous week.

¹⁶ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, pp. 89-90; J. K. PAASIKIVI, *President Paasikivis minnen. II. Mellankrigstiden - Som sändebud i Moskva* (Helsingfors 1959), p. 176; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 35, 22.I.1941, 6440/Ho66991-93; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 153, 22.I.1941, B19/Boo3961. Witting's instruction to Paasikivi was also relayed to Berlin, where Minister Kivimäki submitted it to the Auswärtiges Amt; see Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung betr. Petsamo-Nickelfrage," Ha. Pol. VI 234/41, B19/Boo3958-59, also in DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1162-63.

¹⁷ PAASIKIVI, pp. 176-77; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 41, 24.I.1941, 6440/Ho66980-81; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. [163?], 24.I.1941 (not found), relayed by van Scherpenberg to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 51, 25.I.1941, 6441/Ho69991.

¹⁸ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 41, 24.I.1941, 6440/Ho66980-81, and tel. no. 46, 25.I.1941, 6440/Ho66965-70.

¹ DOCUMENTS, XI, p. 1137.

Almost immediately after the opening of the new Soviet propaganda campaign against Finland, Blücher had begun to doubt that he could do anything further to retard the Finnish-Soviet talks.² Paasikivi was frantically calling for the return of the Fieandt delegation. And Professor Toivo M. Kivimäki, Finland's Minister in Berlin, told Wiehl on January 14 that the Finnish government found "a danger of an ultimative action by the Soviet Union inherent in continued delaying tactics." He urged that the Finnish and German governments synchronize their action plans on the Petsamo question before the Finnish-Soviet talks resumed.³ Witting subsequently sent Fieandt half way to Berlin before he was told by Blücher that Wiehl considered such a visit "decidedly inopportune, since it might well give Moscow the impression that Fieandt received his instructions from Berlin." Synchronization could be achieved more inconspicuously through an exchange of views between Schnurre and Ramsay, both of whom were due in Berlin soon from their missions in Moscow and London, respectively. Ramsay had to pass through Berlin anyway, and Fieandt ought to wait in Helsinki for his report. Witting agreed. Fieandt was intercepted in Stockholm and returned to Helsinki.⁴

On January 19, Wiehl prepared a proposal for German policy in the Petsamo question. He could see only two alternatives for a course of action: the Finns must either be encouraged to continue their resistance to the Soviet demands, or they must be advised to yield altogether. If they were advised to yield, then Germany must be prepared to write off its interests in Petsamo, which it in Wiehl's opinion could not afford to do. Hence the

² Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 13, 13.1.1941, 6440/Ho67035-36.

³ "Aktenvermerk" by van Scherpenberg, e.o. Ha. Pol. 123, 14.1.1941, 2111H/456802.

⁴ Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 19, 15.1.1941, 6441/Ho70009, and tel. no. 26, 17.1.1941, 6440/Ho67018; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 19, 15.1.1941, 6440/Ho67021, and tel. no. 22, 18.1.1941, 6440/Ho67017.

first alternative would have to be adopted, and he so recommended. However, since such a policy might easily result in Soviet military reprisals against Finland, Wiehl also recommended that Germany be prepared to give the Finns "positive backing against the Russians."⁵

It was a radical recommendation which involved Germany's relations with the Soviet Union in a fundamental way. Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop hesitated to make a decision so fraught with possibly grave consequences. When he learned about the Finnish government's conciliatory response to Vyshinsky's demand of January 21, a response which would seem to avert the danger of any imminent military steps by the Soviet Union,⁶ he decided to wait and see how things developed. He instructed Blücher to advise the Finnish government to "continue to negotiate dilatorily and avoid an open rupture by granting minor concessions."⁷

The time for avoiding the decision was already past, however. Even as Blücher received Ribbentrop's telegram on January 25, it had been rendered obsolete by events, and Blücher saw no sense in communicating most of its contents to Witting. Ribbentrop's advice had been based on the assumption that the Finns could continue to drag out the negotiations by referring to their continuing efforts to get the British to agree to a transfer of the Petsamo nickel mining concession from the Anglo-Canadian trust to a Finnish-Soviet company. However, when Blücher arrived in Witting's office in the morning of January 25 to relay this advice, he was informed that Ramsay's mission had been a failure. Ramsay had just reported from London that the British government stood on the rights of British subjects and rejected any solution of the Petsamo question which would

⁵ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1137-39. See also Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 35, 21.1.1941, 6441/Ho70001.

⁶ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1162-63.

⁷ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1184-85.

remove the concession from the Anglo-Canadian trust or provide Germany with Petsamo nickel. But the British government would not officially bring this standpoint to the attention of the Soviet government. Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow, would be informed, but he would also be told that he could do with the information whatever he pleased. Ramsay concluded that the British would not put up any kind of resistance to the Soviet designs on the Kolosjoki nickel ore resources, and Witting was of the same opinion. He told Blücher that "the English card can no longer be played out against the Russians." Hence it was now essential that Germany use its influence in Moscow in Finland's behalf, and Witting hoped that Schulenburg would be so instructed. Blücher advised the Auswärtiges Amt that the Finns were likely to yield to the Soviet demands "on essential points unless this German support is given them in Moscow."⁸ This was confirmed by Fieandt later the same day.⁹

Alarmed by the imminent danger to vital German interests, Blücher impressed upon his superiors in Berlin that these interests were military as well as economic. He reminded them that the Arctic Highway, the indispensable life line of the German transit traffic across Finnish territory between Kirkenes and the Baltic Sea, happened to cut right through the nickel mine installations in the Petsamo area. Hence Germany faced serious impairment of its military position in North Norway should Finland be forced to turn over the Petsamo concession to Soviet control.¹⁰

⁸ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 46, 25.1.1941, 6440/Ho66965-70. For further information on Ramsay's mission to London, see Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 18, 15.1.1941, 6440/Ho67023-25, tel. no. 40, 23.1.1941, 6440/Ho66983-84, and tel. no. 42, 24.1.1941, 6440/Ho66977-78; Blücher, "Unterhaltung mit Aussenminister [Witting] am 15. Januar 1941," 6509/Ho73126-27; FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, p. 5.

⁹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 48, 25.1.1941, 6440/Ho66957-60.

¹⁰ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1199-1200.

Although Blücher's warning may have made some impression on the diplomats on Wilhelmstrasse, it told the German military leaders nothing that they did not already know. For five months, Hitler and his military planners had kept a sharp eye on the Petsamo area, which they intended to occupy at the first sign of a Soviet military intervention against Finland.¹¹ Plans for such an operation, prepared under the code name of "Renntier", had been developed by the *Armeeoberkommando* 20 in Norway since late August 1940.¹² By January 1941, "Renntier" had already become an integral part of a larger operational plan, named "Silberfuchs", which called for a German attack from Norway across Petsamo in conjunction with Finnish units for the purpose of capturing Murmansk and severing the Kola Peninsula from the rest of the Soviet Union. However, even within this larger operation, which formed a part of the German invasion of the Soviet Union planned for the spring of 1941, the occupation of the nickel area in Petsamo was at all times the single most important objective for purely economic reasons.

¹¹ See my article in *Scandia*, XXXI: 2, pp. 313-14.

¹² See AOK 20, Ia, *Kriegstagebuch Nr. 4*, entries for August 12, 13, and 14, 1940, T-312/989/9181540; OKW, WFSt/Abt. L Nr. 33230/40 g.K.Chefs, "Betr.: Norwegen," 16.8.1940, T-312/1010/9205478-79; letter from Colonel Walter Warlimont to Colonel Erich Buschenhagen, OKW, Chef der Abt. Landesverteidigung, Nr. 00646/40 g.K., 20.8.1940, T-312/1010/9205467-68; "Mil. Geo.-Stellungnahme zu der Frage Wie und wo könnte Russland das nördliche Norwegen abschneiden?" 23.8.1940, T-312/1010/9205480; Gruppe XXI/Ia, g.K. Chefs., Aktennotiz, "Aufstellung eines Operationsentwurfes 'Renntier'," 23.8.1940, T-312/1010/9205481; Gruppe XXI, Aktennotiz, "Betr. Renntier," Chefs., 23.8.1940, T-312/1010/9205482 and -483; "Tätigkeitsbericht der Gruppe XXI/Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.-30.11.1940," geheime Kommandosache, Chefsache, T-312/992/9185547-54; "Tätigkeitsbericht des Armee-Oberkommandos Norwegen/Abt. Ia in der Zeit vom 1.12.-31.12.40," geheime Kommandosache, Chefsache, T-312/992/9185675-81; "Tätigkeitsbericht des Armee-Oberkommandos Norwegen/Abteilung Ia in der Zeit vom 1.1.-31.1.1941," geheime Kommando-sache, Chefsache, T-312/993/9185810-16. See also EARL F. ZIEMKE, *The German Northern Theater of Operations, 1940-1945* (Washington, Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-271, 1960), pp. 113-15 and 121-22.

All other considerations "could only have been of secondary importance," maintains General Walter Warlimont, who at the time was the Deputy Chief of Operations in the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW).¹³ The fact that the Finnish General Staff did not intend to defend the Petsamo area at all in the event of a new war with the Soviet Union¹⁴ made the Germans very sensitive to all signs of possible trouble there. For instance, when the Germans in mid-January feared that the Soviet Union might "react to our entry into Bulgaria with an attack on Finland,"¹⁵ the OKW requested the Auswärtiges Amt to persuade Finland to protect the mining facilities, ostensibly against the possibility of "English disturbance measures." The Finns complied at once by posting military guards at the Kolosjoki mine, the Jäniskoski power station, and the Pasvik River suspension bridge.¹⁶ But this was merely a token force, equipped perhaps to prevent acts of sabotage, and the Germans remained deeply troubled by the prospect of a Soviet preventive strike into the military vacuum of the Petsamo area.¹⁷ This fear was reflected in the speed with which the planning for "Silberfuchs" proceeded during January and early February. It was also reflected in the revised operational plan of February 13, which began by stating the primary offensive purpose as follows: "Se-

¹³ General d. Artl. a. D. Walter Warlimont, letter to the author, 11.10.1965.

¹⁴ See Gruppe XXI, Ia 80/40 g.Kdos., "Ergebnis der Besprechung mit Oberst Rössing," 11.10.1940, T-312/1010/9206144-47, and Rössing to Generalstab des Heeres and Gruppe XXI, "Betr.: Finnland-Kampfführungsabsichten des finnischen Generalstabes im Petsamogebiet," Tgb. Nr. 3/41 geh. Kdos., 10.1.1941, T-312/1010/9206136-39.

¹⁵ FRANZ HALDER, Kriegstagebuch, edited by Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, II (Stuttgart 1963), p. 247.

¹⁶ Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 32, 20.1.1941, 6441/Ho70003; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 33, 21.1.1941, 6440/Ho66998, and tel. no. 63, 29.1.1941, 6440/Ho66921.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Armee-Oberkommando Norwegen, Ia Nr. 3/41 g.Kdos. Chefs. (Silberfuchs), "Entwurf," 27.1.1941, T-312/1010/9206092-106.

curing the ore mines of the Petsamo area and the Arctic Highway."¹⁸

The Finns were not informed of the German military plans,¹⁹ and the Auswärtiges Amt probably remained uninformed also. Had Wiehl been aware of the military decisions already made with regard to Petsamo, he should in all likelihood have repeated his forceful recommendations of a few days before when he composed another policy proposal on January 26 for Ribbentrop's consideration. His new proposal was anything but forceful, however. In effect, Wiehl suggested that the Finns now be left to fend for themselves against the Russians. They could, he suggested hopefully, continue to delay the negotiations by blaming the British, and they should try to hold out for at least parity in the projected Finnish-Soviet concession company. Should this prove impossible, then it seemed better, according to Wiehl's lame recommendation, that a Finnish surrender to the Soviet demands "happens without our approval and not with our agreement." At any rate, it was "not opportune for us to intervene . . . at this time."²⁰

Wiehl's recommendation was rejected again. Ribbentrop recognized that a decision was now urgently required. Even as Wiehl was drafting his recommendation in Berlin, Ribbentrop and Schnurre were discussing the Petsamo question with Hitler at the Berghof.²¹ As a result, when Wiehl's draft came back from Ribbentrop's special train in Salzburg the next day,²² it

¹⁸ Armee-Oberkommando Norwegen Ia Nr. 10/41 g.K.Chefs. 'Silberfuchs', "Betr.: Barbarossa," 13.2.1941, T-312/1010/9206058-62; "Sicherung von Petsamo, der Erzgruben und der Eismeerstrasse," Anlage 2a zu Armee-Oberkommando Norwegen Ia Nr. 10/41 g.K.Chefs. 'Silberfuchs', 13.2.1941, T-312/1010/9206066.

¹⁹ Cf. the entry for 27.1.1941 in HALDER, II, p. 255: "Uncertainty in Finnish political circles about Germany's attitude."

²⁰ Draft telegram intended for Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, zu Ha. Pol. VI, 289/41, B19/B003972-73.

²¹ See DOCUMENTS, XII (Washington 1962), p. 4.

²² Ribbentrop from Sonderzug Heinrich to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 48, 27.1.1941, B19/B003974-75.

had been fundamentally revised. His first three suggestions were left intact, but the last two points of his recommendation, which embodied his proposal for non-intervention, were replaced by a new and forceful point four designed "to make it easier for the Finns in their negotiations in Moscow to maintain the German-Finnish agreements in force." Schulenburg was to be instructed to "remind the Soviet government *once more* that we could agree to modification of the concession arrangement only on condition that the German-Finnish agreements regarding delivery of nickel and nickel ore to Germany would be fully recognized by the Soviet government and by the future concession company." Molotov should be told that the Germans "could not consent to any impairment of our nickel interests based on these agreements because of the importance of this metal for Germany."²³

As far as Ribbentrop was concerned, this represented a sufficiently strong German intervention to enable the Finns to continue to resist the Soviet demands. It implied much more to him than it did to the Finns, however. Witting thought it to be particularly significant that the proposed German *démarche* in Moscow was to be made on the grounds of German self-interest. He feared that the Russians might decide to recognize those interests, and that Germany's solicitude for Finland's bargaining position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the Petsamo question would then vanish. He would have preferred to see Germany become a third partner in the Moscow negotiations, Witting told Blücher.²⁴ Kivimäki was equally disappointed. Ribbentrop's instruction to Schulenburg was "after all something," he remarked dryly to Wiehl, but what would happen to Finland if another crisis occurred in the Finnish-Soviet talks? Wiehl refused to say.²⁵

²³ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1206-08.

²⁴ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1212-13.

²⁵ Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung," Dir. Ha. Pol. 16, 28.I.1941, B19/Boo3980-81; re-

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Thus, it was in a spirit of uncertainty and apprehension that the Fieandt delegation, reinforced by the addition of Dr. Castrén, returned to Moscow for the second round of the negotiations in the mixed commission. They were determined to stand their ground as long as possible, however, and as a consequence the two sides moved no closer to a solution of the Petsamo problem during the seven meetings of the commission held between January 29 and February 11.

After a friendly opening session taken up by preliminary generalities,¹ the battle was joined on January 31 when Fieandt produced a statement of the Finnish position: the Finnish government would take over the Anglo-Canadian concession on a temporary basis for the duration of the war and accept a joint Finnish-Soviet concession company for that period provided that the Petsamo Nickel Company remain in charge of the mining operations. Alexei Krutikov, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Trade and head of the Soviet delegation, rejected the proposal as completely unacceptable. The joint company must have full charge of all operations from ore excavation to sales; it must be a permanent arrangement; and it must be under Soviet control, he insisted. The Finns could break their contract with the Mond Nickel Company by enacting a special law if necessary.²

Fieandt delivered the Finnish answer the next day in equally categorical terms. A purely Finnish management of the proposed interim joint company was a "*conditio sine qua non*" for

layed by Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 62, 29.1.1941, 6441/Ho69983-84.

¹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 66, 31.1.1941, 6440/Ho66916-17.

² Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 68, 1.2.1941, 6440/Ho66909-11; Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung," Dir. Ha. Pol. 20, 1.2.1941, 2111H/456810-11; PAASIKIVI, pp. 177-78. It should be noted that the account given by Paasikivi in his memoirs actually described the Finnish proposal as it emerged after several sessions of the mixed commission and not in its original form as one is led to believe.

Finland, he said, and he would have to leave Moscow if this condition was rejected. Krutikov was visibly taken aback, and during the remainder of the meeting he seemed so unsure of himself that Fieandt surmised his instructions did not even cover the possibility of such a negative Finnish attitude.³ Four days later, as the commission met again for a ten-minute session, Krutikov allowed that one might discuss the possibility of giving Finland a majority of the stock in the joint company, but there could be no compromise on the management question. Nevertheless, Fieandt subsequently advised his government to reject the Soviet demand for control of the management, since it might well lead to "the Russification of the area."⁴

When the mixed commission met on February 7 for its fifth session, Fieandt presented the Russians with a draft agreement prepared by himself and Witting.⁵ It called for a joint Finnish-Soviet company with a capital of 700 million Finnmarks (\$14,000,000), of which almost 80 percent would be expended immediately to buy out the Anglo-Canadian trust (\$7,000,000) and pay off accumulated debts owed by Finland to German interested parties (\$4,000,000),⁶ leaving the remainder (\$3,000,000) for operating capital. Finland should have 51 percent of the company's stock.

³ Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 244, 3.2.1941, B19/Boo3986-87; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 71, 3.2.1941, 6440/Ho66896-901; Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung," Dir. Ha. Pol. 21, 3.2.1941, 2111H/456812-13.

⁴ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 92; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 79, 6.2.1941, 6440/Ho66877-78.

⁵ The description of the Finnish draft given here is based on Witting's account of it as reported by Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 77, 5.2.1941, 6440/Ho66883-84.

⁶ Witting assured Blücher that "payment of German claims was naturally not anticipated." In other words, the provisions for buying out the interests of the Anglo-Canadian trust and the I.G. Farbenindustrie were included in the Finnish draft agreement merely to give it a semblance of a sincere Finnish will to compromise, whereas the draft as a whole was designed to be unacceptable to the Russians.

Krutikov at once registered some serious objections to this draft agreement and enumerated the amendments to it which the Soviet government regarded as essential. Both countries should have equal shares in the projected company's capital stock and management, he declared, and the managing director must be a Russian. The Finns could have the entire labor force, but the Russians insisted on having one-fifth of all engineers, foremen, and office personnel. Furthermore, the Jäniskoski power station must be incorporated into the joint company. Finally, the Soviet government expected that the job of organizing the company would be completed within one month of the signing of the agreement.

Fieandt stressed that Finland could in no circumstances accept the designation of a Soviet citizen as managing director. Krutikov retorted that the Soviet Union could never yield on that point. Thus a clear deadlock had been reached on a crucial issue as the fifth session of the mixed commission adjourned.⁷

On Fieandt's request, Witting sent new instructions to the negotiators in Moscow on February 9. They were to stand pat on the Finnish demand for 51 percent of the stock in the joint company. Finland must have four of the six members of the board of directors, including the chairman and the vice-chairman. The two Soviet members must reside in Helsinki. Only two Soviet auditors could be allowed to reside in the Petsamo area, and the Finns would tolerate no Soviet agitation against Finnish company regulations. Fieandt and his colleagues were also to insist that German payments for nickel ore deliveries be made through the Finnish-German clearing. "If at all possible," the joint company could be organized in six months after the signing of the agreement.

This was a tough stand for Finland to take, and Witting was fully aware that his new instructions to Fieandt would do no-

⁷ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 81, 8.2.1941, 6440/Ho66870-74.

thing to help free the negotiations from their "*Totpunkt*" position. Consequently he told Kivimäki to implore the German government to "help strengthen the Finnish position in Moscow."⁸

On February 10, the mixed commission met again. Both sides adhered stubbornly to their respective positions. Krutikov insisted that Finland buy out the I.G. Farbenindustrie, and Fieandt replied that his government was quite willing to do so, but it depended on whether the German firm was willing to surrender its legal rights. Neither side retreated an inch on the management question. The Russians demanded the unconditional merger of the power station with the joint company. Finnish fears that the British would put an end to the Petsamo traffic by denying further navicerts to Finnish vessels should the rights of the Anglo-Canadian trust be violated were dismissed as unwarranted by the Russians. Finally the exasperated Krutikov said that he would turn the negotiations over to higher authorities, but on second thought he called another meeting for the next day.⁹

The February 11 meeting of the mixed commission, its seventh, was to be its last. Fieandt and his two colleagues attempted to keep the negotiations alive by suggesting points on which it might be possible to compromise, but they were unable to go far enough to suit the Russians. They had taken preliminary steps, said the Finns, to speed up the formation of the joint company, and they were prepared to submit the question of compensation to the Anglo-Canadian and German firms to arbitration by a third party. They were also ready to turn over the mining property to the joint company unencumbered, depending on the attitude of the I.G. Farbenindustrie. But they could not surrender control of the management to the Soviet

⁸ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 83, 10.2.1941, 6440/Ho66864-66.

⁹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 84, 11.2.1941, 6440/Ho66861-62; Woermann memorandum on conversation with Kivimäki, U.St.S.Pol.Nr. 93, 11.2.1941, B19/Boo4009; DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 75-76.

side. If the Russians would yield on that point, then Finland might yield on the questions of the power station and the division of the stock. This was as far as Finland could go, said Fieandt.

For a moment Krutikov hesitated. Then he declared that the Soviet government would not reduce any of its demands. Since the Finns were unwilling to accept them, he could only note that the mixed commission had failed to produce any positive results, and he would so report to his government. As Fieandt subsequently explained it to Schulenburg, the Russians had broken off the negotiations without explicitly saying so, and he was afraid that they would now "resort to reprisals against Finland." In his report to Witting, Fieandt surmised that the strong Soviet stand was taken in order to show Germany that "Russian influence in Finland was stronger than German."¹⁰

Fieandt was about to leave Moscow¹¹ when he received instructions to remain there "for the time being."¹² On February 15, he was unexpectedly summoned by Krutikov, who apparently wanted to make one final attempt to bamboozle the Finnish diplomat into agreeing to the Soviet demands. Krutikov tried to demonstrate that the two sides were really in agreement on all points except the appointment of the managing director, but Fieandt could not be confused. For Krutikov's benefit, he went down the list of unresolved differences point by point and concluded by reiterating the Finnish position. Krutikov grew visibly angry, but he decided to blame his troubles on the "stub-

¹⁰ For accounts of this meeting, see BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, pp. 92-93; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 87, 12.2.1941, 6440/Ho66853-55, tel. no. 90, 13.2.1941, 6440/Ho66847-49, and tel. no. 91, 14.2.1941, 6440/Ho66844-45; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 296, 11.2.1941, B19/Boo4015, relayed by Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 107, 12.2.1941, 6441/Ho69956.

¹¹ Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 303, 13.2.1941, B19/Boo4018-19.

¹² Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 91, 14.2.1941, 6440/Ho66844-45.

bornness" of the I.G. Farbenindustrie rather than on the Finns. Having accused the German firm of obstructing the Finnish-Soviet Petsamo negotiations, he ended the interview by scheduling another meeting of the mixed commission for February 17.¹³

The meeting never took place. Krutikov came down with a case of diplomatic illness, and the meeting was first postponed for two days,¹⁴ then cancelled by Vyshinsky, who told Paasikivi that the Finns were only trying to drag out the affair anyway.¹⁵

Again Fieandt wanted to leave Moscow, and again he was ordered to remain in order to demonstrate Finland's willingness to negotiate. For the next three weeks he was left to reluctantly cool his heels in Moscow, as Witting, on the advice of the Auswärtiges Amt, ordered him to stay there. Not until March 8 was he called back to Helsinki.¹⁶ Even Grönblom, who had gone to Helsinki to report on the negotiations, was sent back to Moscow,¹⁷ but he returned to Helsinki together with Castrén

¹³ Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 323, 16.2.1941, B19/Boo4028, relayed by Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 133, 17.2.1941, 6441/Ho69933-34; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 96, 17.2.1941, 6440/Ho66833-34.

¹⁴ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 102, 18.2.1941, 6509/Ho73053.

¹⁵ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 94. The copy of this document which Kivimäki submitted to Woermann on February 20 (B19/Boo4034) contained two sentences which are missing in the copy published in the BLUE-WHITE BOOK II. In those sentences Paasikivi described additional German guarantees, and "not only diplomatic," of Finland's security to be a necessity.

¹⁶ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 108, 20.2.1941, 6440/Ho66812, tel. no. 117, 24.2.1941, 6440/Ho66794, tel. no. 126, 28.2.1941, 6440/Ho66778-79, and tel. no. 147, 8.3.1941, 6440/Ho66748; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 482, 5.3.1941, B19/Boo4049 (also in DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 217-18), relayed by Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 174, 6.3.1941, 6441/Ho69906-07; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 539, 11.3.1941, B19/Boo4070-71, relayed by van Scherpenberg to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 191, 12.3.1941, 6509/Ho73021-22; Blücher "Unterhaltung mit Aussenminister [Witting] am 8. März 1941," 6509/Ho72177-78; BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 27.

¹⁷ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 108, 20.2.1941, 6440/Ho66812, and tel. no. 111, 21.2.1941, 6440/Ho66807-08.

in late February when the Soviet government refused to extend their expired visas.¹⁸

4

During the two weeks that the mixed commission held meetings in Moscow, there were constant consultations between the Finnish Foreign Ministry and the *Auswärtiges Amt*. The German intervention in Moscow ordered by Ribbentrop on January 27 took place three days later when Schulenburg conveyed Ribbentrop's statements to Molotov. As the Finns had expected, Schulenburg was unable to extract from Molotov the guarantees which Ribbentrop sought. Molotov declared generously that his government would be happy to assume contractual obligations for the delivery of 60 percent of the Petsamo nickel ore throughout the war, so the Germans "had not the least cause" for worrying. When Schulenburg repeatedly stressed that Germany was not interested in making any new arrangements with the Soviet Union, only in a Soviet guarantee of the existing Finnish-German agreements, Molotov was evasive. As before, he refused to acknowledge the priority of the German claim. Schulenburg advised the *Auswärtiges Amt* that Germany might well find a direct settlement with the Soviet Union in the nickel question to be satisfactory, since the Soviet government "has always hitherto fulfilled its contractual obligations."¹

It was because they anticipated the adoption of this sort of advice that the Finns had been unhappy about Ribbentrop's *démarche* when they first learned about it a few days earlier. Their apprehensions had been unwarranted, however. The German government had no intention of following Schulenburg's advice. Schulenburg's faith in Soviet promises was not shared by his superiors in the *Auswärtiges Amt*. State Secretary Ernst von Weizsäcker instructed him instead to stand firm on the

¹⁸ Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 121, 27.2.1941, 6440/Ho66786-87.

¹ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1235-36.

previously stated German demands and to give implicit support to the Fieandt delegation in future interviews with Molotov. He was informed that the Auswärtiges Amt was in complete accord with Fieandt's position. "The most important thing for him will be," said Weizsäcker's telegram to Schulenburg, "to see to it that the management of the technical operations remains in Finnish hands and that Finnish influence continues to be decisive in the business management of the future company."² These instructions were also forwarded to Blücher for the information of the Finnish government,³ a significant morale booster for the Finns, needless to say.

There were other German encouragements also. Kivimäki was told in the Auswärtiges Amt that the nickel matter "was on the right track and he should not worry." His report on this to Helsinki had a "very soothing effect on the Foreign Minister who informed the President and the Prime Minister at once," according to Blücher.⁴ The Finnish government was also encouraged by the reports received on the discussions which Kivimäki and Ramsay had in Berlin with Wiehl and Schnurre, and as a consequence it endorsed the relatively uncompromising instructions which Witting proposed to send to the Fieandt delegation in Moscow, the instructions which were presented to the Russians in the form of a draft agreement on February 7.⁵ Hard on the heels of these reports came the news of Ribbentrop's forceful instructions to Schulenburg, coupled with the statement that the Germans "would not like to see Fieandt retreat beyond the line suggested by us for the negotiations."⁶

² DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 24-26.

³ Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 86, 5.2.1941, 6441/Ho69968-70.

⁴ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 66, 31.1.1941, 6440/Ho66916-17.

⁵ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 72, 4.2.1941, 6440/Ho66892-94, and tel. no. 77, 5.2.1941, 6440/Ho66883-84.

⁶ Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 86, 5.2.1941, 6441/Ho69968-70.

Thus it was hardly surprising that the American Minister found Witting in a confident mood when he saw him on February 7. Witting asserted that a settlement was in sight in the Petsamo question, an incomprehensible statement if based on the developments in the Moscow negotiations. Obviously it was based on the news which Witting had received from Berlin. Witting proceeded to assure Schoenfeld that the Finnish people were quite used to living with the threat of Russian aggression. They had been at war with Russia for 92 years out of the last 900 years, and they could cope with another attack even now, "provided Russian resources were not concentrated exclusively on Finland." The three Baltic States had lost their independence because of their "policy of supine accommodation," said Witting. Finland had no use for such a policy.⁷

However, the next day Witting's confidence was shaken a bit as a result of the hard line taken by the Soviet side in the crucial fifth meeting of the mixed commission in Moscow. He instructed Kivimäki to seek further German support for the Finnish negotiators, and Kivimäki went to see Weizsäcker. The negotiations were "rather critical again," he told the State Secretary, and it would be helpful if Schulenburg were to intervene with Molotov. For instance, he might be instructed to "prophylactically warn Molotov against an act of violence" against Finland. Kivimäki was told that Schulenburg had already received instructions to make another *démarche* in Moscow, and he seemed to be satisfied with that.⁸

But three days later Kivimäki was back in the Auswärtiges Amt again to inform Under State Secretary Ernst Woermann that the Russians were now "especially insistent" in demanding that the Finns cancel their credit agreement with the I.G. Farbenindustrie. "Since a matter of interest to Germany" was in-

⁷ FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, pp. 10-11.

⁸ Memorandum by Weizsäcker, St.S.Nr. 98, 8.2.1941, B19/Boo4001.

volved, Kivimäki suggested that the German government tell the Russians that this agreement must remain in force. Woermann was non-committal.⁹

Schulenburg's new démarche was made on February 10. As usual Molotov refused to be pinned down. He declared generously that Germany's economic interests would as a matter of course be "unconditionally protected" by the Soviet Union within the framework of the new concession arrangement, even though he could find no support in the Finnish-German agreements of which he had received copies for the contention that Germany was entitled to indefinite deliveries of 60 percent of the Petsamo nickel ore, at least not beyond 1947. He professed not to know of the special Finnish-German exchange of letters in which provision for such deliveries was made—a deliberate lie, since these letters had been submitted to the Russians on December 19¹⁰—but he did promise to give Schulenburg a written statement of the Soviet government's position on the German demands in the near future.¹¹ As it turned out, Schulenburg had to wait two suspense-filled weeks for that statement.

5

For Paasikivi, the month of February was the most nerve-racking, bitter, and tragic in all his time as Finland's Minister in Moscow. His reaction to the Soviet pressure on him in the late summer and fall of 1940 had undermined Witting's confidence in him and led to the appointment of Paavo J. Hynninen as a sort of watchdog Minister-Counselor in the Finnish Legation in Moscow.¹ His reaction to the renewed Soviet pressure in late January and in February 1941 led directly to his removal from

⁹ Memorandum by Woermann, U.St.S.Pol.Nr. 93, 11.2.1941, B19/Boo4009.

¹⁰ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 91, 14.2.1941, 6440/Ho66844-45.

¹¹ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 75-76.

¹ See my article in Scandia, XXXI: 2, pp. 319-20.

his post, as the widening gulf between his views and Witting's policy made Paasikivi's position untenable.

From the very outset of the second round of negotiations in the mixed commission, Paasikivi had urged upon Witting that he considered sweeping Finnish concessions to be absolutely required. When he learned from Schulenburg on February 1² that Molotov two days before had described the Soviet interest in the Petsamo area as "not merely economic, but predominantly political,"³ he succumbed to pessimism, mixed with the bitter satisfaction of having warned of this all along.⁴ "It is good," wrote Paasikivi in his diary on February 4, "that special negotiators have been selected for the nickel matter. Had I handled the matter alone, I should have been accused of being compliant. Now they can see for themselves what can be done here."⁵

Pondering the "delicate" situation in search of a compromise solution, Paasikivi "hit upon the idea of proposing, if the worst happened, an exchange of the nickel area for some other area." He suggested this to the three Finnish negotiators, who promptly reported it to Helsinki.⁶ Witting was not pleased, especially since he suspected that the idea might appeal to certain members of the government.⁷ Blücher considered the idea to be incredible and described it to Witting as an "Eisenbart-Kur",⁸ and

² See Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 71, 3.2.1941, 6440/Ho66896-901; memorandum by Wiehl of conversation with Kivimäki, Dir. Ha. Pol. 21, 3.2.1941, 2111H/456812-13.

³ DOCUMENTS, XI, pp. 1235-36.

⁴ Molotov's statement to Schulenburg was not a surprising revelation, of course, since he had made similar statements before to both Finns and Germans. See BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 51, and DOCUMENTS, X (Washington 1957), p. 237. What shocked Paasikivi—and other Finns—was that Molotov was making such a statement to the Germans at the same time that Vyshinsky was assuring the Finns that the Soviet Union had only economic interests in Petsamo.

⁵ PAASIKIVI, p. 179.

⁶ *Loc.cit.*

⁷ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 79, 6.2.1941, 6440/Ho66877-78.

⁸ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 81, 8.2.1941, 6440/Ho66870-74.

Hilger van Scherpenberg, the head of the Northern Europe section in the Wirtschaftspolitische Abteilung of the Auswärtiges Amt, telephoned to Helsinki to say that the idea was regarded in Berlin as “a bad joke” and absolutely “undebatable.”⁹ Wiehl warned the Embassy in Moscow that a territorial swap such as proposed by Paasikivi would make a mockery out of all of Finland’s commitments to Germany.¹⁰ There was no need for concern, however. Witting had not the slightest intention of taking Paasikivi’s suggestion. Paasikivi was to recommend an exchange of the nickel area again on at least two occasions,¹¹ but nobody took him seriously.

With the collapse of the negotiations in the mixed commission on February 11, Paasikivi came under direct Soviet pressure again. Vyshinsky summoned him the next day and suggested firmly that the two of them could surely find a solution if they tackled the nickel problem “personally.” The Soviet government had no political interest in the Petsamo area, said Vyshinsky, and it had no ulterior motives. However, the Soviet Union was a great power while Finland was merely a very small state, and prestige therefore necessitated that the Soviet Union enjoy “equality” in the projected joint company. This could only be achieved by giving the Soviet Union control of the company’s management, since Finland controlled the territory involved. It would all work to Finland’s benefit anyway, for the Russians intended to sink a “large amount” of money into the company and provide it with “first-rate experts,” whereas the Germans were only “despoiling” the nickel resources through their agreements with the Finns. In view of all that the Russians were going to do for the company, it was only logical that they should also

⁹ Memorandum by van Scherpenberg, included as part 1 of a document labeled “Zu Ha. Pol. VI 458,” 8.2.1941, 2111H/456819.

¹⁰ The draft of this telegram was found as part 2 of *ibid.*

¹¹ See Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 95, 15.2.1941, 6440/Ho66836-38, and memorandum by Weizsäcker on conversation with Kivimäki, St.S.Nr. 179, 17.3.1941, B19/Boo4083-84.

“direct the undertaking.” The Soviet government had in fact already decided, revealed Vyshinsky, that there would be a Soviet managing director. Naturally, the Soviet government must also insist on an equal division of the capital stock, equality on the board of directors with the chairmanship rotating annually, and on having one-fifth of the engineers, foremen, and office staff. When Paasikivi jestingly remarked that the job of managing director was “too small a matter for you to begin a war against us on that score,” Vyshinsky’s reply was: “We are already engaged in a commercial war with each other.”¹²

Paasikivi’s report to Witting on this conversation, as published in the Blue-White Book of 1941, reveals nothing about what he contributed to the exchange, except that he stuck to the Finnish position with respect to the managing director. In his memoirs, he noted that he had suggested a compromise proposal which he asked Vyshinsky to present to the Soviet government,¹³ but he gave no details beyond hinting that it involved the composition of the company’s personnel. Schulenburg learned from Fieandt that Paasikivi had indeed made a proposal to Vyshinsky and that it would have given the Russians an equal representation on the board of directors with a rotating chairmanship, equality in all management positions, and one-fifth of all engineers, while Finland would have the managing director.¹⁴ The Auswärtiges Amt confirmed this in a report to Blücher and told him to point out to the Finnish government that Paasikivi’s proposal would menace German interests.¹⁵ On February 21,

¹² BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, pp. 93–94; PAASIKIVI, pp. 179–81; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 90, 13.2.1941, 6440/Ho66847–49, and tel. no. 95, 15.2.1941, 6440/Ho66836–38; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 303, 13.2.1941, B19/Boo4018–19, relayed by van Scherpenberg to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 122, 15.2.1941, 6441/Ho69946–47.

¹³ PAASIKIVI, pp. 180–81.

¹⁴ Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 303 (see note 12 above).

¹⁵ Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 128 [incorrectly numbered 118], 15.2.1941, 6441/Ho69949.

Blücher informed the Auswärtiges Amt that Witting had reprimanded Paasikivi for having promised the Russians “to recommend that the Finnish government accept 20 percent Russian engineers.”¹⁶ In his memoirs, Paasikivi wrote that the compromise proposal which he suggested that his government make to the Russians was submitted by him to Witting on his own initiative (“*för egen del*”)¹⁷ and not in fulfillment of a promise he had made to Vyshinsky. But his description of the proposal tallied with the proposal which Fieandt told Schulenburg that Paasikivi had made to Vyshinsky. It seems clear, therefore, that Paasikivi had placed his government in an awkward position, and that the reprimand which he subsequently received from Witting was not entirely unwarranted.

As his Finnish and German colleagues would occasionally put it behind his back, Paasikivi’s “nerves” were failing him again. He was convinced that mortal danger was again facing his country, and he did not believe that Germany could help. Nothing was therefore more important than to prevent an armed conflict between Finland and the Soviet Union. His compromise proposal was the very least that Finland could offer the Russians, he told Witting, and he would regard a Soviet acceptance of it as the best possible outcome of the crisis for Finland. Finland must yield in the nickel question, “which after all is not of vital importance to us,” he advised Witting.¹⁸ Even long after the Continuation War he was bitter about Witting’s rejection of his proposal.¹⁹

It was a dejected Paasikivi who arrived in Vyshinsky’s office on February 18 to deliver another negative Finnish reply. Vyshinsky curtly informed him that the Soviet Union was a great power, and its demands were therefore “categorical and

¹⁶ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 111, 21.2.1941, 6440/Ho66807-08.

¹⁷ PAASIKIVI, p. 181.

¹⁸ PAASIKIVI, pp. 181-82.

¹⁹ PAASIKIVI, p. 182.

definitive.” He observed that Finland had in effect rejected those demands, which he considered to be rank effrontery, and he would so report to his government. He warned that “the matter will now take its course, with all its consequences.” With that he dismissed the Finnish Minister “abruptly and was angrier than ever before.”²⁰

Paasikivi was convinced that the Petsamo question was now out of hand and had become “a prestige issue for the Kremlin.” The Russians could no longer back down.²¹ “One now required guarantees of other kinds of adequate assistance from Germany also, not only diplomatic, in the event that this aid should prove to be necessary,” said Paasikivi in his telegraphic report to Helsinki,²² but he did not believe that the Germans would come through for Finland. If one “considered the matter thoroughly,” he wrote in another communication to Witting, it would become evident that Germany was in no better position than it had been in the past to act resolutely. German assistance was therefore a pipe dream. To back up his point, Paasikivi proceeded to lecture Witting on the realities of great power politics in one of the bitterly scornful tirades against all great powers of which the volumes of his memoirs contain so many examples. Full of self-righteous moral indignation and self-pity he explained how the Germans, the Russians, and the British were all demanding that Finland protect their interests, while none of them would lend a helping hand when Finland got into trouble for their sake. “All great powers are the same,” lamented Paasikivi,

²⁰ *Loc.cit.*; BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 94; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 342, 19.2.1941, B19/Boo4038; Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 106, 19.2.1941, 6440/Ho66815-18; memorandum by Woermann, U.St.S.Pol.Nr. 129, 20.2.1941, B19/Boo4033.

²¹ PAASIKIVI, p. 183.

²² This sentence was left out of the copy of Paasikivi's telegram published in BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 94. Another sentence was also excluded. Both are found, however, in the copy which Kivimäki gave to Woermann on February 20 (B19/Boo4034). Presumably the latter was the complete version.

"equally selfish, and we small nations are caught between them. We small states are the only respectable ones."²³

As usual, Witting related Paasikivi's sentiments and suggestions to Blücher, adding that he was personally "inclined to take the matter calmly." It was "just one of those crises." He believed that the Russians regarded the Petsamo question as "a touchstone for testing Finnish nerves and Finnish-German relations."²⁴ The Auswärtiges Amt agreed: "We judge the situation just as calmly as the Finnish Foreign Minister."²⁵

It is difficult not to sympathize with Paasikivi's position, however. For him, who had experienced the Finnish-Soviet negotiations in the fall of 1939 prior to the outbreak of the Winter War, the threats by Vyshinsky on February 18 and the sudden silence which then followed must have been frighteningly reminiscent of November 1939. He saw another war on the horizon, a war he was certain that Finland would lose. He had done what he could to prevent catastrophe by warning Witting and proposing an alternate course of action, and he had been reprimanded for it. His position as Finland's Minister in Moscow had become untenable as well as incompatible with his self-respect, and on February 20 he cabled his resignation to the Finnish Foreign Ministry. It was, not unnaturally, a bitter telegram. He had noted, he said, that "our views concerning Finland's foreign policy are not sufficiently compatible." Since Witting did not appear to have "faith in my political judgment and my experience," and since he did not wish "to be in any way involved in a policy which can lead to catastrophe," he was submitting his resignation, effective as of the end of May. As long as the government did not regard his "services for the

²³ PAASIKIVI, p. 183.

²⁴ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 106, 19.2.1941, 6440/Ho66815-18.

²⁵ Moraht to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 142, 20.2.1941, 6441/Ho69929. See also Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung über den Stand der Petsamo-Verhandlungen," Dir.Ha.Pol. 44/41, 22.2.1941, B19/Boo4041-42.

country to be so important" that he needed to "sacrifice" himself by remaining in Moscow, his resignation would settle the matter "to the satisfaction of both parties."²⁶ Witting accepted the resignation at once, and Paasikivi was recalled from Moscow in early March, ostensibly for consultations, but actually for good. His return to Moscow in May had no other purpose than to fulfill the obligatory duty of a departing envoy to bid farewell to his host government and diplomatic colleagues.

6

The Paasikivi-Vyshinsky confrontation on February 18 represented the lowest point of the Finnish-Soviet Petsamo negotiations. As time would tell, it also marked the beginning of the end of those negotiations, although no one was prepared to believe so at the time. On February 24, Witting remarked to Blücher that "in the nickel question there is no sign of life from the Russians,"¹ but who could tell whether that was a promising or an ominous situation? There was, however, some cause for optimism in that the Finnish General Staff could discern no Soviet military preparations in the snow-bound border regions.² Further encouragement was provided when the Russians unexpectedly suggested that previously interrupted negotiations for a Finnish-Soviet telegraph and telephone communications agreement be resumed at once. Witting hoped that this signified that the Russians had not yet abandoned "the road of negotiations."³ And the continuing Soviet silence in the Petsamo question indicated to Witting that the Russians might be turning their attention to the Balkans, away from Finland.⁴

Fieandt, who was still performing his *acte de présence* in

²⁶ PAASIKIVI, pp. 230-31.

¹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 117, 24.2.1941, 6440/Ho66794-95.

² Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 111, 21.2.1941, 6440/Ho66807-08.

³ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 126, 28.2.1941, 6440/Ho66778-79.

⁴ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 121, 27.2.1941, 6440/Ho66786-87.

Moscow, found the waiting enervating. He suggested that Schulenburg should remind Molotov of his promise to give Germany a written statement on the Soviet position with respect to Germany's interests in Petsamo. Without such a reminder, the Russians might conclude the "the German interest in nickel is secondary," said Fieandt.⁵ The Auswärtiges Amt felt, however, that the German position had been presented to the Russians often enough and in sufficiently forceful terms to convince them of "the genuine nature of our interests." Hence it was up to the Russians to make the next move.⁶ But even as this information was cabled to Helsinki, Ribbentrop changed his mind and instructed Schulenburg to see Molotov and "again emphasize our interest in the guarantees of our agreements with Finland."⁷

The next day, before he could carry out his instructions, Schulenburg was summoned to Vyshinsky and handed the long awaited statement. It was as unsatisfactory as Molotov's assurances of two weeks earlier. No guarantee of the Finnish-German agreements was offered. It was noted that the Finns and the Russians would share equally in the output of the nickel mine, and if the Finns wished to sell their entire share to Germany, that was their own business. The Russians were quite willing to conclude a "special agreement" with Germany for another 10 percent of the output from their share in order to give Germany its 60 percent. Deliveries to Germany on an indefinite basis was "naturally" out of the question, but "sympathetic consideration" would be given to the German wishes "within a definite period of time."⁸

⁵ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 117, 24.2.1941, 6440/Ho66794-95.

⁶ Wiehl to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 151, 25.2.1941, 6441/Ho69927. The telegram was actually sent on 27.2.1941.

⁷ Ribbentrop from Fuschl to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 109, 27.2.1941, B19/Boo4043, relayed to Deutsche Botschaft Moskau the same day as tel. no. 395; also relayed by Clodius to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 155, 28.2.1941, 6441/Ho69922.

⁸ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 196-97.

While the *auswärtiges Amt* scrutinized Molotov's statement and worked out a reply, a last Finnish Soviet confrontation took place in Moscow on March 4, when Molotov told Paasikivi in "a serious tone" that the Petsamo question "now finally had to be settled once and for all" on the terms proposed by the Soviet government. Rather naively, Molotov gave Paasikivi copies of the German *démarche* of February 10 and the Soviet statement of February 28, "so that you may be fully aware of Germany's attitude and not rely on rumors." The implied suggestion that Finland was now isolated in the Petsamo question may have impressed Paasikivi, who had thought so all the time, but it could not conceivably impress Witting, whose information was more complete than Paasikivi's. Paasikivi tried to revive the mixed commission, noting that Fieandt was still in Moscow, but Molotov pronounced the commission to be dead. Although Paasikivi reported to Witting that Molotov had been "very resolute" and had demanded the Finnish government's "final reply" at the "earliest opportunity," his statement that all matters could be discussed except the post of managing director would seem to indicate that he had retreated from the rigid position of February 18. As instructed, Paasikivi insisted that Finland must control the management of the joint company.⁹

The confrontation confirmed Paasikivi in his apprehensions, and he advised Witting to submit a compromise proposal. Not to do so involved "much too great a risk," he warned.¹⁰ Schulen-

⁹ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, pp. 94-95. A fuller version of Paasikivi's report was sent by Witting to Berlin, where Kivimäki gave it to Wiehl on March 6 (B19/Boo4054-55). Other accounts of the interview are found in PAASIKIVI, p. 184; Schulenburg to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 482, 5.3.1941, B19/Boo4049-50 (also in DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 217-18), relayed by Wiehl to *Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki*, tel. no. 174, 6.3.1941, 6441/Ho69906-07; Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 142, 6.3.1941, 6440/Ho66753-56; Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung betreffend Petsamo," Dir.Ha.Pol. 57/41, 6.3.1941, 2111H/456832; FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, pp. 13-14 (Steinhardt got his dates mixed up).

¹⁰ PAASIKIVI, p. 184.

burg reported to Berlin that Paasikivi had been "strengthened in his inclination to urge his government to yield."¹¹ And Steinhardt, after a talk with Paasikivi, informed Washington that the Finnish Minister, who was about to go to Helsinki, intended to propose a compromise which would give the Soviet government "substantially what it wants."¹² Witting remained calm, but he asked to be informed of "the opinion of the German government before he takes up the matter in the cabinet."¹³ Kivimäki tried to find out what that opinion was in an interview with Wiehl on March 6, but Wiehl refused to say.¹⁴ However, as soon as Kivimäki left, Wiehl wrote a memorandum in which he proposed to Ribbentrop that "it seems prudent to correct, in a suitable form," the Soviet assertion "that Russia must have the management because it has assumed delivery obligations to us."¹⁵ At the same time he drew up a draft telegram for Weizsäcker's signature in which he would have Schulenburg make that correction in an interview with Molotov.¹⁶

The best informed Finnish leaders were not really worried any more, however. The conspicuous interest which German military figures had displayed in Finland lately indicated that Finland would not be abandoned to the Soviet Union. Officials in the *Auswärtiges Amt* had also begun to drop broad hints to that effect. For instance, Weizsäcker told Kivimäki on March 5 that the German position had now been "definitively determined," and Finland could face "with complete assurance all surprises even in the nickel question." Two days later, Kivimäki

¹¹ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 217-18.

¹² FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, p. 14. The words in quotation marks were Paasikivi's own.

¹³ Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 142, 6.3.1941, 6440/Ho66753-56.

¹⁴ Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung betreffend Petsamo," Dir.Ha.Pol. 57/41, 6.3.1941, 2111H/456832.

¹⁵ Wiehl, "Aufzeichnung betreffend Petsamo," Dir.Ha.Pol. 58/41, 6.3.1941, 2111H/456833-34.

¹⁶ Zu Ha.Pol. 1192 g. Ang. II, Br9/Boo4057-62.

was told by officials of two government departments that a turn of events “very advantageous for Finland” had occurred, and the Finns should make no territorial concessions of any kind to the Soviet Union.¹⁷ Small wonder, then, that Schoenfeld on March 13 reported to Washington that Witting was not “especially concerned” and meant to stick to the Finnish position “regarding control of nickel mines.”¹⁸

Wiehl’s draft of March 6 for a reply to the Soviet government was approved by Ribbentrop on March 8¹⁹ and cabled to Schulenburg the next morning.²⁰ The Finnish government was also informed of its contents.²¹ The note which Schulenburg was to present to Molotov rejected Molotov’s written statement of February 28 on all points where it differed with the German position as previously explained to the Soviet government. Any deviation from the provisions of the Finnish-German agreements would “undoubtedly” be detrimental to Germany’s interests and could therefore not be accepted. Molotov had ample reason to lament, when Schulenburg gave him the note on March 10, that “the settlement of this question had run into more and more difficulties from the German side.” Any further delay would be “intolerable for the Soviet government,” he complained, to which Schulenburg replied that his government “valued the continued validity of the German-Finnish agreements above all” and asked for nothing more than a Soviet guarantee that they would remain in full force after the Petsamo concession was transferred to a Finnish-Soviet company.²²

On March 24, Vyshinsky delivered his government’s reply to

¹⁷ ARVI KORHONEN, *Barbarossaplanen och Finland* (Tammerfors 1963), pp. 218–19.

¹⁸ FOREIGN RELATIONS, 1941, I, p. 14.

¹⁹ Tel. no. 155 from Fuschl, 8.3.1941, B19/Boo4064.

²⁰ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 248–50.

²¹ Clodius to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 187, 10.3.1941, 6441/Ho69893–96.

²² Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 539, 11.3.1941, B19/Boo4070–71.

the German note to Schulenburg. No Soviet guarantee was given. The Soviet government merely offered to take the Finnish-German agreements of July 24 and September 16, 1940, into consideration "when studying the matter." The nickel matte agreement signed by the Petsamo Nickel Company and the I.G. Farbenindustrie on February 19 and submitted to the Russians by the Finns on March 15 would receive separate consideration in due time, said the Soviet note.²³

The Petsamo question was now utterly deadlocked on both the Finnish-Soviet and the German-Soviet fronts. There would in fact be no further negotiations with the Soviet Union for either of the two interested parties. As of March 24, the Petsamo question was practically removed from the diplomatic agenda. Few Finnish or German diplomats were ready to believe that, however.

7

Anticipating further Soviet pressure in the Petsamo question, the Finnish government in the second week of March summoned Fieandt home from Moscow and Kivimäki from Berlin for consultations. Paasikivi was also called home, but there is no evidence to indicate that his trip was really genuinely connected with these consultations. In his memoirs, he referred to "lengthy discussions in Helsinki" in a manner suggesting that he had not been intimately involved in them.¹ It seems safe to assume that his trip to Helsinki had no other purpose than that of getting him out of Moscow. As of the day he left there,

²³ The Soviet note in German translation was sent by Counselor Hilger to Auswärtiges Amt on 25.3.1941, as Tgb. Dg. 48/41 g. (zu Ha. Pol. 2019/41 g.), 260/169942-44; a copy was relayed to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, 6674/H090783-84. Schulenburg summarized the main points of the note in his tel. no. 685 of 25.3.1941 to Auswärtiges Amt, B19/Boo4101 (also in DOCUMENTS, XII, p. 352), relayed by Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 239, 26.3.1941, 6434/H059273.

¹ PAASIKIVI, pp. 184-85.

March 11, chargé d'affaires Hynninen was for all practical purposes Finland's Minister in Moscow.

Fieandt, on the other hand, was recalled to Helsinki to serve as chairman of a committee charged with working out a reply to Molotov's demands of March 4. Also on the committee were Grönblom and Castrén and the newly promoted Secretary General of the Finnish Foreign Ministry, Aaro Pakaslahti. The committee's initial proposal was ready by March 14, and it was taken to Berlin at once by Kivimäki for submission to the *Auswärtiges Amt*.² The proposal was as negative as any previously submitted by the Finns to the Russians. It rejected the Soviet demand for control of the joint company's management as both unjustified and inexpedient, and it reiterated the minor concessions offered previously. But it did so in much stronger language than before, which must be taken as a reflection of the greater sense of security now felt by the Finns. Specifically, what few concessions that might be offered to the Russians were described as privileges; and Finland's general responses to the Soviet demands during the past nine months were described as "well disposed" and as guided by a spirit of "very far-reaching cooperation." In short, nothing was to be offered which had not already been rejected by the Soviet government. But the Finns would be glad to resume negotiations, said the proposal, preferably in Helsinki.³

Clearly, the nickel committee's draft proposal was not intended to accommodate the Soviet government in any way. As Kivimäki told Weizsäcker on March 17, "the Finnish negotiators expect a definitive rupture of the negotiations if they submit the projected answer." According to Paasikivi, said Kivimäki, the proposal would "lead to another war in a few months unless Germany guaranteed its firm support." Without

² Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 159, 14.3.1941, 6440/Ho66733-34.

³ Entwurf zur Antwort an die Sowietunion [*sic*] in der Nickelfrage. Vertraulich," 6509/Ho72994-99.

such support, Paasikivi would prefer to give the Petsamo area to the Soviet Union in exchange for some other territory. The Finnish government now requested "clear advice by the German government," said Kivimäki, since that would "change the complexion of things entirely."⁴ What Weizsäcker said has not been recorded, but when Counselor Edvin Lundström of the Finnish Legation raised the question again later the same day he was told by an official of the *Auswärtiges Amt*: "But we have told you that you do not need to worry; that is after all something."⁵

On March 18, the final version of the nickel committee's report as endorsed and slightly revised by the Finnish government was submitted by Witting to Blücher.⁶ As summarized by Blücher in his report to the *Auswärtiges Amt*, it read as follows: "1) No concessions in question of management and officials. 2) In control question the appointment of two Russian auditors can be considered. 3) Readiness to resume negotiations on this basis."⁷ Ribbentrop promptly took the proposed reply under study,⁸ and six days later his response was delivered to Kivimäki. Point one was all right, but point two ought to be strengthened, said Ribbentrop. He would prefer to strike out the reference to the two Russian auditors altogether or describe them as "liaison personnel" between the Finnish management and the Soviet members of the board of directors. Ribbentrop also reminded the Finns that Petsamo talks were still in progress between Germany and the Soviet Union, which meant that a rupture of the Finnish-Soviet talks would be of no particular significance. Furthermore, the German government was "not

⁴ Memorandum by Weizsäcker, St.S.Nr. 179, 17.3.1941, B19/Boo4083-84; relayed by Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, Ha. Pol. 1742 g. I, 6674/Hog0739-41.

⁵ KORHONEN, p. 219.

⁶ 6509/Ho73019.

⁷ Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 180, 18.3.1941, 6440/Ho66681.

⁸ Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 221, 21.3.1941, 6509/Ho73017.

inclined to believe that any particular danger for Finland was involved in the projected answer.”⁹

Meanwhile the Fieandt committee had produced another report, which Witting submitted to Blücher on March 27. The report dealt with a number of practical problems regarding the management and the general organization of the projected joint company, and it suggested an even stricter circumscription of the few Soviet officials who might be involved than had been anticipated in the report of two weeks earlier. In effect, the new report would reduce the influence of these officials to approximately nothing.¹⁰

8

The Finnish government did not submit its reply to the Soviet government, assuming most likely that developments elsewhere in Europe during March had given the Russians more important things to worry about than the Petsamo question. But the Finns continued to seek explicit expressions of support from the Germans in the event that such support should become useful after all. On April 2, Kivimäki finally received the assurances he had been striving for in countless conversations with *Auswärtiges Amt* officials. He told Weizsäcker that the advice so frequently given to him and to other Finns by the Germans was interpreted in Finland to mean that Germany would not “leave Finland in the lurch” in the hour of crisis, but the fact that no “binding official confirmation of this interpretation” had ever been given by the Germans disturbed the Finnish government.

⁹ Memorandum by Schnurre, zu St.S.Nr. 179, 21.3.1941, B19/Boo4093-95; relayed by Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 245, 27.3.1941, 6434/Ho59269-70.

¹⁰ Ausschuss zur Klarlegung der Angelegenheit betreffend die Aktiengesellschaft ‘Petsamo Nikkeli O. Y.’: Praktische Gesichtspunkte betreffend die Leitung und die Organisation der vorgesehenen finnisch-sowjetrussischen Aktiengesellschaft. Streng vertraulich.” 6509/Ho73010-14.

“I told the Minister,” wrote Weizsäcker after the interview, “that his worries did not seem quite justified.” And the German State Secretary continued:

The Russian government knows, and this is also known in Helsinki, that we have given Moscow to understand that we do not want a new Finnish-Russian conflict at this time. This plain hint, coupled with the good season which is now beginning, ought surely to serve as sufficient warning to Moscow that it should not now let it come to a break between Russia and Finland.¹

The hint was obviously plain enough even for Kivimäki, who must have realized that Weizsäcker was referring to the opening of a season suitable for military campaigning rather than to the beauty of spring. The German records reveal no further efforts by Kivimäki to obtain guarantees of German support for Finland. The German attack on Yugoslavia and Greece four days later, and only a few hours after the conclusion of a Soviet-Yugoslav treaty of friendship and non-aggression, must have acted as an additional reassurance to the Finns in that it demonstrated Germany's determination not to let the Soviet Union interfere where German interests were involved.

The overwhelming display of German military power in the Balkans in April, coupled with the impunity with which Germany was extending its influence in Rumania, Hungary, and Bulgaria during the late winter and early spring of 1941, effectively ended the Petsamo question as a diplomatic problem. Almost overnight, following the German attack on Yugoslavia and Greece, the Soviet government concentrated all of its attention and energy on a frantic campaign to appease Germany. Rumors of an impending German attack on the Soviet Union were spreading throughout Europe like a prairie fire. In Finland

¹ Memorandum by Weizsäcker, St.S.Nr. 200, 2.4.1941, 260/169931; relayed by Schnurre to Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki, tel. no. 262, 4.4.1941, 6434/H059266.

these rumors were received with “a certain undertone of satisfaction,” said Kivimäki to Weizsäcker.² With a similar undertone of satisfaction, the Finns were also pondering the underlying significance of the rapidly increasing German military interest in their country. It was inescapable that Finnish military leaders should draw some tentative conclusions of a far-reaching nature when they were visited in February by such key military figures as Lieutenant General Hans Georg von Seidel, the Quartermaster General of the German Air Force, and Colonel Erich Buschenhagen, the Chief of Staff of *Armeeoberkommando* 20 in Norway, especially since Buschenhagen cautiously asked whether the Finns would be prepared to protect a German troop concentration in North Finland in the event of war with the Soviet Union “*if ever such a case were once to arise.*”³

Both the Finns and the Germans prepared themselves for the possible resumption of Soviet pressure in the Petsamo question, but none came. The *Auswärtiges Amt* instructed Schulenburg on April 10 to handle any new Soviet initiatives in the matter dilatorily,⁴ and, after checking with the *Auswärtiges Amt*, Witting cabled similar instructions to Hynninen.⁵ Neither envoy found it necessary to make use of these instructions, since the Soviet government never brought the Petsamo question up again. Instead, the Finns were noticing signs of a more friendly

² Memorandum by Weizsäcker, St.S.Nr. 181, 17.3.1941, B19/Boo4088.

³ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 122–26, and General d. Inf. a. D. Erich Buschenhagen, letter to the author, 21.5.1964.

⁴ DOCUMENTS, XII, pp. 507–08. See also Schnurre, “Entwurf einer telegrafischen Instruktion an Moskau,” zu Ha. Pol. 2019/41 g. [incorrectly numbered 2018], prepared for Weizsäcker’s signature and submitted to Ribbentrop on 8.4.1941, 260/169939–41; Schnurre, “Aufzeichnung,” zu Ha. Pol. 2019/41 g., 7.4.1941, 260/169937–38.

⁵ Blücher to *Auswärtiges Amt*, tel. no. 252, 19.4.1941, 6440/Ho67070–71; Weizsäcker to *Deutsche Gesandtschaft Helsinki*, tel. no. 323, 29.4.1941, 6434/Ho59257. Blücher gave Weizsäcker’s telegram to Witting on May 1, according to a marginal note on it.

Soviet attitude. Pavel G. Orlov, the man who had replaced Zotov in Helsinki (although he did not present his credentials to President Risto Ryti until April 24), was doing his best to please the Finns and quickly gained a reputation as a reasonable man to deal with. And as early as mid-March the Finnish government was pleasantly surprised by a Soviet offer to let Finland use the ports of Murmansk, Arkhangelsk, or Vladivostok for its trade with the Western Hemisphere, an offer which provided an alternative to the Petsamo traffic.⁶

On May 5, eleven days after Orlov had finally become officially accredited as the Soviet Minister in Helsinki, the Petsamo question came up at last in an interview which Orlov had with Witting. Whether a dialogue took place is difficult to say, for the Finnish record of the interview⁷ includes only what Witting "gave M. Orlov to understand" and nothing about what Orlov might have said. Earlier, Witting had confided to Blücher that when he got together with Orlov, he intended to proceed "from the point where the negotiations stood at the outset ten months ago,"⁸ and that was exactly what he did. He began by berating Orlov for the endless Soviet demands on Finland, which had created a "psychologically unfavorable effect" in Finland. Then he turned to the Petsamo question. The Finnish government was perfectly willing to continue the negotiations, he said, but it could not retreat from the position it had taken in the mixed commission. He concluded by suggesting that the whole idea of a joint Finnish-Soviet company be abandoned, and that the Soviet Union instead conclude a normal commercial delivery agreement with the Petsamo Nickel Company. That would have "a psychologically beneficial effect at this time."

⁶ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 159, 14.3.1941, 6440/Ho66733-34.

⁷ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 95.

⁸ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 269, 24.4.1941, 6440/Ho67095-96.

A couple of days later, Witting decided to instruct Hynninen to tell the Soviet government that if it desired good relations with Finland, "it might come to an understanding with Finland in the nickel question in the same elegant fashion as Germany did."⁹ The audacity of this instruction brought objections from Hynninen, but Witting insisted that Hynninen present the proposal orally at least. If the Russians then requested it, he could give it to them in writing.¹⁰

Hynninen carried out his instructions on May 10. Vyshinsky listened patiently until the Finnish diplomat had finished his statement. Then he observed mildly that they had reached this point three months ago, and he "considered himself able to say in advance that the reply does not satisfy the USSR government." He would pass it on, however, if Hynninen would give him a written statement of the proposal.¹¹ Hynninen complied at once. The statement embodied the proposal worked out jointly by the Finnish and German foreign ministries as well as the essence of Witting's statements to Orlov.¹²

The Soviet government never replied to this proposal. No reply had really been expected. Confident at last of German support, Witting had made it plain to the Soviet government that there would be no Finnish concessions or compromises. Realizing that Witting's intransigence was a reflection of the German power on which he relied, the Soviet government resigned itself to its diplomatic defeat and wrote off Petsamo as a temporarily lost cause. The matter was not one of the many subjects discussed when Paasikivi paid a farewell courtesy call on Stalin on May 30.¹³

⁹ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 312, 8.5.1941, 6440/Ho67170-71.

¹⁰ Blücher to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 324, 10.5.1941, 6440/Ho67189-90.

¹¹ BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, p. 96.

¹² BLUE-WHITE BOOK II, pp. 96-97.

¹³ PAASIKIVI, pp. 239 and 248-49; Schulenburg to Auswärtiges Amt, tel. no. 1280, 1.6.1941, 260/170000.

In these two articles, the emphasis has been placed on Finnish-German and Finnish-Soviet relations as revealed and affected by the Petsamo question. There were also other factors involved in the diplomacy of that question, but the limitations of space dictated their exclusion in full or in part. For instance, a separate study could be made of the role of the Petsamo area in Germany's military planning and the effects of this military interest on the diplomacy of the question. That element has only been outlined in these articles.

Similarly, for a still better understanding of the importance of the Petsamo question in Finnish foreign policy between March 1940 and June 1941 it would be necessary to delve into the role of England much more fully than has been done here. During the first six months of 1941, the Finns were constantly faced with British demands for the transfer of deep-sea vessels to British time charter, for instance. They also had to walk a tightrope between the British and the Germans on the question of carrying German cargoes in Finnish vessels. And in every instance where the British made demands on the Finns, they threatened to close down the very important trickle of Finnish foreign trade through the port of Liinahamari in the Petsamo area. The Germans operated with the same threat on several occasions. Both were fully capable of making good their threats. By luck and by skill, the Finns succeeded in continuing the Petsamo trade until the eve of the Continuation War, when the British finally put an end to it. Of this element, too, a separate study could be made. The records of the *Auswärtiges Amt* alone provide considerable information on it, enough for a fairly clear understanding of what the Finnish government was up against.

The German diplomatic and military records also make it possible to trace the continued history of the Petsamo question

from June 1941 until Finland's surrender in the late summer of 1944. Beyond that it is difficult to go, and Finland was by then also out of the Petsamo picture. The story of the diplomatic tug of war which took place over the question of Soviet compensation to the Anglo-Canadian interests between the end of the war and 1957 will remain hidden in the archives in Ottawa, London, and Moscow for a long time to come.¹

H. Peter Krosby

¹ See, however, JOHN F. THOMPSON and NORMAN BEASLEY, *For the Years to Come: A Story of International Nickel of Canada* (New York & Toronto 1960), pp. 244-53.