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# Biographical Study of Johannes Virolainen and Transnational Politics of the Cold War : A Finnish Friend and Foe of the Soviet Union

Katajisto, Kati Maaria

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# Biographical Study of Johannes Virolainen and Transnational Politics of the Cold War – A Finnish Friend and Foe of the Soviet Union

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## Abstract

*This article explores how a systematic study of a person's life and career can be revealing of larger political processes, for instance the dynamics between states and political actors during the Cold War period. The biographical method utilised in this article – the study of Finnish long-term politician Johannes Virolainen's archive – enables the discerning of illogical and contradictory features in the behaviour of the Soviet Union. Thus, using this method, phenomena can be observed, which might otherwise be difficult to identify. The article highlights multipolar-multilevel interactions of the Cold War: 1) how the Soviet Union could not ignore medium level political actors from small states, such as Virolainen, and 2) how the balance between Cold War blocs in Europe was truly a conundrum for the Soviet Union, which created interesting scopes of action for political actors.*

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## Introduction

This study focuses on Johannes Virolainen (1914–2000), one of the leading politicians in Finland during the Cold War period. Virolainen was elected to Parliament for the first time in 1945. He was a parliamentarian in 1945–1983 and 1987–1991 and served 15 times as a minister. He was the Chairman of the Centre Party (the former Agrarian Union) in 1965–1980 and a vital partner to President Kekkonen for several decades. This article explores how a biographical case study of an intermediate-level political actor in transnational politics can reveal new insights into the multileveled multipolarity of the Cold War. The study adheres to the latest developments in Cold War studies, which have stressed the multileveled, multipolar, and microlevel dimensions of this intricate and complex era.<sup>1</sup> The biographical approach, combined with

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the study of multileveled-multipolar aspects of transnational political platforms, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), discloses, for instance, the Soviet Union's contradictory aims in the Cold War context.

As Sari Autio-Sarasma and Katalin Miklóssy have pointed out in *Reassessing Cold War Europe*, the East–West division was not a solid Iron Curtain based on confrontation and reciprocal mistrust. Instead, cooperation and multilevel interactions between various states, institutions, and persons were also an important element of the Cold War. A plurality of motives and ambitions led to mutually beneficial collaboration, which often contradicted bloc leaders' interests.<sup>2</sup> In a similar vein, a plurality and even ambiguity of motives and ambitions can be traced in the relations between Virolainen and the Soviets. In this article, the Soviet Union's discrepant attitudes toward Virolainen in national and transnational political arenas are key, especially to understand the multifaceted nature of its foreign policy towards Finland and, more generally, Europe. Virolainen built a long career in the Inter-Parliamentary Union, starting in 1949 and culminating in his presidency during the period 1982–1983. The IPU, founded in 1889, is an international organisation of national parliaments. During the Cold War, it was one of the platforms in which the superpowers and their allies confronted each other and tried to propagate their ideas and solutions to the ongoing political crises and themes. The IPU was potentially an even more far-reaching institution than intergovernmental organisations, such as the United Nations, because it was a parliamentary forum for legislators across the blocs to discuss cooperation and security issues.<sup>3</sup> Its role was, in any case, underrated in Finland as it gave only recommendations, instead of imposing binding resolutions. Still, for skilful politicians like Virolainen, the IPU offered a valuable channel for influence in transnational politics.<sup>4</sup>

Virolainen's long political career enables long-term study, which is pertinent for the present analysis. This study follows the evolution of his political career, especially aspects relating to foreign policy, and the development of this relationship with the Soviet Union. The main departure point of the article is exploring the ambivalent way in which the Soviet Union treated Virolainen. Why did this rising figure of the Agrarian Union/Centre Party, the anticipated successor of President Kekkonen in the field of foreign politics, end up inhabiting the dual role of friend and foe of the Soviet Union in the late 1960s? How can this ambivalence be explained and what does it reveal

about the Soviet Union's politics in the European context and specifically towards Finland? What does it divulge about intermediate-level political actors' means of influencing transnational politics? How does the case of Virolainen reflect the political culture of the Cold War?

This study's biographical method is based on systematic research of the archives of Johannes Virolainen located at the National Archives of Finland. The archives of Virolainen consist of 22 shelf metres of organised papers, which include a variety of documents. These documents – including notebooks, calendars, assorted notes, diaries, letters, official state documents, newspaper clips, photos, manuscripts, and other miscellaneous material – have been filed in 257 boxes according to different themes and periods. The extent and variety of the archival material, although occasionally sporadic, not only allows for a comprehensive picture of Virolainen's political career, but also reveals personal motives and intentions. At the same time, the biographical method reveals the turning points in Finnish relations with the Soviet Union and enables the disclosure of subtle developments, which were not stated publicly during the Cold War, nor even after the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> A central element of Cold War political culture in Finland was to know what one could say aloud, especially in the upper echelons of political life.<sup>6</sup>

As in all Nordic countries, the central aim of the existing literature has been to analyse how 'national policies were shaped in a junction of national priorities and external adaption.'<sup>7</sup> Traditionally, Cold War studies have centred on 'high politics'. In Finland, this has involved the role of the president, due to the strong executive power of the office in terms of foreign policy, and discussions of the concept of 'Finlandization'.<sup>8</sup> The role and scope of intermediate-level political actors in transnational politics remains a relatively unexplored field, although, for example, Bo Lidegaard's renowned biography of the Danish diplomat and long-standing Ambassador to the United States, Henrik Kauffmann, has proved the value of the insights that a biographical approach can bring to Cold War studies.<sup>9</sup>

The use of the biographical method in this study points out three findings, which can be highly useful in future studies of the Cold War era, especially in a situation where archives in Russia are once again unattainable. The biographical method in this article refers to how a consistent study of a person's life and career can illustrate larger political, cultural, and social processes.<sup>10</sup> Firstly, the findings of this study confirm that even an intermediate-level political actor from a small state could have a significant international political

influence, which the Soviet Union could not disregard or ignore, instead reacting to the individual's acts and presence. Consequently, the multipolarity of Cold War politics undoubtedly deserves more research interest in various contexts.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, the biographical method can unfold and clarify the aims of the Soviet Union and how these aims were at times contradictory, for instance towards Finland and the Eastern European countries. In other words, the Soviet Union's unilateral interest towards one country could play out against its general policy interests in Europe. It is reasonable to assume that one can find similar kinds of contradictory elements concerning other countries' political actors and the Soviet Union's interest in a wider foreign policy context, which can reveal new insights into the dynamics of the Cold War era. Finally, the study discloses how deeply rooted the political culture of silence was among Finnish politicians regarding the Soviet Union, even after the Cold War era and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which further research could shed more light on. This is even more the case within a wider European context, in terms of different countries' attitudes towards the Soviet Union and its successor state Russia.

### **Virolainen and Finland's Realistic Foreign Policy Line**

Finland's leading foreign policy figures, J.K. Paasikivi (Prime Minister 1944–1945, President 1945–1956) and Urho Kekkonen (Prime Minister 1950–1953, 1954–1956, President 1956–1982), had adopted a new realistic foreign policy line towards the Soviet Union after the Continuation War (1941–1944). They acknowledged the Soviet Union's security interests in Finland and, by acknowledging these realities, they pursued the safeguarding of Finland's sovereignty.<sup>12</sup> Virolainen approved of this new realistic foreign policy outlined by Paasikivi and Kekkonen. He distinctly discerned the necessity to continue defensive actions in the fields of politics, economics, and culture to preserve Finland's vulnerable sovereignty. However, he was more reserved than Kekkonen regarding the Soviets. Virolainen and Kekkonen were both members of the Agrarian Union (later the Centre Party), and they cooperated closely after Virolainen was elected to Parliament. As a parliamentarian, Virolainen had more leeway than cabinet member Kekkonen in the 1940s, although a tendency toward similar attitudes remained present throughout their political careers.<sup>13</sup>

In 1948, Finland signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA) with the Soviet Union, as the last country in the chain of the Soviet Union's Eastern European neighbours. However, the terms of the pact were exceptionally advantageous for Finland. The President of Finland, J.K. Paasikivi, remarked immediately after the signing of the FCMA that it had been formulated according to the special circumstances in Finland and not based on the Soviet Union's similar agreements with the other Eastern European states – which set Finland apart from the people's democracies. According to Finnish leaders, the FCMA did not discredit the sovereignty and neutrality of Finland; although, over the years that followed, they had to reassure international and domestic audiences that Finland would remain a Nordic democracy, despite the FCMA. The nature of Finland's neutrality thus remained a contested issue, and the Soviet Union's and the United States' stances towards it varied along the junctures of the Cold War.<sup>14</sup>

Virolainen was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs for the first time in 1954. Soon after the appointment, agreements concerning the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) were signed in Paris. These agreements enabled the rearmament of the FRG and its accession into NATO. The Soviet Union reacted by sending a conference invitation to Finland, other European states, and the United States. The official purpose of convening the conference was to negotiate a Pan-European collective security system; obviously, however, the real main objective was to prevent the enforcement of the Paris agreements. In Finland, the Soviet Union's note was taken seriously. Virolainen noticed how nervous President Paasikivi was. Virolainen was suspicious as well. He wondered if the intention was to drag Finland closer to the Eastern bloc – or if it was just a propaganda gesture.<sup>15</sup>

A skilful diplomatic reply saved Finland from participating in the conference, in which only the people's democracies were expected to take part. Moreover, the Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO in 1955. Nonetheless, the Soviet Union did not try to tighten its grip on Finland.<sup>16</sup> Finland was bound by the FCMA treaty concerning a possible military threat from the FRG. In the first article of the treaty, Germany and its prospective allies were mentioned as possible invaders against whom Finland was committed to defend its territorial sovereignty, if necessary, aided by or alongside the Soviet Union, but according to mutual agreement.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the logical presumption would have been the Soviet Union's corresponding pressure on Finland. Instead,



*Image 1: Signing of the restitution contract of Porkkala in Helsinki, 26 January 1956. Minister Johannes Virolainen (left), Prime Minister Urho Kekkonen, Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Soviet Ambassador Viktor Lebedev, Deputy Prime Minister Mihail Pervuhin, and Finnish President J. K. Paasikivi. Photo: U.A. Saarinen. Finnish Heritage Agency.*

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the Soviet Union resorted to the opposite tactics. The Soviet charm offensive, targeted beyond Finland, yielded unprecedented outcomes for the Finns.<sup>18</sup>

The Soviet Union returned the military base of Porkkala to Finland decades before the scheduled termination date of the lease. According to the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947, the Soviet Union would hold the military base in Finland, and the Soviets even had free access to enter Porkkala via the country.<sup>19</sup> Détente and the principle of peaceful coexistence also enabled Finland to join the United Nations and the Nordic Council, despite the Soviets' earlier objections. Virolainen was delighted with this foreign policy success, but he also knew the Soviets' pressure towards Finland would continue. A Soviet representative told Foreign Minister Virolainen on 16 December 1955 that the Soviet Union strived for close collaboration (with Finland) at the United Nations. Virolainen wrote in his diary: 'The Soviet Union's reaction came a

day after the membership decision. There will be problems.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Finland's policy at the United Nations evolved into one of staying out of conflicts between the superpowers.<sup>21</sup>

The Soviet political establishment officially embraced peaceful coexistence, although, in reality, relations were tense.<sup>22</sup> Especially as a cabinet member, Virolainen experienced the Soviets' not always subtle attempts to influence Finnish politicians. When Virolainen was again Foreign Minister in 1957, the First Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union Nikolai Bulganin, and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko visited Finland. Khrushchev did not hesitate to say that the Finns could help the Norwegians choose between war and peace, since NATO was a military organisation. In plain terms, this meant that the Finns should encourage the Norwegians to leave NATO.<sup>23</sup> The heat was also tangible when Virolainen negotiated with Gromyko about the communiqué of the visit. Even though both the Soviets and the Finns emphasised cooperation and friendship, Gromyko tried to undermine Finland's status as a sovereign and neutral country. 'It was a bumpy ride all the time', Virolainen later recalled.<sup>24</sup> Despite these pressures, Virolainen continuously supported the new foreign policy line towards the Soviet Union, because there was no real alternative; conflict between the Soviet Union and Finland was not a solution. Still, Virolainen also tried firmly to defend the sovereign rights of Finland, including the right to freely determine the composition of its government.

In 1958, the Finns' right to decide on members of their cabinet without taking into account Soviet interests was suddenly put to a serious test. The so-called Night Frost Crisis flared up after the parliamentary election of 1958 and the appointment of a majority coalition government in which Virolainen was the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Soviets did not approve of the composition of the government.<sup>25</sup> They claimed that the right-wing Social Democrats and the conservative National Coalition Party would try to change Finland's foreign policy line in a hostile manner vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Moreover, the Finnish People's Democratic League, in which the Communist Party of Finland was a leading force, was not included in the cabinet, despite its electoral victory. As a result, the Soviet Union withdrew its ambassador from Finland and suspended trade negotiations. The Night Frost Crisis was obviously related to the Berlin Crisis of 1958–1959. Khrushchev's interest was to demonstrate to the United States and the Western bloc what he was capable of, if his ultimatum regarding the status of Berlin was not accepted. It

was also worthwhile to remind the stubborn Finns of their position next to a superpower with a nuclear arsenal.<sup>26</sup>

Virolainen had decided to participate in a majority coalition government with the right-wing Social Democrats against the strongly expressed wishes of the Soviet representative in Finland – and against the advice of President Kekkonen. Finland was a semi-presidential democracy in which a multi-party parliamentary mechanism required the president to have the support of the political parties, especially in the process of cabinet formation.<sup>27</sup> Virolainen gave more weight to parliamentary will than he did to the Soviet warnings, which he regarded as interference in the internal matters of Finland. Ambassador Lebedev had informed Virolainen that the Social Democrat Väinö Leskinen was worse than the devil: ‘When God created the earth, the devil was made of leftovers, and Leskinen was made of the devil’s leftovers.’<sup>28</sup> Immediately after the government’s appointment, the Soviet Union started measures of oppression against Finland. The fate of the cabinet was thus sealed when, within a few months, Foreign Minister Virolainen submitted his resignation letter in a tense international situation. Khrushchev’s ultimatum in November 1958 concerning Berlin was the final trigger for Virolainen, as the FCMA treaty would have allowed the Soviet Union to request military consultations. Virolainen did not approve of this interference, but he finally yielded before such harsh realities.<sup>29</sup> The new minority government, which included neither the Social Democrats nor members of the National Coalition Party, was nominated in January 1959. Finally, the Night Frost Crisis ended in the same month as negotiations between Kekkonen and Khrushchev – in which Khrushchev pulled Kekkonen even tighter into the role of the guarantor of Finno-Soviet relations.<sup>30</sup> Virolainen, for his part, understood the difficult geopolitical position of Finland, and therefore supported the realistic foreign policy line even after the Night Frost Crisis.<sup>31</sup>

The Night Frost Crisis became a critical juncture in Finno-Soviet relations. From 1958 onwards, the anticipation and, in fact, the pre-anticipation of Soviet reactions was a common undertaking of the everyday political life of Finland. The fierceness of the Soviet reaction was widely seen as proof of the Soviet Union’s readiness to interfere in Finland’s internal affairs.<sup>32</sup> The Soviet Union had used a veto concerning the composition of the Finnish government. After the crisis, Khrushchev explained to President Kekkonen that the right-wing Social Democrats were unacceptable, and that they should not be nominated to government again. The Soviet leadership sent a clear message, which

Kekkonen passed on to Virolainen. If Virolainen had thought that he could vouch for the right-wing Social Democrats, he had made a big mistake; they could have changed the foreign policy line of the country.<sup>33</sup> However, Virolainen himself was not made a persona non grata by the Soviet political establishment at this point. The real watershed moment between Virolainen and the Soviets took place at the end of the 1960s, and it was related to developments in Eastern Europe.

### **A Turning Point in the Late 1960s – Abrupt Disapproval of Virolainen and the Soviets’ Sphere of Influence**

The Night Frost Crisis was a setback for Virolainen, but his political career proceeded. He was Minister of Agriculture in two consecutive cabinets in 1961–1963. The Soviet Union approved Virolainen’s ministerial role, even his role as Prime Minister (1964–1966), without complaint, although his cabinet included three representatives of the National Coalition Party. However, ten years later, the memories of the Night Frost Government started to haunt Virolainen once again. In May 1968, President Kekkonen wrote in his diary that Vladimir Stepanov had criticised his former party, the Centre Party, for moving towards the political right. Stepanov was a Soviet diplomat and a leading KGB officer in Finland, the Soviet leadership’s direct contact to the President. According to Stepanov, the Centre Party was moving in a direction which would be extremely harmful for the whole country. Stepanov also claimed that the Chairman of the Centre Party, Johannes Virolainen, could not be trusted because of the events of 1958. Accusing Virolainen of involvement in the events ten years after the fact was utterly surprising. Kekkonen’s reaction confirmed this, exclaiming in his diary: ‘this is wrong!’<sup>34</sup>

It was odd that Virolainen was suddenly criticised for his past actions, even though the Soviet Union had previously condoned his acts and accepted his post as Prime Minister. Evidently, domestic policies were not the core of the problem. Stepanov had suggested on the same occasion that the German Democratic Republic should be recognized. Finland had recognized neither of the two Germanies, which was one of the cornerstones of Finnish neutrality. According to Stepanov, the Soviet Union was very concerned about the FRG, which could start a Third World War, even though militarily the Soviet Union was so strong it could not be beaten by anyone.<sup>35</sup>

The Night Frost Crisis of 1958 coincided with the early phases of Khrushchev's policy of brinkmanship, and the crisis in Finland was without a doubt part of Khrushchev's scheme. On 4 October 1957, the Soviet Union launched a satellite, Sputnik, which was portrayed as innocent and peaceful. American analysts, however, realised that the Soviet Union now had the capacity to deploy a multimegaton nuclear charge. Nuclear missiles were the essence of Khrushchev's brinkmanship policy. As Vladislav M. Zubok has stated: 'The Soviet leader wanted to present the Western governments and citizenry with a stark choice: either to accept responsibility for the consequences of a thermonuclear war or to dismantle the anti-Soviet ramparts.'<sup>36</sup> Virolainen was in New York at a meeting of the United Nations when Sputnik was launched. He described the situation to President Kekkonen: 'Here, the impact of the Soviet satellite is as if an atomic bomb had been used.' According to Virolainen, the Soviets' technological advancement was a horrible shock for the Americans.<sup>37</sup> However, the Americans were not willing to yield, as Virolainen noticed during his visit.<sup>38</sup>

Nonetheless, the most dangerous period of the Cold War had been initiated. Khrushchev's nuclear missile gambit did not end until the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. For Khrushchev, the brinkmanship policy ended miserably. He was ousted from his office in 1964 and most Politburo members criticised him for bluffing and gambling over the Suez Crisis, the Berlin Crisis and especially the Cuban Missile Crisis. Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, for his part, embraced détente as he was unwilling and unable to execute domestic reforms. Détente gave the Soviet Union international legitimacy, and it became, according to Zubok, 'a substitute for the missing dynamism of the Soviet experiment'.<sup>39</sup> From the point of view of Virolainen, however, the word 'substitute' was a mild expression. Virolainen spoke to President Kekkonen after his visit to Poland in January 1968: 'Poles speak openly about the deep hatred among the people towards the Russians. The ideal is still a hussar riding a horse with a sword, ready to fight and die against Russia. It will take decades to change attitudes, if ever.'<sup>40</sup> However, it was not in Poland where trouble emerged. The Prague Spring, the political liberalisation of Czechoslovakia, began in January 1968 with the election of the reformist Alexander Dubček as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, notoriously ending in August that same year when armies of the Soviet Union and four other Warsaw Pact countries invaded Czechoslovakia.

Already as Prime Minister, Virolainen had received a secret report about discussions between Prime Minister János Kádár and Aimo Aaltonen in Budapest in June 1964. Aaltonen was the Chairman of the Communist Party of Finland. Hungarian communist leader Kádár gave an overview of the situation to Aaltonen. At first, Kádár discussed the split between the Soviet Union and China, saying that there was no hope of rapprochement. Then Kádár depicted the murky prospects of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which was under Soviet leadership. The Comecon was trembling in Central and Eastern Europe. Romania's detachment from the Comecon had begun with the sale of oil to Italy without a permit and making economic contracts with the United States, as well as with the FRG. Similar economic cooperation was being prepared with France. According to Kádár, Romania had a secret contract with France, and it had already received a 150 million dollar loan from the West. In addition, Romania had not sent its foreign currencies to the Bank of Comecon in Moscow for some time. Aaltonen had asked nervously: 'Where will this lead?' Kádár had replied that Khrushchev had urged all the people's republics toward greater economic independence because the Soviet Union could not at present afford to provide them any assistance.<sup>41</sup>

The Soviet Union's difficulties with the Eastern European people's democracies affected Finland as well. Earlier, the Soviet Union had accepted Finland's description as a neutral country in the official state visit releases, called *communiqués*. However, after the Prague Spring, the Eastern bloc seemed so vulnerable that the word 'neutrality' was banned concerning Finland. The people's democracies yearned for economic and political freedom, and Finland was an aspirational model for them after the violent clashes in Czechoslovakia. Max Jakobson, a foreign policy adviser of President Kekkonen and Finland's Ambassador to the United Nations (1965–1971), later wrote: 'Symptoms of the fear of the Finnish contagion were noticeable at the turn of September-October 1969, when President Kekkonen made an official visit to Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania. His welcome was bland, and the *communiqués* remained totally silent on the neutrality of Finland.'<sup>42</sup>

Evidently, a Soviet representative also told Jakobson face-to-face the following year about the problematic implications of Finnish neutrality in terms of the people's democracies. Kekkonen wrote in his diary in October 1970 that Jakobson had the impression that the neutrality of Finland was difficult for the Soviet Union because of its socialist neighbours, but Jakobson had not received a precise explanation.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, President Kekkonen was forced to

fiercely defend the neutrality of Finland. In 1970, he even threatened to resign unless the neutrality of Finland was mentioned in the renewed FCMA treaty, and the Soviets acquiesced. Kekkonen held the upper hand, for as president he symbolised continuity and stability, not the winds of change that the Soviets abhorred.<sup>44</sup>

The Soviet Union was obliged to seek measures to stabilise its sphere of influence. The Political Consultative Committee of the Warsaw Pact Organization held its meeting in March 1969 in Budapest. On the same occasion, a proclamation from the previous year was republished – a petition for the European states to organise a Pan-European conference.<sup>45</sup> The Ambassador of Hungary in Finland delivered the proclamation to the Finnish Foreign Ministry. In addition, the Ambassador of the Soviet Union in Finland, Andrei Kovalyov, presented it personally to President Kekkonen on 4 April 1969. Kovalyov urged Finland to take a positive stance toward the conference and volunteer to participate in its preparations. According to Kovalyov, the purpose of the conference was to address unresolved issues related to Europe, for the sake of European security and peaceful cooperation. Obviously, President Kekkonen must have realised that the stabilisation of Europe was crucial for the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup>

## **Seeking Balance and Constructive Measures in Transnational Arenas of the Cold War**

After the Night Frost Crisis, Virolainen focused his foreign policy ambitions on the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Virolainen was the chairman of Finland's IPU group from 1962 to 1983. He therefore knew how actively the Soviet Union was trying to find solutions to European problems. During the IPU meeting in Tehran in 1966, the parliamentarians were invited to the embassy of Yugoslavia to discuss the possibility of convening a European conference aiming to improve cooperation between East and West. To that end, Yugoslavia suggested that a Pan-European conference of parliaments could be organised. The Belgian representative opposed the idea and insisted that a conference be organised between the IPU members. The consequence would have been the absence of the German Democratic Republic, as it had not been accepted as a member of the IPU. The Danish representative tried to propose a com-

promise – two separate conferences – but without success. In the end, this proposed conference did not proceed.<sup>47</sup>

At the IPU conference in Peru in September 1968, Virolainen referred in his speech to the conference proposal made in Tehran. The atmosphere of the conference was very tense because of the invasion of Czechoslovakia.<sup>48</sup> It had been extremely precarious already a year before, when an IPU conference planned for Moscow was called off. The Soviet Union had prevented the participation of South Korea. Views towards divided states caused disagreements among IPU members. As a result, an entire conference had failed, for the first time since World War II.<sup>49</sup> The IPU was thus in a severe crisis. Virolainen was elected to the IPU Executive Committee at the meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Council in Geneva in 1967, after the cancellation of the Moscow conference. In 1966, his candidacy had ended in defeat in the final round of voting with the election of the United States' candidate. As a result, the Nordic countries lost the seat they had occupied for years. In the strained circumstances of 1967, Virolainen seemed to be the right person for the Executive Committee. He was a dedicated Centre politician and always willing to find a third way, a compromise between East and West.<sup>50</sup>

Virolainen stated in his speech in Peru in 1968, concerning the condemnation of the Soviet Union, that 'if we mention in the final resolution only one country, we should also, in order to be fair, mention all the countries we see to use violence and force today'. He clearly referred to the actions of the United States in Vietnam. Virolainen voted against the condemnation of the Soviet Union for that reason, but he also stated he would never accept the occupation of Czechoslovakia or any other country. He explained that the Finnish view was that the only way to find real solutions in international disputes and crises was to mediate, bring opposite parties closer to each other, and draft a resolution, which both parties could endorse. Virolainen added: 'In the UN and in other international organisations Finland votes for proposals which are realistic and appeal to all sides. One-sided decisions are no decisions at all.'<sup>51</sup>

His speech in Peru was obviously in line with the views of Max Jakobson, the Finnish Ambassador to the United Nations. On 5 March 1968, Jakobson had written a letter to the Foreign Minister of Finland, Ahti Karjalainen, and Virolainen had received the same letter. Jakobson assessed that Finland's candidacy to the Security Council indicated a qualitative shift in Finland's policy at the United Nations. Discussions with the representatives of the United States and the Soviet Union confirmed, according to Jakobson, that the importance

of the Security Council had increased, and that the Council was taking up its original mission to maintain international peace and security. The superpowers had learned to use the Security Council as a tool for cooperation rather than as a battleground for their disputes. Jakobson pointed out that both the United States and the Soviet Union avoided questions in which their vital interests were in conflict. Instead, they aimed to solve crises and conflicts. He added: 'The list of cases under procedure at the Security Council in the years 1965–1967 is illustrative. It comprises only the so-called Third World questions.' Jakobson considered the increasing tendency to find unanimous resolutions to be another significant feature of Security Council procedures.<sup>52</sup>

Jakobson concluded that the basic interests of Finland concerning substantial questions on the Security Council agenda were similar to those of the United States and the Soviet Union. Both superpowers strived to restrict local conflicts so that global security was not threatened. European security disputes, which were especially sensitive to Finland, were not discussed. 'Therefore, we can presume that we can act in the Security Council in a way which would strengthen our neutrality rather than undermine it.'<sup>53</sup> Actually, the invasion of Prague confirmed Jakobson's analysis, as the United States did not interfere. Another consequence was that the need to defend Finnish neutrality became highly pertinent.

On 29 April 1969, President Kekkonen and Max Jakobson discussed the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union's intentions to organise a European security conference. Based on this discussion, a memorandum was drafted which was not only a response to the Soviets' proposed conference, but, in fact, an independent proposal. Finland offered to host a security conference, pointing out that it had good relations with all the states related to European security. Finland's stance towards the pivotal question of European security, namely the issue of the two German states, was impartial. Finland's initiative to organise a European security conference was published on 5 May 1969.<sup>54</sup>

Virolainen, for his part, had apparently concluded already in the aftermath of the 1967 IPU crisis that Europe needed stability and constructive measures instead of confrontation. He sought solutions for a European *détente* in collaboration with the Secretary General of the IPU, André de Blonay, who had a strong interest in finding constructive initiatives. His organisation's ability to function had been in danger due to the cancellation of the Moscow conference. Secretary General de Blonay visited Finland in November 1967 on the invitation of Virolainen, and during his visit he met President Kekkonen and

Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen. The Inter-Parliamentary Bulletin 1/1968 described his visit with the following opening words: 'Few European nations have had to overcome such grave dangers and fought such hard battles to establish their national identity as Finns, a courageous people with a genuine and deep-rooted democratic spirit.' According to the article, Finland had succeeded in establishing relations of trust with all its neighbouring countries after World War II, due to cautious and balanced politics dictated by its geographical position. Finland, at the crossroads between East and West, could be a suitable mediator and offer a venue for meetings.<sup>55</sup> In short, Finland was promoted as a suitable country for international conferences.

Virolainen also had good contacts with many of the Central and Eastern European agrarian parties. In June 1968, a conference for the European agrarian and centre parties was organised in Helsinki, including the centre parties from Sweden. Participants recommended closer cooperation and larger European conferences. The conference report stated: 'The participants of the conference expressed their concern over European security. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge current realities, which have arisen as a result of World War II. This can succeed only by a general recognition of both Germanies.' Virolainen had removed the previous passage, which he probably saw as too far-reaching from the Finnish point of view. However, the passage is obviously an indication of the Soviet Union's intentions to organise a European security conference to reinforce existing borders – and how the Finns, for their part, tried to find the right balance to advance the idea.<sup>56</sup>

### **Promotion of the CSCE: Virolainen Proves Useful for Soviets at the IPU**

As mentioned earlier, Virolainen repeated the idea of a European conference in September 1968 in Peru. The next year at the IPU conference in New Delhi, Virolainen stated that the Secretary General of the IPU had paid attention to the fact that there had been very few constructive steps after the previous conference. According to him, one of the positive signs had been the revival of the idea of a European security conference, adding that Finland had suggested Helsinki as the venue due to its good relations with all countries.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, Finland was chosen to be the venue of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) between the United States and the Soviet Union, of which

Virolainen informed President Kekkonen on 24 October 1969. Hosting the SALT conference reinforced the image of Finland as a neutral country where a European security conference could be organised.<sup>58</sup>

At the IPU, Virolainen began to promote the official initiative of the security conference to be held in Finland. In New Delhi, Virolainen was elected as Chairman of the Committee on Political Questions, International Security and Disarmament. In the Hague in 1970, Virolainen – as chairman – presented a report of the Committee which suggested that, instead of a security conference of the IPU, an intergovernmental conference could be organised, and the member parliaments of the IPU should openly support the organisation of this conference.<sup>59</sup> Virolainen worked hard at the IPU for a successful outcome to Finland's initiative to organise the conference. A parallel conference of the IPU could have thwarted Finland's efforts. The representative of the Soviet Union at the IPU, the Chairman of the Council of the Union of the Supreme Soviet, A.P. Shitikov was pleased with Virolainen. Shitikov stated in *Izvestia* on 12 October 1970 that the idea of a European security conference had gained wide support among the parliamentarians, and that Virolainen had correctly stated that a security conference was one of the most important goals in securing peace on the continent, and not only in Europe but across the entire globe.<sup>60</sup>

However, Finland's initiative to host the security conference was at risk in 1971 at the IPU. The new Secretary General, Pio-Carlo Terenzio, informed Virolainen that the Preparatory Committee for the European Inter-Parliamentary Meeting had considered that it was opportune to organise an inter-parliamentary conference on European cooperation and security. Finland, however, did not have a representative in the Preparatory Committee, and Belgium had expressed its interest in organising the conference. Terenzio wrote to Virolainen that the Committee had requested to keep the information confidential, but he deemed it necessary to inform him. In fact, Terenzio suggested in his letter to Virolainen that Belgium or some other country could have taken the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) away from Finland.<sup>61</sup>

Virolainen did not remain passive. In March 1971, a Security Policy Working Group was established in the Finnish Parliament on the initiative of the Centre Party, chaired by Virolainen. The purpose of the Working Group was to support Finland's objective to organise the CSCE in Finland. The Security Policy Working Group estimated that the appropriate way to pursue this goal

was to invite European parliamentarians to a security conference in Finland, and the idea was supported by IPU resolutions in autumn 1970 and 1971. As a result, the Security Policy Working Group of the Finnish Parliament sent an inquiry to other parliaments in December 1971 as to whether they would be willing to participate in a Pan-European conference of parliamentarians in Helsinki. The inquiry was signed by Chairman of the Working Group Virolainen and Vice-Chairmen Kalevi Sorsa (Social Democrat) and Olavi Lähteenmäki (National Coalition Party). Sorsa was an influential and well-connected Social Democrat. He had previously worked at UNESCO in Paris. Virolainen and Sorsa undoubtedly acted in close cooperation, as Sorsa's name was an important factor in persuading European Social Democrats to join the conference – and Sorsa and Virolainen's friendship was later a well-known fact in Finland. The conference idea proved to be successful. Soon afterwards, Finland received an invitation to participate in the Preparatory Committee for a European Inter-Parliamentary Meeting. This meant that Finland's goal to organise the CSCE in Finland was back on track at the IPU.<sup>62</sup>

Virolainen spoke for the Pan-European Security Conference of the Parliamentarians at the IPU meeting in Cameroon in spring 1972. The Inter-Parliamentary Council approved Finland's initiative, but reservations were expressed concerning the date.<sup>63</sup> At the IPU conference in Rome in September 1972, the date of the Security Conference of the Parliamentarians was again postponed. Virolainen, Minister of Finance at the time, had to leave Rome early, as he had to hurry to Washington for a meeting of the International Monetary Fund.<sup>64</sup> In Washington, he received a telegram in which a member of the Finnish IPU delegation, Ralf Friberg, disclosed that Secretary General Terenzio was slightly worried about the outcome of the conference, clearly referring to the fate of the Security Conference of the Parliamentarians. Friberg even asked if Virolainen could return to Rome as 'the Soviet Union had specifically asked us for a politically influential representative'.<sup>65</sup>

However, the postponement of the Pan-European Security Conference of the Parliamentarians turned out to be short-lived, as the CSCE of the IPU was organised in Helsinki in 1973.<sup>66</sup> Virolainen succeeded, and he apparently acted as a mediator between representatives A.P. Shitikov of the Soviet Union and E.J. Derwinski of the United States. They were both members of the Preparatory Committee for the European Inter-Parliamentary Meeting to which Finland was not initially invited. Virolainen became friends with both men

and remained in touch with them.<sup>67</sup> Derwinski wrote to Virolainen in October 1975: 'I look forward to our continued association in the IPU.'<sup>68</sup>

Shitikov, for his part, supported Virolainen in 1976 for the presidency of the Inter-Parliamentary Council. Virolainen was not elected, however. Shitikov said afterwards to Virolainen that the Soviets had decided to support Virolainen, and he had spoken of his candidacy to Brezhnev, but Virolainen had adversaries in Finland. Virolainen replied that he had spoken only to President Kekkonen, who had responded positively. According to Virolainen, Shitikov seemed suspicious and asserted that the Soviets had not changed their mind on him.<sup>69</sup> It is possible, however, that President Kekkonen did not back Virolainen, preferring instead to keep Finland's foreign policy tightly in his own hands. But it is also possible that the two-fold implications of the Soviet Union's détente policies were what lay behind Shitikov's words. Virolainen was, indeed, a useful person for the Soviet Union at the IPU, as the successful Helsinki meeting in 1973 proved. Without Virolainen's determined action, a NATO member like Belgium, or some other non-neutral country, could have deprived Finland of the interparliamentary CSCE and thus the intergovernmental CSCE could also have been lost – in which case the Soviet Union could have lost its stake in the CSCE.

The Soviet Union needed the CSCE in order to secure its sphere of influence; the existing borders needed to be recognized in Europe.<sup>70</sup> The interparliamentary CSCE in Helsinki created a good foundation for the intergovernmental CSCE, which took place in 1975 in Helsinki. Both Germanies were already present in Helsinki in 1973, as Virolainen, the host of the conference, especially emphasised. The Soviet Union was without a doubt satisfied with Virolainen, but from the point of view of the Soviet leadership, his aspirations went too far and, therefore, Virolainen's presidency of the IPU could have been a problem. Virolainen's main objective was to defend the susceptible neutrality of Finland; in the same vein, however, he also gave hope and support to the people's democracies for the prospects of peaceful change. Virolainen suggested already at the CSCE of the IPU in 1973 that an interparliamentary follow-up forum should be set up to monitor the results of the intergovernmental CSCE, even though the intergovernmental conference had not even been organised yet. Virolainen also stated that participants had been able to sign an agreement based on a compromise, and he urged all parliamentarians to support it and put it into practice, by all possible means. According to

Virolainen, parliamentarians had a good reason to be satisfied; they had facilitated a détente in Europe.<sup>71</sup>

Virolainen strived for a détente as he apparently thought it would eventually enable a peaceful change in Europe. Therefore, he urged all parliamentarians to monitor the next steps. Virolainen understood that the CSCE would enhance the neutrality of Finland, but he must also have realised that the CSCE could also open a door to a freer world for the people's democracies.<sup>72</sup> He seems to have even made a cautious reference to these prospects in his speech to the Bulgarian Agrarian Party in 1971, in which he pleaded for strong support for the initiative of the CSCE. Virolainen said: 'In a united Europe, peace and security will prevail in all fields, leading to cooperation among all its nations, and this will actively lead us in future towards greater freedom and equality among all nations of the world.'<sup>73</sup> In addition, Virolainen had also insisted at the IPU conference in Paris that the role of parliaments should be reinforced in decision-making.<sup>74</sup> In Bulgaria, he said ambiguously: 'Our voice is so strong that it must be heard, and it must be listened to.'<sup>75</sup>

Initially, the Soviet Union had accepted the idea of Finnish neutrality, apparently expecting that it would be an enticing model for other Nordic countries, especially NATO members Norway and Denmark. Instead, the Eastern European socialist states became interested in the Finnish model of neutrality. Virolainen, for his part, spoke quite openly about Finland's neutrality, even after the Prague Spring. Virolainen stated in his speech at the reception of the Finnish-Bulgarian Society in Helsinki on 8 September 1969 that Bulgaria had actively cultivated a politics of peace and, in line with peaceful coexistence, tried to develop neutral relationships with all its neighbouring countries. He also added: 'Likewise, leaders of Bulgaria have, for example, always shown strong interest in the neutrality politics of Finland, and the foreign policy line of Paasikivi-Kekkonen is well known even among Bulgarian people, as a symbol of good neighbourly policies.'<sup>76</sup> The Soviets were hardly delighted about such speeches. The words Virolainen recited at the anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria in 1974 were also dubious from the point of view of the Soviet Union: 'Liberation from the occupation thirty years ago was a powerful expression of the love of freedom of the Bulgarian people, their will to determine their destiny by themselves.' He noted on the same occasion that socialism and the Soviet Union were praised, but there was no real enthusiasm.<sup>77</sup>

## Soviet Leaders' Continuous Fears of a Virolainen Presidency

Virolainen was a potential successor to President Kekkonen, but for the Soviet leaders he was clearly the wrong person. Why? Virolainen's presidency would have sent a wrong signal to the people's democracies, as Virolainen advocated for a genuine peaceful coexistence and détente – which could have opened a path towards change in Eastern Europe. Therefore, the Soviet Union had to clarify Virolainen's real position in Finland, although he was a useful partner at the IPU. The leading KGB officer in Finland, Vladimir Stepanov, visited President Kekkonen in December 1969 and expressed once again his concern over Virolainen. According to Stepanov, the Soviet Union would never trust him. He added, distinctly, that Virolainen could never become President of Finland.<sup>78</sup>

When the CSCE report was discussed in November 1975, Virolainen said in Parliament that 'especially for small countries like Finland it is essential that besides the fourth article of territorial integrity, also the sixth article of non-intervention in internal affairs is among the generally accepted rules.'<sup>79</sup> According to Virolainen, it was also significant that all participant countries have the right to be neutral, and the role of governments was to supervise 'the execution of the accords by all available means.'<sup>80</sup> He highlighted the importance of spreading information efficiently, and his intention was to advocate a follow-up of the CSCE at the IPU.<sup>81</sup> Vladimir Stepanov, for his part, complained to President Kekkonen that in the CSCE report given to the Parliament there had been too much emphasis on neutrality. Besides, already in the summer, Stepanov had once again stated that they suspected Virolainen's political motives.<sup>82</sup>

Stepanov was clearly irritated that Virolainen emphasised the final act of the CSCE (Helsinki Accords) and its implementation. In February 1976, a CSCE meeting of the agrarian parties was organised in Helsinki. Virolainen hosted the conference, and it was the first large-scale follow-up meeting, in which 23 participant states expressed their support for the Helsinki Accords.<sup>83</sup> Virolainen relentlessly pursued the principles of the Helsinki Accords, which the Soviet Union had ratified. Nonetheless, the Soviet embassy did not approve of his actions. Stepanov communicated to President Kekkonen that they would be prepared to express their doubts about Virolainen prior to the election of the Chairman of the Centre Party. According to Stepanov, Virolainen should not win the seat, because it would mean that he would also

win a majority in the presidential election, which would lead to mistrust and discord between the Soviet Union and Finland. If Virolainen were to become president in 1978, Stepanov would leave his post immediately.<sup>84</sup> These are extremely harsh words, which do not make sense in light of the political situation in Finland but can be explained by the Soviet Union's difficulties with the people's democracies.

In fact, President Kekkonen observed that there were signs of liberalisation efforts in Poland and Hungary, and it had been said that the United States might support these endeavours toward greater autonomy in Eastern Europe.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, even though the CSCE had strengthened the neutrality of Finland, Kekkonen still needed to defend it. In 1978, he even rejected Soviet Defence Minister Dmitri Ustinov's proposal of combined military exercises.<sup>86</sup> The delicate political situation continued and affected the presidential elections of 1982. Kekkonen became seriously ill in 1981, and he had to resign. Virolainen then registered as the presidential candidate for the Centre Party.

## Presidential Elections of 1982

Viktor Vladimirov, the premier KGB officer in Finland, made a telephone call to Virolainen on 8 October 1981. He wanted to meet him, and congratulated him on receiving the Gold Mercury International Award, granted for his contributions to peace and international cooperation.<sup>87</sup> Only Ahti Karjalainen, Virolainen's rival in the election for presidential candidate of the Centre Party, had previously received the award in Finland, just the year before. Karjalainen was a leading figure of the K-line, which was a Centre Party faction inclined to follow the Soviets' 'friendly advice', as contemporaries called it. The award seemed to be a way of putting Virolainen on equal footing with Karjalainen as a presidential candidate in the eyes of the people's democracies. Already in January 1977, Virolainen had written in his notes that the editor-in-chief of the Centre Party's main newspaper (*Suomenmaa*), Seppo Sarlund, had been told that the Bulgarians had contacted the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and demanded 'even-handedness and balance' concerning the Centre Party of Finland.<sup>88</sup> The award was granted to Virolainen by a Bulgarian jury, whereas Karjalainen had received his award from a Soviet jury. In fact, Vladimirov tried to promote Karjalainen as the presidential candidate for the Centre Party, although he insisted to Virolainen that the Soviets would not interfere.<sup>89</sup>

The election of Karjalainen would have signalled to the people's democracies that the hegemony of the Soviet Union would continue as before, whereas Virolainen's candidacy would have been a sign of change and loosening of the Soviet Union's grip. Some supporters of Karjalainen even said it aloud: 'In Poland, a desire has been expressed to attain a similar position as Finland. If an opportunity is now offered to show the 'real position' of Finland, the temptation to do the same would be very strong.'<sup>90</sup> However, the supporters of the Centre Party chose Virolainen as their candidate for president, but the people of Finland elected Mauno Koivisto (Social Democrat) as Kekkonen's successor. In the eyes of the Finnish people, Koivisto symbolised change in comparison to President Kekkonen, who had carefully cultivated a special relationship with Soviet leadership. Koivisto said publicly in 1981, when asked about his relationship with the Soviets, that 'there is not much to boast about it.'<sup>91</sup> Nevertheless, Koivisto seemed to understand the Soviets' distress very well. He stated, concerning the involvement of Finland in international matters: 'Our starting point is that we do not try to push our views where our views are not needed, or where they could cause more confusion. But whenever an issue concerns our vital interests, we have the full right to state our opinion.' Koivisto also further advanced these views during his presidential campaign, as he later wrote in his memoirs.<sup>92</sup> Unlike Kekkonen, he arranged his relations with the Soviets discreetly, behind closed doors.<sup>93</sup>

As for Virolainen, he swore to continue the foreign policy line of Paasikivi-Kekkonen in his presidential campaign, but he had obviously emphasised the CSCE too much with regard to the Soviet Union's leadership over the people's democracies.<sup>94</sup> However, cooperation between Virolainen, Shitikov and Derwinski at the IPU continued even after the Helsinki Accords of 1975. They were all members of the Working Group on European Cooperation and Security, chaired by Virolainen since February 1977.<sup>95</sup> It is clearly an indication that the Soviet Union appreciated Virolainen's efforts at the IPU. He was credible enough to give the people's democracies hope for change, which probably slowed down some more radical demands for reforms, but his election as President of Finland would have been a step too far.

Interestingly, Virolainen's efforts for a détente pleased the Americans too. It is worth mentioning that Derwinski informed Virolainen in November 1982 that he had been appointed by the President to the position of Counsellor of the Department of State. Derwinski served as a special assistant to Secretary of State Georg Schultz. Derwinski wrote to Virolainen: "I look forward to re-

newing our friendship. I hope that we can continue to remain in contact, and that through our friendship, we will be able to work together for the mutual interests of our two countries.<sup>96</sup> Georg Schultz, for his part, was a trusted man of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. Schultz used Finland as a stop-over place on his trips to Moscow and met with President Koivisto several times during the end of the 1980s, when the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States began to improve, and it is likely that Virolainen took on the role of middleman here. Derwinski wrote to Virolainen on 5 October 1987:

Bilateral relations between our two countries are of special interest to me, and I am looking forward to discussing both international and bilateral matters with you at future IPU conferences or on one of my trips to Helsinki. You are one of the real 'pros' of IPU conferences. I always appreciate the opportunity to work with you.<sup>97</sup>

The role of Virolainen at the IPU, and his success there with the Soviets, could also be an indication of an early manifestation of the reformists that surfaced during the era of Mikhail Gorbachev. As early as 1982, Virolainen was elected President of the Inter-Parliamentary Council, with the support of the Soviet Union. At this point even the KGB officer Viktor Vladimirov supported Virolainen, as he told him on 23 April 1982.<sup>98</sup> Even though reformist tendencies emerged properly only a few years later, Virolainen, for his part, supported them early on. Indeed, he had supported reformist tendencies throughout the CSCE process, and, in the end, little by little, reformists seemed to gain the upper hand in the Soviet Union – and Virolainen became *persona grata* even for the KGB officer Vladimirov.

## Conclusion

Virolainen never elucidated his behind-the-scenes operations at the IPU. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and once his own political career had ended, he could have disclosed why the Soviet Union disliked him in domestic politics, although not at the IPU. It would have been easy for him to show that the Soviets had treated him incoherently; shunned him in domestic politics and supported him in another context – as an examination of his vast archive makes clear. He chose not to reveal the Soviets' duplicitous policy towards him although he was critical of their pressure towards Finland in his

memoirs, and therefore the myth of the Night Frost Crisis and its effects on his poor relations to the Soviets prevailed in Finland. One can find various reasons for his silence. Firstly, the Soviets' pressure towards Finnish politicians during the Cold War era, their 'friendly advice' as the Soviets spun it, was a widely known fact in Finland. A detailed account of the Soviets' duplicity in the transnational context would, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, have been seen as an act of 'beating the beaten'.

In spite of past experiences, Finnish politicians tried seeking ways to help the ailing Soviet Union and later Russia. Finns sought to provide material and food aid, especially in the vicinity of the Finnish border.<sup>99</sup> It was in the Finnish interest that Russia would become a market-oriented liberal democracy – as Finns at that time believed to be likely. Rumination over past wrongs would hardly have encouraged such a development. Besides, detailed accounts could have compromised other countries' politicians or at least been a violation of trust, for instance, in the case of Virolainen towards Derwinski and Pio-Carlo Terenzio. In addition, Virolainen may have had even more personal reasons. He was born in Karelia, which the Soviet Union had taken from Finland during World War II. Virolainen had hoped that the Soviets' successor state would correct past wrongs and restore Karelia back to Finland. Therefore, there was no point in irritating the Russians.

Furthermore, if Virolainen had indicated his personal efforts to make sure the CSCE was organised in Finland, he would have seemed like a politician who tried to exaggerate his own role. Virolainen was an experienced politician, and he knew that it would have been easily interpreted as just an operation to undermine President Kekkonen's role in the CSCE. President Kekkonen was a highly controversial figure after the Cold War; indeed, both his opponents and supporters were ardent. Virolainen would not have been a credible advocate of his own cause. Nonetheless, a biographical study of Virolainen's long political career demonstrates that the multileveled, multipolar, and microlevel dimensions were an essential feature of Cold War interactions – leaders like Kekkonen needed such persons as Virolainen on multiple levels. Therefore, one cannot proclaim Virolainen as an outstanding person who saved the CSCE process for Finland. Instead, he and his actions were one tiny piece in a complicated Cold War puzzle. They were, however, necessary to make the whole puzzle work. In other words, it was not just leaders and 'high politics', which ensured outcomes, such as the CSCE.

The Soviet Union could not force its ideas onto parliamentary democracies and, therefore, it had to carefully balance its treatment of political players, of which Virolainen's treatment is a prime example. Regarding Finland, the Soviet Union had to take into consideration not only its bilateral relations, but also the people's democracies and the wider European balance. Although, in reference to Finland's position, the 'Northern Balance' theory has traditionally been more predominant than multifaceted considerations of the European balance.<sup>100</sup> However, the trade-off between the people's democracies' desire for greater freedom and the neutrality of Finland was at least an equally important balancing factor since the end of the 1960s. The Eastern European developments threatened the neutrality of Finland after the Prague Spring, whereby the CSCE process became an essential tool for Finland to defend its neutral status; although, for the Soviets it was a way to stabilise their sphere of influence. The difficulties the Soviets experienced with the people's democracies explain their incongruous attitude towards Virolainen, and why the neutrality of Finland became a problem.

The biographical approach of this study underlines, as Autio-Sarasmo and Miklóssy (2010) have pointed out, that cooperation and multilevel interactions between various persons, institutions, and states were an essential element of the Cold War.<sup>101</sup> Indeed, this study has shown how complexly multifaceted – and even ambiguous – motives and ambitions were behind the mutually beneficial cooperation. Moreover, it shows how transnational and national arenas offered different scopes of collaboration and contest. Virolainen could pursue his own agenda at the IPU by skilfully promoting both the national policy interests of Finland and the interests of the Soviet Union – the latter by taking literally the Soviet Union's peace and security propaganda, which indeed was a challenge to the Janus-faced foreign policy of the Soviet Union.

Johannes Virolainen was a dedicated third-way politician and patriot, who was eager to promote the neutrality of Finland through the CSCE process. At the same time, however, he was able to subtly encourage Eastern European people's democracies towards a freer future. The Soviets obviously noticed Virolainen's aims, which is why they disliked him in domestic politics, but, on the other hand, he was needed by them in the transnational political arena. Virolainen gave credibility to the people's democracies and the United States that supporting the CSCE process would not only be a gain for the Soviets. Therefore, the Soviet Union needed him at the IPU, but the price of this was that Virolainen not only advanced a CSCE that the Soviets desired, but also

advanced the status of Finland as a neutral country and promoted a genuine détente and democratisation of whole Europe, including the people's democracies. Virolainen was significant enough to undermine the Soviets' peace of mind to the extent that they tried well in advance to make sure he would never become President of Finland. Had he been president, it would have been seen as a sign of change, a token of the Soviets' loosening grip on the people's democracies.

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*PhD **Kati Katajisto** works as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki. Her research has dealt with 19th and 20th century political history, political elites, municipal politics, biographies, and political party history.*

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## Endnotes

- 1 Autio-Sarasmo & Miklóssy 2010, 2–3; Immerman & Goedde 2013, 2–5. In addition, Eloranta et al. 2019 have argued that smaller/weaker states have had a crucial role in the history of trade and conflicts. On microlevel interactions, Koivunen 2022 has demonstrated that the instances of the World Festival of Youth and Students were not only rallies controlled by the Kremlin but also transnational platforms in which people found various ways to overcome Cold War constraints, barriers, and restrictions.
- 2 Autio-Sarasmo & Miklóssy 2010, 1–2.
- 3 Katajisto 2017; Zarjevski 1989.
- 4 Katajisto 2017, 359–360.
- 5 Compare with Caine 2010; Lahtinen 2014; Brander 2019. One of the main findings of Brander's dissertation was that the empirical study of Procopé's activities reveals much about the restrictions of Finnish involvement during the early political integration of Western Europe.
- 6 Jensen-Eriksen 2019, 223. Jensen-Eriksen has studied Cold War trade relations and emphasised that it is important to look at low-level interactions instead of high politics and public statements.
- 7 Olesen 2004, 8.
- 8 Olesen 2004, 7–9.
- 9 Lidegaard 1997; Villaume 2004, 22.
- 10 Caine 2019, 119–120. In the case of Virolainen, the consistency of his ideas, values and political behaviour can be put into perspective regarding the Soviets' attitudes towards him in different political circumstances. Especially illogical/incoherent situations are illustrative in his case and reveal the dynamics of transnational politics and the Soviets' foreign policy aims.
- 11 Overviews of previous studies, for example Maier 1991, 4–11; Hanhimäki 1996, 15.
- 12 Compare with Aunesluoma, Petersson & Silva 2007, 185–188.
- 13 Katajisto 2017, 596–597.
- 14 Radio speech of J.K. Paasikivi, 9 April 1948, published in Suomen Sosialidemokraatti, 10 April 1948, N:o 96; Rainio-Niemi 2008, 273–275.
- 15 Notes of Johannes Virolainen 16 and 17 November 1954, The Archives of Johannes Virolainen, box 106, The National Archives of Finland, hereafter NAF; Virolainen 1984, 176–177.
- 16 Compare with Petersson 2012, 223–224.
- 17 Decree of the FCMA Treaty, 17/1948, 1 article. Accessed 9 December 2018. <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/sopimukset/sopsteksti/1948/19480017>. The FCMA Treaty uses the plain term Germany.
- 18 Aunesluoma, Petersson & Silva 2007, 186, 188.
- 19 The Paris Peace Treaty, 20/1947, article 4. Accessed 9 December 2018. <https://www.finlex.fi/fi/sopimukset/sopsteksti/1947/19470020>.
- 20 Diary of Johannes Virolainen, 16 December 1955, The Archives of Johannes Virolainen, box 93, NAF, Helsinki.
- 21 Kallenautio 2007, 28. Compare with Rainio-Niemi 2014, 35.

- 22 Hentilä 2004, 241–242.
- 23 Notes of Johannes Virolainen, 7 June 1957, The Archives of Johannes Virolainen, box 106, NAF, Helsinki; Virolainen 1986, 77–90.
- 24 Virolainen 1986, 80–81.
- 25 Parties and the number of ministers in the government, 29 August 1958–13 January 1959: Social Democratic Party 5, Agrarian Union (later the Centre Party) 5, National Coalition Party 3, Swedish People's Party 1, and People's Party of Finland 1.
- 26 Katajisto 2017, 282–284; Rentola 1997, 488–489; Zubok 2007, 119–122, 150.
- 27 Karvonen 2014, 7, 16. Karvonen also offers a good overview of the Finnish political culture and political system.
- 28 Johannes Virolainen's article, published in Suomen Kuvalehti, 9.10.1992, N:o 41. See also, Johannes Virolainen's letter to Urho Kekkonen, 18 August 1958, and 10 November 1958, The Archives of President Urho Kekkonen.
- 29 Johannes Virolainen's letters to Urho Kekkonen, 18 August 1958, and 10 November 1958, The Archives of President Urho Kekkonen; Virolainen 1982, 230–238.
- 30 Suomi 1992, 208–214.
- 31 Virolainen 1960, 8–12.
- 32 Rainio-Niemi 2014, 90.
- 33 Suomi 1992, 208–214; Katajisto 2017, 270–271.
- 34 Diary of Urho Kekkonen, 8 May 1968, The Diaries of Urho Kekkonen 1963–1968. Virolainen had been the Speaker of the Parliament (1966–1968) after serving as Prime Minister, and at the time of Stepanov's comment, he was again a member of the cabinet, Minister of Education.
- 35 Diary of Urho Kekkonen, 8 May 1968, The Diaries of Urho Kekkonen 1963–1968.
- 36 Zubok 2007, 123–134 (citation p. 134).
- 37 Johannes Virolainen's draft letter to President Urho Kekkonen, 8 October 1957, The Archive of Johannes Virolainen, box 117, NAF, Helsinki.
- 38 Notes of Johannes Virolainen, 14–15 October 1957, The Archive of Johannes Virolainen, box 106, NAF, Helsinki.
- 39 Zubok 2007, 150, 191–193 (citation p. 191).
- 40 Diary of Urho Kekkonen, 27 January 1968, The Diaries of Urho Kekkonen 1963–1968.
- 41 'Lyhyt selostus pääministeri Kádárin ja Aimo Aaltosen keskustelusta Budapestissä kesäkuun puolivälissä 1964' ['Short report of the discussions between Prime Minister Kádár and Aimo Aaltonen in Budapest in mid-June 1964'], Secret, 2 August 1964, The Archive of Johannes Virolainen, box 119, NAF, Helsinki.
- 42 Jakobson 1938, 235–238 (citation p. 238).
- 43 Diary of Urho Kekkonen, 21–22 October 1970, The Diaries of Urho Kekkonen 1969–1974.
- 44 Diary of Urho Kekkonen, 11–13 July 1970, The Diaries of Urho Kekkonen 1969–1974.
- 45 For a thorough summary of the Soviet calls for a European Security Conference, see Fischer 2009, 83–100.
- 46 Reimaa 2008, 25.
- 47 'Eräitä havaintoja Teheranin matkalta' ['Some observations from the Tehran journey'], The Archive of Johannes Virolainen, box 179, NAF, Helsinki
- 48 'Lyhyt selostus Parlamenttien välisen Liiton 56. konferenssista Limassa syyskuussa 1968' ['Short report of the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Lima

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- 91 Koivisto 1995, 15.
- 92 Koivisto 1994, 28–29.
- 93 Ovaska 2017, 234–238. According to Ovaska, Koivisto actually was the Soviets' favourite candidate because Ahti Karjalainen was too Soviet-minded in the eyes of the international community, which would have created complications for the Soviet Union.
- 94 *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, 16 January 1982, N:o 14. Compare with Ovaska 2017, 236–237.
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