

# History

An inquiry into the factors leading to the successful resettlement of the Karelian refugees between 1944-1949.

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## Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on ollut määrittää ja arvioida tärkeimmät tekijät, jotka johtivat maanluovutusten takia evakuoitujen karjalaisten onnistuneeseen jälleenasutukseen toisen maailmansodan jälkeen. Aiheella on maailmanlaajuista merkittävyyttä, sillä järjestelyt, joita tehtiin karjalaisten jälleenasuttamiseksi, ovat minkä tahansa kansainvälisten väestörakenteellisten kriteerioiden mukaan ainutlaatuinen esimerkki vastoin tahtoaan evakuoitujen ihmisten asuttamisesta.

Karjalaisen väestön nopea alueellinen hajauttaminen oli merkittävä askel, jolla ehkäistiin pakolaisleirien perustamisen tarve. On kuitenkin huomioitava, että ellei karjalaisen väestön alueellista hajauttamista olisi seurannut pitkäaikaiset asuttamissuunnitelmat olisi yhteiskunnallisen levottomuuden ehkäiseminen jäänyt väliaikaiseksi voitoksi. Tutkimuksen mukaan yksi tärkeimmistä tekijöistä asuttamisen kestävyuden kannalta oli kuntakohtainen sijoitussuunnitelma. Karjalaiset evakot asutettiin kotikunnittain, mikä auttoi heitä säilyttämään karjalaisen identiteetin, joka oli tiukasti sidoksissa kotikuntien kyläyhteisöihin.

Asutustoiminnan keskeisin laki, maanhankintalaki (1945), polveutui usean sukupolven ajan kertyneestä asutustoiminnan tiedosta ja perinteestä. Se loi vankan perustuksen toisen maailmansodan jälkeiselle asutustoiminnalle, ja teki mahdolliseksi maanhankintalain avoimen tulkinnan. Avoin tulkinta mahdollisti sen, että asutustoiminta pystyttiin hajauttamaan kunnallistasolle. Kunnallistason päätöksenteko puolestaan edesauttoi kaikkien tahojen yhteistyötä.

Asutustoiminnan pääauktoriteetti, maatalousministeriön asutusasiainosasto ylljohtajansa Veikko Vennamon johdolla sai yhdessä hallituksen tehokkaan päätöksenteon turvin asutustoiminassa aikaan nopeita, mutta kuitenkin pitkäaikaisia ratkaisuja, joissa eri tahojen yhteistyö tehtiin mahdolliseksi. Tutkimuksessa arvioitun näytön perusteella eri tekijöiden yhteiseksi nimittäjäksi asuttamisen onnistumisessa nousivat avoin yhteiskunnallinen keskustelu ja paikallishallinnon päätöksenteko.

## Abstract

The aim of this essay is to determine and evaluate the key factors which led to the success of the resettlement of the Finnish Karelians, displaced as a result of the territorial cession made to the USSR following the Second World War. The topic is of global significance for according to any international demographic criteria it illustrates an exceptional example of the procedures taken to resettle involuntarily displaced persons. The swift decentralization of the Karelian evacuees was a significant merit as it prevented the need to erect refugee camps. However, had decentralization not been immediately followed by long-term settlement plans, the triumph of preventing immediate social unrest would have been short lived. According to the findings of the investigation, the Communal Settlement Scheme was one of the most significant factors for the sustainability of resettlement. The Scheme settled evacuees according to their former communes and, thus, ensured the preservation of the Karelian identity, closely linked to the village of their respective commune. The central piece of legislation, the Land Acquisition Act (1945), descended from a legacy of prior knowledge and tradition. It was this which established the solid basis onto which the superstructures of post World War resettlement could be constructed. The solid basis allowed for the vague guidelines to offer sufficient leeway for the resettlement processes to be decentralized to the communal level, furthering communication between the various parties involved. The foremost authority, the Department of Settlement Affairs led by Veikko Vennamo, and the effective decision making of the government created rapid, yet, sustainable solutions which enabled the participation of the various parties involved. The evidence evaluated in this essay suggests that the common denominator for the factors which led to the success of resettlement was open discourse and local level decision making.

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## 1 Introduction

The aim of this investigation is to determine and evaluate the factors leading to the success of the resettlement of the displaced Karelians in Finland following the Second World War. The research question is established on the presupposition that by any international demographic criteria the resettlement of the Karelians was a success. However, to be considerate towards the reader, through the careful treatment of the research question the essay aims to offer substantial evidence to support the presupposition which establishes the very heart of this research topic.

Following Finland's participation in the Second World War on the side of the Axis powers, she was forced to cede territory and pay financial restitutions to the USSR. The cessions of Karelia, Salla, and Petsamo, accounted for roughly 9.4 percent<sup>1</sup> of Finnish territory at the time, causing a tide of nearly half a million displaced persons. Nearly 11 percent<sup>2</sup> of the population were homeless, and unemployed. Although on a global scale the resulting situation was not unique, its sheer scale makes it one of the gravest refugee situations in world history. Indeed, it may be referred to as “*a central event in the grand narrative of Finnish history.*”<sup>3</sup>

The question arises can the displaced Karelians be recognized as refugees? Karen Armstrong claims that Karelians were *evacuees*, as they originated from within national borders. Martti Ahtisaari<sup>4</sup>, however, states in his speech that “*Like several hundred thousand fellow Karelians, we became refugees in our own country.*” Thus, within appropriate context, we may use either term to describe the nature of the displaced persons. However, regardless of the terminology we use to describe the Karelians, the significance of the topic lies in the fact that the displaced Karelians are an example of a global issue: diaspora due to involuntary displacement.

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<sup>1</sup> Vennamo, p. 29

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 29

<sup>3</sup> Armstrong, p. 2

<sup>4</sup> 2008 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate

Some experts place significant emphasis on the role of Veikko Vennamo, and the Department of Settlement Affairs or the ASO, which was the main body responsible for resettlement procedures. Undeniably, strong leadership, and the effective decision making played an important role in the resettlement process. Other organizational features, as well as legislation, primarily the Land Acquisition Act (1945), also played a major role in the resettlement process. Through the discussion and research generated to evaluate the significance of these various factors, ranging from legislation to collective culture, the investigation will attempt to find some common features which link the success of these factors to one another.

## 2. The flexible legislation

### 2.1 Communal settlement

The Land Acquisition Act (1945), drafted by the negotiation board of the ASO, was central to the resettlement process. The Act was based on the knowledge and experience of previous legislation,<sup>5</sup> namely the Rapid Resettlement Act (1940) enacted after the Winter War. The legacy of previous legislation allowed for the Act to be constructed on a bedrock of experience and tradition. It was from this bedrock that the various superstructures of resettlement, such as the Swedish clause, could emerge from. Eeno Pusa, farmer and representative of the Karelian League, disagreed with the need to enact a new Act. In retrospect, Pusa's approach may have saved time, as a large portion of the 1945 Act was a replica of its precedent. However, the process of installing such a radical land reform needed the approval of several parties with differing interests, thus *“it was better to start the legislative process from the beginning.”*<sup>6</sup>

The Act granted land to the agrarian population who had owned land in the ceded territory. The success of the Act is largely due to the Communal Settlement Scheme<sup>7</sup>, which *“took into consideration the*

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<sup>5</sup> The 1775 *Isojako* land redistribution scheme handed left over land to the Swedish Crown. This created the issue of hundreds of thousands of crofters. The 1918 *torpparinvapautus* freed 126 000 crofters. Lex Kallio (1922) redeemed state owned land for settlement purposes, yet, the results were to an extent slow and insufficient. The Settlement Act (1936), implemented in 1938, was a continuum of these earlier reforms. The Rapid Settlement Act (1940) was a refined crisis version of the 1936 Act.

<sup>6</sup> Hietanen. p. 278

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix 1

*environment, language, and religion*”<sup>8</sup> of the ceded communes. Why were factors such as the climate, and environment taken into consideration? According to John Eriksen, in the resettlement of agrarian populations it is important to “*deal with climatic and biological factors as an integral part of project design and implementation. This is particularly true when resettlement occurs in frontier areas on marginal soils.*”<sup>9</sup> Indeed, farmers were often dependent on specific tools and techniques suitable for farming in their respective communes. Settlement into disparate conditions, could have posed significant barriers on the ability of the Karelian farmers to maintain their livelihood.

## 2.2 The Swedish clause

The Swedish clause was the most controversial clause of the Act, and raised heated debate both for and against. The clause ended up restricting the immigration of Finnish speaking Karelians into Swedish speaking regions, situated predominantly on the coast. This was especially unfortunate for the fishermen from the Ladoga Karelia who were accustomed to fishing in sea water conditions. However, the addition of the Swedish clause was at the time perceived to be necessary in terms of both domestic and foreign political goals.

Domestically, the Swedish clause aimed to protect the culture and language of a significant minority, as well as to pursue resettlement according to the aims of the Communal Settlement Scheme. Indeed, it should be noted that the Finnish speaking evacuees “*felt foreign in Swedish areas, for most of the offices and schools were Swedish speaking.*”<sup>10</sup> On a foreign political level, politicians were cautious of the reaction of the Swedish government, were large scale resettlement of Finnish speaking Karelians into Swedish speaking areas to take place. Thus, the addition of the Swedish clause was at the time perceived to ensure viable, long-term resettlement.

## 2.3 Local decision making

Apart from the Swedish clause the Act set vague guidelines, leaving plenty of room for the interpretation of resettlement and integration procedures to local level decision makers. A practical reason for this was that while the Act was being drafted, there were no exact figures for how much land

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<sup>8</sup> Kaunismaa, p. 96

<sup>9</sup> Cernea, p. 109

<sup>10</sup> Kaunismaa, p. 96

was needed. Likewise, the various political groups, associations, and unions strove for an Act which would please the largest amount of the population possible.

On a more theoretical note, scholars agree that in cases of involuntary displacement, *“it is important to have a legal framework in which there is the possibility for the potentially affected to comment during the initial plan.”*<sup>11</sup> Ericksen, likewise, argues that often the key to success in resettlement was due to the decentralization of management *“to the county level, where local government officials had better knowledge of and were more sympathetic towards the people being displaced than officials at higher levels of government.”*<sup>12</sup> The vague guidelines enabled this, as the Act was able to shift decision making to local communes, who were more acquainted with local conditions. As we shall observe in Section 4, the organizational structure of the ASO further supported local level, communal, decision making, as well as the involvement of those ‘potentially affected’.

### 3. Organization of resettlement

Effective organization was a key factor contributing to the success of resettlement.<sup>13</sup> The short term goals, direct evacuation procedures, and the decentralization of evacuees<sup>14</sup> took place relatively swiftly. However, even more importantly the long-term needs of the refugees were taken into consideration before, and during resettlement procedures. Following the land cessions, the demand for arable land clearly exceeded the amount available. The creation of standardized housing, and the thorough investigation of the arable properties of several hundreds of thousands of hectares of land, exemplifies the significance of effective organization for the outcome of resettlement.

#### 3.1 Direct evacuation procedures

Transporting the refugees from Karelia, Petsamo, and Porkkala into Finland, was a logistically arduous task. Trains were widely used for the evacuation of the refugees. Some refugees, however, as well as livestock made the journey by foot. Although the dusty village roads did not provide the ideal means

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<sup>11</sup> Koenig, p. 34

<sup>12</sup> Cernea, p. 106

<sup>13</sup> During our discussion Karen Armstrong enlightened me the importance of minor factors, such as the fact that tickets were written by hand for every single evacuee. As a Finn who has grown up in an overwhelmingly organized and temperate society (in terms of both the nature of people as well as social organization) I had not thought of the significance such seemingly ‘minor’ factors could have on the overall process of resettlement.

<sup>14</sup> Tolvanen (2008)

for evacuation, the evacuation took place rapidly with relatively few casualties. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the bombing of the Elisenvaara and Simola railway stations by the Soviet air force in June 1944 resulted in civilian casualties. Approximately 150 evacuees died in Elisenvaara, while the Simola incident claimed around 100 casualties<sup>15</sup>.

Once the Karelians were evacuated into Finland, the evacuees resided in temporary housing in Western Finland. Vennamo argues that the swift decentralization of evacuees prevented the need to erect large refugee camps. His claim can be supported by statistics as by 1948 ninety-six percent<sup>16</sup> of all Karelians' were considered settled. Vennamo further argues that the political climate of the time reveals the significance of the decentralization of the evacuees on the structure of Finnish Society. The years 1944-48 which followed the Moscow armistice are generally referred to as "*the years of peril*."<sup>17</sup> Pressure on Paasikivi's government, elected on 17 November 1944, was tremendous. Soviet field artillery in Porkkala<sup>18</sup> was within shooting range of Helsinki, the Finnish army had to return to its peace time levels by 15 December 1944, and the Allied Control Commission remained in Finland until the ratification of the Paris Peace Treaty. With \$300,000,000<sup>19</sup> to be paid as war reparations, Finland was in desperate need of stability.

Although Vennamo's personal involvement in solving the refugee issue may have intensified its importance to him, his claim is not irrational. Jacobson states that if the population of the ceded areas remained behind the border, or was left to roam aimlessly within Finland, grave domestic and foreign political issues would have arisen concerning the "*ever-dissatisfied refugees*."<sup>20</sup> Hyvämäki<sup>21</sup> also argues that the terms of the Moscow Armistice "*placed such a heavy and controversial burden upon us, that the internal integrity [of Finland] was placed under tremendous strain*."<sup>22</sup> Jacobson's and Hyvämäki's analysis helps us to understand the importance of decentralization. In the long-run, the 'controversial burden' would have to be addressed more thoroughly, to ensure that the evacuees would be, given the circumstances, as satisfied as possible.

<sup>15</sup> Sanomalehti Ilkka (2008) Note: only approximate figures are noted as there continues to be disagreement over the exact number of casualties. Finnish estimate.

<sup>16</sup> Hietanen, p. 289

<sup>17</sup> Fear of communist takeover

<sup>18</sup> A military base leased to the USSR for a period of 50 years.

<sup>19</sup> As the reparations were later reassigned to be priced according to the 1938 levels, the amount to be paid roughly doubled.

<sup>20</sup> Jacobson, p. 48

<sup>21</sup> 1913-1980. In his book *Vaaran vuodet 1944-48* he gave this period in Finnish history the commonly used name *vaaran vuodet* or the *Years of Peril*.

<sup>22</sup> Hyvämäki, p. 14

### 3.2 Housing and compensation

Although decentralization played a significant role in the preservation of political stability, in the long-run, permanent solutions would have to be made. The answer to this need was the standardization of housing, which meant that the size, measurements, and resources required to build houses were regulated. In 1940 the Agrarian Ministry, the Social Ministry, the KYMRO<sup>23</sup>, and the MTK<sup>24</sup> published propositions for standardized housing. The propositions had building specifications, and material calculations. Since 1941 the rationing of building materials was the responsibility of the KYMRO. The Finnish Association of Architects established a reconstructions office, which attempted to actively engage in the reconstruction process as well as ensure the high quality of the standardized housing. The resulting houses are referred to as “*agrarian functionalism*.”<sup>25</sup>

Land was given in scale to the evacuees’ previous holdings, as well as their immediate needs, such as the number of children. According to Dolores Koenig’s studies, often in cases of the resettlement of involuntarily displaced peoples “*effort (is not made) to tailor the size of landholdings to the labor or capital endowments of households*.”<sup>26</sup> In the case of the resettlement of the Karelians, this was not the case. Indeed, although the size of the new farms, and plots, was smaller than the ones which the displaced persons had lost, close attention was paid to the evacuees’ needs in terms of family and former holdings. An example of this is the preservation of a forest,<sup>27</sup> which ensured households had enough wood for heating purposes, as well as left over lumber which acted as an additional source of income.

How was it possible that there was land available for the resettlement of the agricultural population? One explanation is that after the first evacuation and the enactment of the Rapid Settlement Act (1940), the government had 200 000<sup>28</sup> hectares of expropriated land suitable for settlement purposes. Furthermore, since 1905 The Finnish Peat Cultivation Society<sup>29</sup> had investigated the arable properties of 700 000 hectares of peat land, of which 165 000<sup>30</sup> hectares were found to be arable. The arable land

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<sup>23</sup> *Kulkulaitosten ja yleisten töiden ministerion rakennusasiain osasto*. Translation: the Building Affairs Department of the Transport and Public Works Ministry.

<sup>24</sup> The Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners (MTK).

<sup>25</sup> Kummala, p. 9

<sup>26</sup> Koenig, p. 37

<sup>27</sup> *takametsä*

<sup>28</sup> Hietanen (2007)

<sup>29</sup> *Suoviljelysyhdistys*

<sup>30</sup> Soini (2006)

inventory, which was transferred to the ASO in 1945, continued to research the properties of uncultivated land in Finland. This can be seen as a significant achievement, for often in cases of involuntary resettlement such as in the examples provided by John Eriksen<sup>31</sup> of Brazil and India, investigation into the resources, as well as the effects of agricultural enterprise “*did not take place.*”<sup>32</sup> This thorough research can be seen as a tremendous merit as it is important that “*planners... collect all relevant data on the resource base in the project area*”<sup>33</sup> in order to ensure sustainable resettlement.

#### 4. Organizational structure of the Department of Settlement Affairs (ASO)

The effective structure of the Maatalousministeriön asutusasiainosasto (ASO) or the Department of Settlement Affairs aided in ensuring effective, and successful resettlement. While the ASO acted as the umbrella organization in the resettlement process, it was able to shift sufficient autonomy to individual communes. Furthermore, the main advisory body of the ASO, the Land Commission, included representatives from all political parties. This decreased the chance of parliamentary debate slowing down the decision making processes concerning resettlement procedures.

The ASO worked under the Ministry of Agriculture, and was headed during the years of 1944-1959 by Chief Director and Member of Parliament Veikko Vennamo.<sup>34</sup> Since the ASO took over settlement affairs from the Settlement Council<sup>35</sup> in 1939, it was responsible for purchasing, and expropriating land, as well as the planning, and financing of resettlement during and after the Second World War. The ASO was split into twenty-two central committees. Each committee was headed by a chairperson, appointed by the ASO. An important committee was the land expropriation committee, which was composed of a representative of the landowners, appointed by the communal settlement board, and a representative of the refugees, appointed by the MTK.

The respective communal population boards were in charge of handling the plot and farm applications, and the displaced owners claims for the land they had lost. The structure of the population boards consisted of a chairperson and three other members. The chairperson was appointed by the ASO from the land expropriation committee. Two of the members were appointed by the local commune, with

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<sup>31</sup> Cernea, p. 110

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 109

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 109

<sup>34</sup> 1913-1997

<sup>35</sup> *asutushallitus*

one representing the landowners, and the other the land recipients. The third party was appointed by the governing body of the commune from the ceded area. This structure was effective as it represented all the parties involved in the resettlement process. The fact that one of the members came from the commune of the ceded area, gave way to the effective transfer and integration of the evacuees into their present communes.

In the Land Acquisition Act (1945), the negotiation board was replaced by the Land Commission (1945-1958). The Commission was headed by Vennamo, and was composed of a chairperson and eight other members. The Commission was consulted for all large scale projects and issues. The Commission was composed of both left and right wing political groups, as well as major associations, and unions. According to Vennamo this enabled all of the issues to immediately be placed under “*political scrutiny*.”<sup>36</sup> An example of the significance of the Commission is the work carried out by its sub-commission, the Commission of Urban Centers.<sup>37</sup> The members of the Commission of Urban Centers traveled to negotiate with larger town communes who were opposed to the “*dictatorial powers*”<sup>38</sup> of the ASO. This played a significant role in furthering resettlement in urban areas such as Tampere, and Turku.

Vennamo notes that another merit of the ASO was that the organizational tasks provided a means of employment for some of the evacuees. In the work *Jälleenrakennuksen ihme* P.O. Väisänen describes how he came to work for the ASO: “*My brother heard from Uuno Havu that there was a vacancy in the ASO’s Settlement Affairs Division.*”<sup>39</sup> Van Wicklin emphasizes the importance of employment by providing the example of the India Upper Krishna II and Maharashtra Composite Irrigation projects, which offered employment to the displaced persons, much like the employment provided by the ASO.<sup>40</sup> He also states that: “*The most feasible source of employment is in the activity the project is supporting.*”<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the ASO was able to offer several Karelians, such as Väisänen, a “*steady income flow and a sense of control over their lives,*”<sup>42</sup> thus, supporting the overall resettlement process.

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<sup>36</sup> Vennamo, p. 149

<sup>37</sup> *Pysyvä asutuskeskusten valiokunta*

<sup>38</sup> Vennamo, p.150

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28

<sup>40</sup> Although the nature of the work in the ASO was more of an administrative nature, in comparison to the laborious irrigation projects.

<sup>41</sup> Cernea, p. 243

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 243

## 5. Effective decision making and organization of resettlement

### 5.1 Political atmosphere

A significant merit of Paasikivi's government was that they were able to draft the Land Acquisition Act (1945) during the former regime. The government feared that in order to make effective decisions concerning the resettlement of the displaced persons, action must be taken before the election of the new government 17-18 March 1945.<sup>43</sup> This was a tremendous success, for according to expectation, the 1945 elections ended in a Socialist majority. Vennamo claims that an example of how the Land Acquisition Act of 1945 could have been different, had it been drawn during the new government, is the discussion concerning revolutionary changing of land ownership which took place during the 27 and 28 June 1946. The discussion focused on the interpolation of 37 discontented Members of Parliament, belonging to the Communist Party of Finland (SKP) and the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL). The objective was to make landowners the primary relinquishers, and to protect state owned land on the basis of "*socialistic principles*."<sup>44</sup>

### 5.2 The influence of Veikko Vennamo

Nine of the twenty two committees of the ASO were headed by Vennamo, giving rise to criticism over Vennamo's dictator-like powers. Indeed, it is impossible to view resettlement without considering the powerful leadership of Vennamo, and it's attributions to the gravest refugee crisis in Finnish history. According to Silvo Hietanen, the Land Acquisition Act (1945) could have diverged on an unsuccessful road. The fact that it did not, he attributes to the leadership of Vennamo: "*Vennamo was able to combine the settlement of the displaced persons' and soldiers in a sensible way, which drove the interests of both sides*."<sup>45</sup> Indeed, Vennamo as a native Karelian was motivated to create a sustainable settlement plan in a rapid schedule.

Vennamo claims that in 1941 belief in a "*Greater Finland*"<sup>46</sup> was still persistent among some politicians. As a result, after the re-invasion of Karelia<sup>47</sup> the emphasis of resettlement was on the

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<sup>43</sup> Vennamo, p. 51

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 57

<sup>45</sup> Hietanen (2007)

<sup>46</sup> *Suur-Suomi*. A movement which claimed Finnish territory to extend to all areas inhabited by Finns, or by groups ethnically related to Finns.

settlement of Karelia. The Minister of Agriculture Viljami Kalliokoski, and Veikko Vennamo insisted that resettlement within the 1940 borders<sup>48</sup> would continue. It was due to Vennamo's initiative, and Kalliokoski's draft, that on 6 November 1941 the Legislative Resettlement Committee<sup>49</sup> was created. The Committee functioned until 1943 under its chairperson K.T. Jutila. Without Vennamo's and Kalliokoski's realization of the need to create a committee which would discuss resettlement matters, the ASO would have been in a much more difficult situation once the war ended in 1944.

## 6. The importance of collective culture in a situation of diaspora

With the evacuation of the Karelians, a diasporic situation was created. According to Armstrong's idea that "*culture is found in, and travels through discourse*", discourse between the national, Finnish 'we', and the patriotic, Karelian 'we', was central in the formation of the modern Karelian. A concrete example is the gradual transfer of Ecclesiastical communities. For the Karelians, of whom a majority belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and 54 000 to the Orthodox Church, congregations had given them "*the moral and spiritual support needed by the uprooted population in their plight.*"<sup>50</sup> In her study Armstrong found that memoirs of Karelia involved several references to religion, and that artifacts such as the Kirvu<sup>51</sup> Church bell, were significant "*for those who claim a connection.*"<sup>52</sup> Armstrong argues that the preservation and protection of the image of Karelia through quotidian items walls off and protects Karelia as in memoirs and places it "*outside the realm of both nation states involved.*"<sup>53</sup> One may question the possible consequences had this discourse invoked by artifacts, and culture been blocked.

Communal resettlement recognized "*the need for maintaining functional units of social organization.*"<sup>54</sup> The question arises who, or what is a social network? Koenig places emphasis on the importance of identifying a 'meaningful social group', which is not in all cases defined by physical proximity. The Karelians had a patriotic identity of belonging to the village of their respective communes- interlinking the meaningful social group with physical proximity. The communal

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<sup>47</sup> Operation Barbarossa, June 1941.

<sup>48</sup> Refers to the borders decided upon in the 1940 Peace Treaty of Moscow which was drawn after the end of the Winter War between Finland and the USSR. See **Appendix 2** for a map.

<sup>49</sup> *Asutuslainsäädäntötoimikunta*

<sup>50</sup> Väisänen, p. 17

<sup>51</sup> A commune in Karelia

<sup>52</sup> Armstrong, p.26

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 135

<sup>54</sup> Koenig, p. 38

settlement scheme, thus, ensured the success of resettlement in both theoretical and practical respects as the preservation of the strong collective culture maintained the functional units of Karelian society.

## 7. Conclusion

From an international perspective the displaced Karelian ‘we’ can be compared to that of modern day refugees. Such as Balkans and Somalians in Finland, Karelians were “*a group ‘we’ in special relation to (the) nation state.*”<sup>55</sup> Although the Karelians were Finns evacuated into Finland, the existence of their own patriotic identity, and culture, makes the topic of the investigation a pertinent question in relation to contemporary refugee situations world wide.<sup>56</sup>

Local-level decision making and open discourse are the two characteristics which have surfaced repeatedly throughout the investigation. Based on the findings of contemporary experts on situations of involuntary displacement, local-level decision making is perceived to ensure that the resettlement procedures taken are viable in terms of local conditions. The idea of discourse between all parties involved, contributes to both the sustainability, and pace of resettlement, as prolonged debate, in for example the Parliament, is avoided. With the combination of local-level decision making, and open discourse between the parties involved, local decisions which took into account local conditions were made.

The collective culture of Karelians played an important role, as it facilitated the idea of identifying a meaningful social group, and contributed to the success of the Communal Settlement Scheme. The Communal Settlement Scheme, on the other hand, eased both the psychological, as well as practical aspects of resettlement. Indeed, in the case of Karelians, the scheme was a success. However, from a global perspective, we can not assume that in all cases of displacement the meaningful social group is as easily identifiable as it was in the case of Karelians.

The idea of open discourse was to a large extent advocated by the ASO and Vennamo. Factors related to organization, such as housing, were due to the collaboration of various factions of society, and the ASO. The ASO was a keen advocate of open discourse, and the structure of the ASO permitted

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<sup>55</sup> Armstrong, p. 116

<sup>56</sup> During our discussion, as well as in her book, Armstrong highlighted the spiritual value of Karelia. It has in recent decades become a place of pilgrimage to the evacuees. Thus, we can draw parallels between Karelia and other ‘sacred’ areas resulting from situations of diaspora.

communal decision making. Nevertheless, the open discourse, and communal agencies, can not be perceived as the complete decentralization of decision making. In resettlement matters the ASO usually had the final say, and oversaw all actions made by communal decision making bodies.

The Land Acquisition Act (1945) was a key factor in shifting administration concerning resettlement to communes. The Act, however, should be viewed as a dynamic process, rather than a single piece of legislature. Undeniably, the Act was greatly influenced by the Rapid Settlement Act (1940), the post War conditions, and discourse between various decision makers. However, it was to an extent the heir of a legacy of legislature dating back to the late 1700s.

In Finland the loss of territory, after years of fighting accompanied by the necessary war time torrent of patriotism, was to an extent unexpected. As Vennamo's example of the reemergence of visions of a "Greater Finland" illustrates, the loss of Karelia was not anticipated by all war time politicians. Therefore, in the case of the resettlement of the Karelians the key contributor to the success of resettlement was preparing for the unexpected. The success of preparation lies in the fact that the legislation, and hence, practical measures were continuously molded by present situations. The dynamics of flexible and contemporary legislation acquainted with effective leadership, and the well-structured ASO, provided a foundation on which the displaced persons could begin to reconstruct their lives almost immediately after the War.

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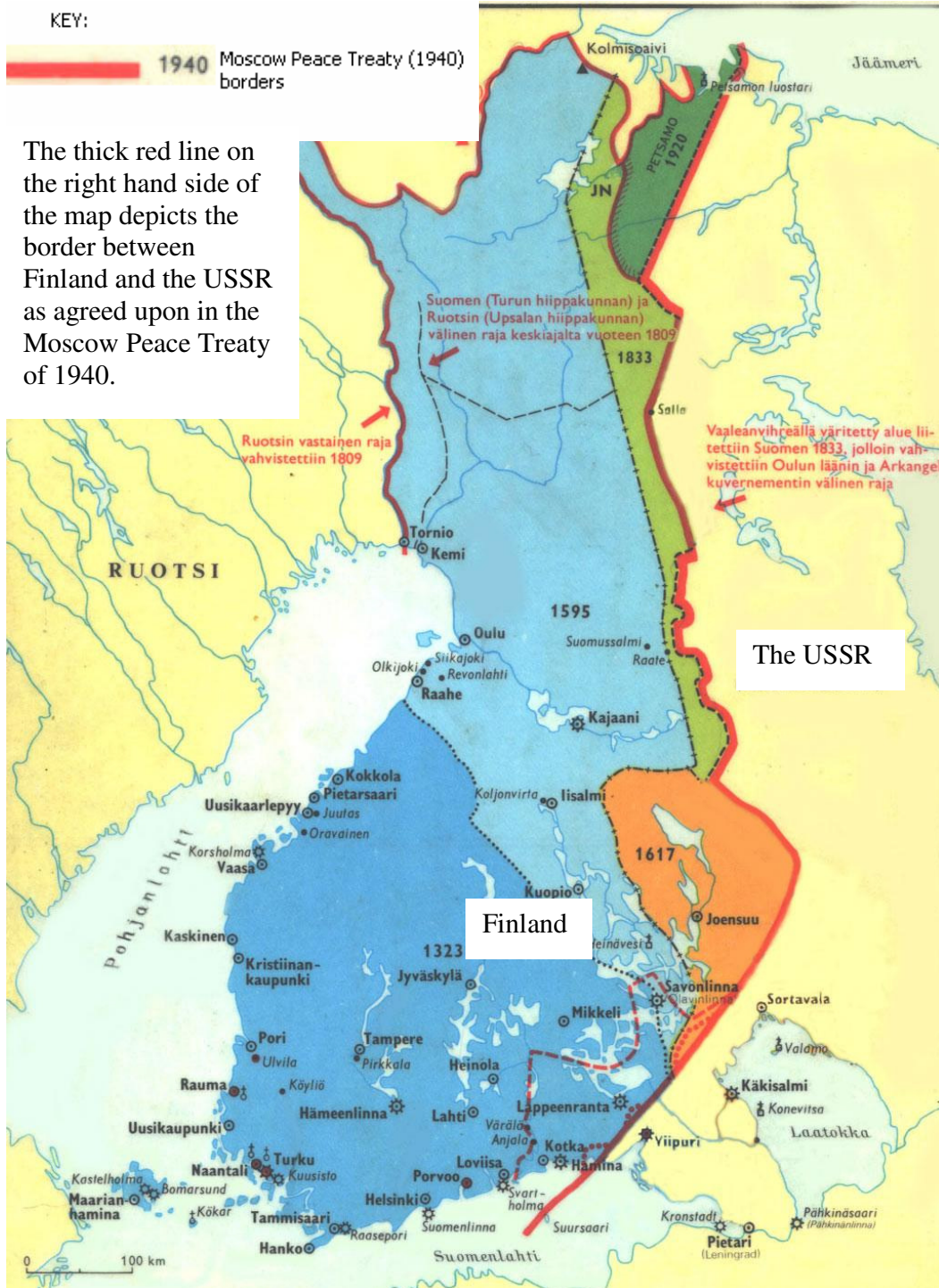
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## Interviews

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Appendix 2



<sup>58</sup> Source: [http://modersmal.skolutveckling.se/finska/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=372&Itemid=188](http://modersmal.skolutveckling.se/finska/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=372&Itemid=188)  
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