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Foreword

“It is difficult to be a part of the process. As a social scientist I would like nothing more than to be able look at the South African situation from the outside: to have the possibility to observe the social dynamics at work in South Africa.” National Party MP, Stoffel van der Merwe, told me this six years ago, while I was visiting the Republic of South Africa. Later he was to become Minister of Education and Training and in 1991 was made responsible for preparing his party for the negotiation process.

As an outsider I have followed the South African situation for nearly a quarter of a century. My interest was first awakened by media coverage of life under apartheid in the 1960s, and then grew as I did research on the historical relations between Finland and South Africa. My master’s thesis (Helsinki University, 1976) dealt with the economic and political relations of Finland and South Africa from the 1920s to the 1970s. I have continued to study the subject because the issue of relations between Finland and South Africa has, if anything, increased in significance.

The directors of Finnish foreign policy have traditionally conducted their work behind the scenes, away from public scrutiny. Pressure groups attempting to influence foreign policy have played little more than a marginal role in foreign policy decisions with one exception: Finland’s policy on South Africa. In this case, moral objections to apartheid by pressure groups and public opinion essentially overrode the normal mechanisms used to formulate foreign policy.

The directors of Finnish foreign policy have stated that it is in the interest of small nations such as Finland to encourage the taking of a moral stand in international politics. Yet, practice has revealed a stubborn reluctance to actually adopt a moral stand on international issues, particularly on the South African question, where the directors of Finnish foreign policy deliberately avoided taking a firm moral position for many years and later refrained from concrete action for as long as possible. It is worth asking whether a more active approach might have yielded better results.

Many people have helped to make this study possible. I would like to express my deepest thanks to the people at the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies. They made my two visits to South Africa possible and allowed me access to their excellent library facilities. Additional support from the Finnish Consultative Council for Information permitted the writing of the initial draft of this study. My employer, the Finnish Broadcasting Company, granted me sabbatical leave to do further research. The Finnish Society for Development Studies has taken the responsibility for distribution of the study in Finland.

I would especially like to thank Jorma Kalela, a docent of political history at Helsinki University, for his criticism and knowledgeable input. I also owe a great debt to Mai Palmberg, my editor at the Scandinavian Institute of African Studies for her purposeful prodding and encouragement that gave me the energy to finish this study. Greg Moore spent many hours stylizing my language.

Helsinki, 20 January 1992

Timo-Erkki Heino

Abbreviations

AK	Suomen asetuskokoelma, Code of Statutes of Finland
SK	Suomen säädöskokoelma, Code of Decerees of Finland
ULA	Ulkopoliittisia lausuntoja ja asiakirjoja, Statements and documents on foreign policy
VP ak	Valtiopäivien asiakirjat, Parliamentary documents
VP pk	Valtiopäivien pöytäkirjat, Parliamentary records
YK	Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien yleiskokous United Nations General Assembly

Political Parties in the Finnish Parliament

Suomen Keskusta—Centre Party, formerly Agrarian Union—conservatively oriented centrist party drawing its support mainly from the rural areas.

Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen puolue—Social Democratic Party—leading labour party

Kansallinen Kokoomus—National Coalition Party—leading conservative party

Vasemmistoliitto—Left-Wing Alliance, formerly Finnish People's Democratic League—an alliance in which communists formerly played a leading role.

Ruotsalainen kansanpuolue, Svenska folkpartiet—Swedish People's Party—centrist party for the Swedish speaking minority in Finland.

Vihreät—Greens—environmentalists.

Suomen Kristillinen Liitto—Christian League—conservative Christians.

Suomen Maaseudun Puolue—Rural Party—populist off-shoot of the Centre Party.

Liberaalinen Kansanpuolue—Liberal Party—liberal party with limited support.

Foreign Policy: Whose Concern?

Before getting into a discussion of the democratization of foreign policy decision-making, we should collect ourselves and think a little about what is at stake. The decision-making process of foreign policy cannot be democratized in such a way that decisions would be made at public rallies.

Keijo Korhonen, Finland's Ambassador to the UN¹

On 1 July 1987 Finland's official sanctions against South Africa went into effect. The Finnish parliament's banning of all trade with the Republic of South Africa by law was exceptional in the context of Finnish foreign policy. In fact, the action represents the only case in which Finland has engaged in unilateral sanctions against another country on a large scale without a mandatory resolution from the United Nations Security Council.

Over two decades of public debate preceded the parliament's action. In 1963 the idea that Finland should impose sanctions against South Africa's apartheid regime was put forward for the first time. In the ensuing years a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties called for diplomatic or economic sanctions against South Africa. Formal sanctions were eventually unanimously adopted by parliament on 16th June 1987, which coincidentally was the 11th anniversary of the Soweto uprising.

Finland lifted its sanctions on 1st July 1991. The decision to lift the trade embargo was made by the government and came into effect by presidential decree.

Finland's sanctions against South Africa were the result of an act passed by parliament, but their lifting was decided by the government. The freeing of trade was swift and handled in such a manner as to avoid debate on the floor of parliament or in other public forums.

These two events highlight the contrast in the approaches of the groups involved in Finland's South Africa policy. On the one hand, NGOs and political parties seek to pressure the directors of foreign policy by bringing the debate into public forums. On the other hand, those implementing foreign policy, such as officials at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, tend to avoid public scrutiny in order to act swiftly and deliberately.

Policy shifts

This study examines the development of Finland's South Africa policy and the factors affecting that policy. The chapters follow the phases of the evolution of that policy, based on the major shifts that occurred in 1966, 1978, 1987, and 1991.

In 1966 the Finnish government concluded that taking a stand on the South African apartheid issue was within the competence of the United Nations. Since then Finland has consistently condemned apartheid.

An intense discussion of Finland's foreign policy occurred in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Many expected the discussion to result in the imposition of sanctions against South Africa. Surprisingly, in 1976 the matter of Finland applying sanctions became even more closely tied to mandatory resolutions of the UN Security Council.

The continued absence of effective action by the UN Security Council eventually prompted the Nordic countries to establish a joint Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa in 1978. The joint programme laid down unilateral Nordic actions which had a relatively minor impact, such as the discouragement of all new investment.

¹ Interview, *Savon Sanomat*, 6 December 1985.

Seven more years passed and the UN Security Council's decision on comprehensive sanctions was still pending. In 1985, therefore, the Nordic countries implemented more far-reaching joint Nordic sanctions against South Africa. This became the direct precursor of Finland introducing an official sanctions policy in 1987.

In 1990 the once-solid joint Nordic stand on sanctions began to crumble. Up to the end of 1991, however, Finland was the only Nordic country to break rank and actually lift sanctions.

The international background

The most important factors shaping Finland's policy on South Africa have been internal developments in South Africa. The Sharpeville shootings in 1960, the Soweto uprising in 1976, and the turmoil which erupted in 1984 all had repercussions that were felt in distant Finland.

The Finnish public monitored developments in Africa, such as the independence process in the early 1960s, as well as the liberation struggles in Zimbabwe (Rhodesia) and the former Portuguese colonies of Mozambique and Angola. The civil rights movement in the United States in the mid-1960s generated further interest in the issue of racial discrimination.

Finnish stands on the South African issue have been geared to the responses of other countries and to international organizations. Whenever the international community reacted to developments in South Africa, Finland followed. The Finnish foreign ministry gave close consideration to UN decisions especially and to the policies of the other Nordic countries.

NGOs have played a crucial role in bringing international opinion into Finland's public discussion on South Africa. All shifts in South Africa policy have been preceded by NGO action. In 1966 there was a boycott by the Finnish Seamen's Union of carriers of alcoholic beverages of South African origin, establishment of a student South Africa Committee, and an election victory for left-wing parties.

The decisions in 1976 and 1978 were preceded by a lively public debate on Finnish foreign policy, which coincided with parliament's exceptional interest in the South African question. Policy changes in the mid-1980s followed the establishment of the "Isolate South Africa Campaign" lobby. In 1985 the Transport Workers' Union staged an effective boycott which brought all Finnish trade with South Africa to a standstill.

The players

The main groups influencing Finnish foreign policy include the president, the foreign minister, public officials within the foreign ministry, the business community, parliament, and the political parties. With regard to the South African issue, NGOs such as the Lutheran Church, trade unions and anti-apartheid pressure groups have also played significant roles.

The Finnish constitution specifies that "The relations of Finland with foreign powers shall be decided by the President". This exceptionally broad power granted to the Finnish president was exercised extensively after the Second World War by President J.K. Paasikivi (Conservative) whose term lasted from 1946 to 1956, and President Urho Kekkonen (Centre) from 1956 to 1981.

Both Paasikivi and Kekkonen expressed firm personal opinions on the powers of the president in determining foreign policy. In his memoirs Paasikivi writes, "Foreign policy is much too difficult and complicated to be decided by 'the man in the street'".¹ Kekkonen stated his view that "Wrong foreign policy will not become right... even if it is supported by the whole nation".²

Mauno Koivisto (Social Democrat), Finland's president since 1981, has sought to keep a lower profile than his predecessors, and has given the impression of granting parliament and the government greater roles in foreign affairs.

¹ Paasikivi, 1958:118.

² Speech, 7 January 1962 in Kekkonen, 1967:222.

With Finnish foreign policy mainly focused on relations with the Soviet Union, other Nordic countries and western Europe, the situation in South Africa has had a relatively insignificant role in the totality of Finnish foreign affairs. Only on very rare occasions have Finland's presidents officially expressed their views on the subject.

Guardian of foreign policy

Nevertheless, compared to its actual substance, the South African question has had a disproportionately large role in Finnish foreign policy. At the beginning of the 1970s the foreign ministry evolved a foreign policy doctrine, a set of guidelines to give consistency to individual positions on foreign policy. One fundamental element of the doctrine was the avoidance of taking moral stances on issues. In the context of the doctrine, the South African question was an exception in that it demanded taking a moral stand. For the foreign ministry seeking to establish a consistent doctrine, it was almost impossible to accept that South Africa policy was *sui generis*.

It has been argued that it is a matter of course that foreign policy is undemocratic and, consequently, the foreign ministry is further beyond the sphere of parliamentary control than other ministries. Goldman summarizes this view: "In the matters of foreign policy it is especially difficult for the voters to control the politicians and for the politicians to control the bureaucracy, and especially easy for the bureaucrats to control policy."¹

In the case of Finland, this argument seems plausible. Given the extent of the president's powers in foreign affairs, the foreign ministry is more accountable to the president than to parliament.²

Paavo Väyrynen, a long-time foreign minister, has described the accountability of the Finnish foreign minister in the following way: "The foreign minister should enjoy the confidence of parliament, but at the same time he must have the absolute confidence of the president."³

The president directs foreign policy, but in minor matters the officials within the foreign ministry may have a significant degree of autonomy. Joel Toivola, a long-time official at the foreign ministry, has described this status. "As guardian of consistent foreign political behaviour, foreign policy decision-makers have the foreign ministry at their disposal."⁴

The decision-making process in the foreign ministry has been described by Klaus Törnudd, both a long-time official at the ministry and a professor of political science: "When a senior official is confronted by a new problem, he usually begins by finding out 'what's been done before'."⁵ Paavo Väyrynen elaborates:

When a situation arises where Finland must define its position and choose a course of action, this instance is compared to earlier analogous cases. The existence of an established principle on which to base the position is also sought.⁶

Strict adherence to the principle of "what's been done before" has, however, also been criticized by Väyrynen when he wrote about the foreign ministry's inability to make innovations:

[Ministry] officials easily become accustomed to reacting to outside challenges and take a defensive position. Creativity, the innovative development of the [foreign policy] doctrine, remains the responsibility of political decision-makers.¹

¹ Goldman, 1986:15–16.

² Cf. Tiihonen, 1990:242–243.

³ Väyrynen, 1989a:319.

⁴ Toivola, 1969:86.

⁵ Törnudd, 1982:85.

⁶ Väyrynen, 1989a:321.

An important aspect in the shaping of Finnish foreign policy is that two Centre Party foreign ministers held positions for many years, even though the period of office of several governments was short-lived and government coalitions varied. The first, Ahti Karjalainen, held his post for nine and a half years between 1961 and 1975, and Paavo Väyrynen (also the current foreign minister) for nine years between 1977 and 1987.

Social Democrats have enjoyed shorter terms of office. Väinö Leskinen was foreign minister for a year-and-a-half between 1970 and 1971, Kalevi Sorsa for a total of three and a half years between 1975 and 1989, and Pertti Paasio for two years from 1989 to 1991.

Centre Party foreign ministers have, quite naturally, adhered strictly to the policy guidelines they helped establish. Social Democratic foreign ministers have at least in words expressed greater sympathy for the views held by NGOs.

The second foreign ministry

Major consideration has been paid to the interests of Finnish exporters in foreign policy decisions. Trade policy can be exercised to increase exports, reduce trade barriers, or enhance Finland's share of the market in a target country. The business community has been interested in state support for its export industries, in the form of both export credits and guarantees, and for administrative services such as commercial secretaries.

The foreign ministry's Department for External Economic Relations seeks to assure that the needs of the business community are taken into account in foreign policy decisions. A 1970s study showed that the level of contact between members of the business community and the foreign ministry were far more close-knit than, for example, between the ministry and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or the media.²

In Finland export trade has long been synonymous with the export of forest products. In the 1920s and 1930s the head office of the forest industry's joint export organization, located a stone's throw from the presidential palace, was only half-jokingly referred to as "the second foreign ministry".

Earlier, the foreign ministry's chief concern in South Africa was the promotion of trade. Furthermore, in the case of South Africa, the Finnish business community had direct access to the foreign ministry. Forest industry representatives working in South Africa were commonly recruited as Finland's honorary consuls.

Political parties

According to the Finnish Constitution the role of parliament in foreign affairs is limited, more so, than in other Nordic countries. However, from the 1970s onwards parliament has notably increased its activity in the sphere of foreign policy.³

After the Second World War the four major parties in Finland have been: the *Finnish People's Democratic League* (since 1990, the Left-Wing Alliance), in which communists play the major role, the *Social Democratic Party*, the *Centre Party* (formerly the Agrarian Union) and the conservative *National Coalition Party*. Support for the far left waned considerably in the 1980s.

The Finnish parliament has normally had a non-socialist majority. The electoral successes of left-wing parties in 1966, however, led to the formation of a "popular front government" composed of Communists, Social Democrats and the Centre Party.

After the collapse of this three-party coalition in 1982, the Social Democrats and the Centre Party formed a "left-centre" government. A major shift occurred in 1987 when a "left-

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 323. Yet in the same study, Väyrynen applies such rigid doctrinal guidelines to Finnish foreign policy that he virtually chokes off any potential for innovation.

² Kalela, 1975:132–136.

³ Ståhlberg, 1987:22–23.

right” coalition government of Social Democrats and Conservatives was formed. And today, after a 25-year interlude, Finland again has a “centre-right” coalition government.

On the South African question, the parliament and political parties have acted as intermediaries between NGOs, the government and the foreign ministry. Initiatives taken by NGOs have often found their way onto the political agenda through youth and students’ organizations of various political parties. The parties have then brought the initiatives into parliamentary discussion and from parliament they have then been implemented as part of foreign policy. Parliament’s decisions have only been considered as recommendations, since the final executive powers rest with the president and the foreign ministry.

In parliament the left-wing parties, especially the Communists, have been active in foreign policy issues in general.¹ Left-wing parties have also been the most active in getting the South African question onto the floor of parliament.

Centre Party MPs, members of Kekkonen’s party and the long-term foreign ministers, have played a distinctly passive role in foreign affairs.² In recent years even the Conservatives have on occasion favoured more radical action on the South African issue than Centre Party MPs. One possible explanation for this passivity is that the Centre Party receives its main electoral support from rural farmowners who, because of their sizable forest holdings, share common economic interests with the export-oriented forest industries.

Non-governmental organizations

Those who direct Finnish foreign policy have been able to do so quite independently of outside scrutiny. In fact, the few pressure groups which ever considered influencing foreign policy have generally failed to achieve anything more than a marginal impact on foreign policy decisions. The only exception is the policy on South Africa. Here, pressure groups and public opinion have exerted an effect on the formation of foreign policy.

On the South African question the major role has been played by three types of NGOs: the Lutheran Church, the trade-union movement and the anti-apartheid pressure groups. Finnish NGOs have tended to follow other Nordic models and the pressure groups have often been based on international models.

Finland’s Lutheran missionaries working in Ovamboland and Namibia have long had first-hand experience of life under apartheid. By the mid-1960s missionary workers were beginning to sympathize with Namibian opposition to the South African regime. The church was, however, reluctant to campaign on a large scale against the South African government, because public campaigns were thought to put missionary activities in Namibia at risk. It was not until the mid-1980s that the church began to campaign against apartheid.³

Since the vast majority of Finns are (at least nominally) Lutheran, the foreign ministry has had to give serious consideration to the church’s critique of Finland’s official South Africa policy. The church’s divergence from official foreign policy was, in fact, the topic of informal discussions between Foreign Minister Väyrynen and the church leaders in the mid-1980s.⁴

The first NGOs in Finland to actually instigate public action against South Africa were trade unions. The Finnish Seamen’s Union and the Transport Workers’ Union were active on the South African question in the early 1960s and, again, in the mid-1980s. The trade unions possessed effective means such as boycotts and blockades to impede trade between Finland and South Africa.

The anti-apartheid groups in Finland have usually been formed as a reaction to incidents in South Africa or because of dissatisfaction with the Finnish government’s handling of the apartheid issue. Once the pressure group has succeeded in reaching its goal, its activities have usually subsided.

¹ Anckar and Ståhlberg, 1987:31–32.

² Cf. Sandén, 1979:11.

³ Kontro, 1979:35–41.

⁴ Cf. Väyrynen, 1988.

The student South Africa Committee was established in 1966 because of dissatisfaction with Finland's behaviour in the UN. In 1971 the Africa Committee was established with the specific mission to get official development aid extended to liberation movements in Southern Africa. The "Isolate South Africa Campaign" was established in 1983 to lobby for the imposition of economic sanctions against South Africa.

Two groups of protagonists

This study distinguishes between two major groups in the dynamics of formulating South Africa policy in Finland. On one hand, there is the foreign ministry, which includes the directors of foreign policy, foreign ministry officials who implement policy, and the representatives of Finland's export industries. On the other hand, there are the NGOs comprising lobby groups, trade unions, the Lutheran Church, and political parties. Generally stated, the objective of the foreign ministry has been to maintain political and economic relations with the Republic of South Africa, while the objective of NGOs has been to break off these relations.

The "power struggle" between these two groups of protagonists is the main theme of this study. Finland's policy on South Africa has developed through the interaction of these groups and culminated in the imposition of trade sanctions in 1987 and their lifting in 1991. The make-up of the coalitions and the intensity of action on the part of the NGOs has varied. The foreign ministry has been more enduring in its course, and in contrast to the critique expressed by Paavo Väyrynen, innovative in its efforts to keep its objectives intact.

The Flag Follows Trade, 1850–1944

That's the country where all the beautiful women come from.

*South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts on Finland*¹

The English saying “trade follows the flag” implies that foreign policy makes way for trade relations. In the case of Finland and South Africa this situation was reversed: the flag followed trade.

In the mid-1850s Finnish timber was exported on an irregular basis to South Africa, where it was used for mine supports and fruit crates. By the 1880s timber exports were regular. At that time Britain was the largest importer of Finnish timber products, so the Finnish trade with South Africa was to a large extent carried on by British agents.

In addition to trade contacts, Lutheran missionary contacts with Finland and Southern Africa were established in the latter half of the nineteenth century. With the help of the Lutheran Church in Germany, Finnish missionaries were sent to work in South West Africa. The first Finnish missionaries arrived in Ovamboland in 1870, a region that straddles the current border of Namibia and Angola.

After Finland's independence in 1917, foreign policy and diplomatic representation concentrated on Europe. Due to factors such as cost limitations, honorary consuls made up a more significant share of the Finnish diplomatic corps in the 1920s and 1930s than today.

With Africa still almost entirely under colonial rule at the time, Finnish diplomatic representation on the African continent was limited. By 1925, however, Finnish honorary consulates were established in five South African cities: Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, and East London.

The duties of the honorary consuls in South Africa involved mainly trade and maritime affairs. Finnish nationals were preferred for the posts, but when they were unavailable, Scandinavian nationals were, somewhat reluctantly, appointed. The Finnish foreign ministry held suspicions that Scandinavians, although honorary consuls of Finland, might promote exports from their home country, rather than Finnish exports.

The Great Depression of the 1930s forced the intensification of cooperation between the foreign ministry and Finnish exporters in the search for new markets. South Africa became one of the targets.

From 1925 to 1939 exports to South Africa averaged 1.45 per cent of the total value of Finnish exports annually.² Although the figure is small, South Africa was the single, largest overseas market for Finnish sawn timber. Further, Finland was the number-one source of imported timber for South Africa, ahead of both Canada and Sweden. Many of the Finnish firms which later acquired prominent positions in South African markets, established their trade relations at this time.

Wool, tannic acids, and fruits were, in turn, the top South African exports to Finland. From 1925 to 1939 the South African average annual share represented a tiny 0.06 per cent of the total value of imports to Finland.³

Honorary consuls were a temporary solution. Active promotion of Finnish exports required a permanent diplomatic presence. As early as 1928 it was proposed that a consular envoy should be posted to Cape Town. Yet it wasn't until 1937 that a consulate in Pretoria, the first permanent Finnish mission in Africa, was actually established.

As the Finns had sympathized with the Afrikaners in the Boer War, the South Africans were sympathetic to Finland's cause during the Winter War with the Soviet Union from 1939 to 1940. In accordance with a resolution of the League of Nations, South Africa sent 25 airplanes and £27,000 in cash as military aid to Finland. In an additional gesture of goodwill, South African wine growers donated 24,000 litres of brandy. The last item never reached its

¹ Quoted in Uola, 1974:42.

² Suomen virallinen tilasto. Ulkomaanaappu [Official Statistics of Finland. Foreign Trade], 1925–1939.

³ *Ibid.*

intended destination, the soldiers of the front line, though it has been remarked, that there was no shortage of brandy at the Finnish embassy in London for many years after the war.

In the latter phase of the Second World War (the Continuation War from 1941 to 1944), Finland fought alongside Germany against the Soviet Union. The dominions of the British Commonwealth, South Africa included, followed Britain and declared war on Finland in December 1941.

From Doctor to Judge, 1945–1966

Every nation needs friends. Everywhere efforts are made to get more of them. And we have good grounds for remembering that South Africa expressed friendship toward Finland in deeds during the hardest years of our recent history. Besides every country needs all the trading partners it has succeeded in acquiring.

*Editorial in Uusi Suomi, Finland's largest conservative newspaper*¹

Relations between Finland and South Africa were quickly restored after the Second World War. In 1949 the first Finnish legation on the African continent was established in Pretoria. In a report to the foreign ministry the first Finnish *chargé d'affaires* described his duties:

I'll do that [promote the selling of Finnish newsprint] with pleasure because the task accords with the mission I, as far as I know, was posted to South Africa to do, namely to advance Finnish exports here!²

After the war, when export possibilities were scarce and badly needed, Finnish paper-exporters started serious marketing efforts in South Africa. Finnish Paper Mills' Association (Finnpap) had a permanent agent with a sales office in Cape Town by 1952.

The honorary consulates, which had been closed during the war, were all reopened by the early 1950s. Thus, it became possible to appoint Finnish citizens, usually Finnpap agents, to these posts. Official relations were strengthened in 1955, when the head of the South African legation to Sweden was accredited to Helsinki.

South Africa's role as a Finnish trading partner remained very limited even after the war. From 1946 to 1966 South Africa's average annual share was 0.74 per cent of Finnish exports and only 0.27 per cent of imports.³

The main export items were forest industry products. Sawn timber gradually lost shares to paper as the main export. At the end of the decade, exports diversified into metal industry products as well.

With the ending of Finnish import restrictions in the mid-1950s, fruit became South Africa's main export item to Finland.

Prior to the 1950s South Africa's apartheid policy did not in any way affect Finland's relations with the country. Finnish diplomatic representatives kept to their main task: the promotion of Finnish exports.

According to Uola the political passivity of the Finnish foreign ministry on the apartheid question was greatly influenced by Finnish *chargés d'affaires*, who in their reports emphasized the importance of the trade relations and recommended a stand of non-interference *vis-à-vis* South Africa's internal affairs.⁴

However, in 1955, when Finland became a member of the United Nations, the foreign ministry could no longer ignore the question of apartheid.

¹ Uusi Suomi, "Etelä-Afrikka ja me" [South Africa and us], 29 September 1963.

² Von Knorringin kirje ulkoministeriölle [von Knorringen to the foreign ministry], 14 November 1950, Foreign Ministry Archives.

³ Suomen virallinen tilasto. Ulkomaankauppa [Official Statistics of Finland. Foreign Trade.], 1946–1966.

⁴ Uola, 1969:121. Based on interviews with *chargés d'affaires* at the time.

The country that came in from the cold

Finland was a rather inexperienced participant in international politics when it took a seat in the UN. After the Second World War the emphasis of Finnish foreign policy had been on relations with the Soviet Union and with Scandinavia. Now the Finnish foreign ministry had to deal with global issues and perspectives.

Not surprisingly, Finland's early role in the UN was very cautious and reserved. Finland strongly emphasized its own policy of neutrality and endeavored to remain outside east-west conflicts. If these objectives could not be achieved otherwise, Finland abstained from taking a stand.

According to this principle—called “Enckell’s corset” after the Finnish Ambassador to the UN, Ralph Enckell—the Finnish delegation seldom addressed the UN, often abstained from voting and took few initiatives of its own. Enckell’s corset bound the Finnish delegation until the mid-1960s. Another fundamental principle of Finnish UN policy, was to strive for common Nordic stands.

In the 1950s UN member states were divided on the question of whether dealing with apartheid was within the competence of the UN. The adherents of the non-interventionist position argued that, according to the UN Charter, apartheid as an internal affair of a member country could not be considered by the UN. Opponents argued that, in accordance with the human rights principles of the UN Charter, the question could be taken into consideration.

By 1955 Sweden, Norway and Denmark had become adherents of the human rights principle. The Finnish stand, somewhat inconsistently in the beginning, was consolidated by 1959. Unlike the other Nordic countries, Finland adhered firmly to the principle of non-intervention in the UN Charter.

Finland's first official statement in the UN on apartheid was made in November 1959. Max Jakobson, who was to later become Finland's ambassador to the UN, stated that the equality of all without regard to race, was deeply rooted in Finnish tradition, law, and social practice. Further, racial discrimination violated the sense of justice of the Finnish people. The Finnish delegation, nevertheless, abstained from voting on the proposed resolution, claiming that it

remained unconvinced by the argument that Article 2 Paragraph 7 of the Charter [i.e. the principle of non-intervention] need not apply in this case. We have adhered to a strict interpretation of this article in other matters... and we do not feel that we could invoke or ignore it at will.¹

Jakobson emphasized that the solution to apartheid should be advanced by negotiations and conciliation. He criticized the UN majority for pursuing a course that has, instead of leading to negotiations, cut off contact with the one agency having the power of alleviating apartheid: the South African government.

The resolution in question, 1375 (XIV), was adopted by 62 votes in favour (including the other Nordic countries and the United States), 3 against (France, Portugal, United Kingdom), and 7 abstentions (Finland, Belgium, Canada, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands).

Jakobson also explained the Finnish position in more general terms: “Our task here is to seek solutions by negotiation and conciliation, rather than pass judgments which are not likely to be enforced.”²

The Finnish stand on the role of the UN and on Finland's role in the organization was further elaborated by President Kekkonen in his address to the General Assembly in 1961:

We consider that it is our task here to narrow differences, to seek constructive solutions, rather than to sharpen or sustain existing conflicts or create new ones. Rather than as judges, we see ourselves here as physicians; it is not for us to pass judgement nor to condemn, it is rather to diagnose and to try to cure.³

¹ ULA, 1959:116.

² *Ibid.*, p. 117.

³ *Ibid.*, 1961:154.

President Kekkonen, in the aftermath of a strong reprimand by the Soviet Union that same year (i.e. the “Note Crisis”), explained to his Finnish audience about the “realism” of Finnish foreign policy. This meant the avoidance of taking a stand on moral grounds:

[President] Paasikivi stressed the avoidance of posturing and positions, which have nothing but a demonstrative significance, but which may harm our country. If we look around us in the world, we can see in every quarter things which ought to be protested against in the name of humanity. But we do not do it.¹

Finland’s policy of non-intervention on the South African question was publicly justified by the principles of the UN Charter and the principle of avoiding taking a moral stand. The most important explanation, however, was Finland’s special relations with the Soviet Union. According to this argument, if Finland were to take a moral stand against a given western country, Finland would sooner or later be called on to take a moral stand against the Soviet Union. This was seen to be contrary to the country’s most vital national security interests. Therefore: no moral stand was taken against any country.

In his memoirs Max Jakobson put this rather explicitly, when he wrote:

When, for reasons of political realism, we did not want to pass moral judgments on actions taken by the governments near us, we avoided them in the name of consistency even when the scene of the crime was far away, for instance in South Africa... The moralizing politics of protest are not a means to influence international relations, they are foreign political self-indulgence. We cannot strive to bring the world closer to our own values without sooner or later colliding with the fundamental interests of our eastern policy. A cynic would say that, if a need to better the world occurs, it is better for a country to choose the objects as far as possible from our borders. In this way, however, our foreign policy would be Janus-faced: the moralist would face the west, the realist the east. The consequence would be a crumbling of credibility—not only in the eyes of the outside world, but also in the eyes of our own people.²

At the time, the concept of a foreign policy free of moral stands was accepted in Finland. Serious criticism of the concept began to be expressed only in the late 1960s.

While the Finnish foreign ministry clarified its position on the South African question in 1959, the political situation in South Africa became more volatile. On 21 March 1960, four months after Max Jakobson’s address to the UN, South African police killed 69 and wounded 180 blacks at Sharpeville.

In the shadow of Sharpeville

The Sharpeville shootings shocked the world and temporarily changed voting patterns in the UN. The 1961 resolutions condemning the South African government’s apartheid policy were adopted almost unanimously by the General Assembly. Even the United Kingdom abandoned its non-interventionist stand for the human rights principle.

Both Finland and Sweden voted for the resolutions, although they had reservations about certain provisions. The change in Finland’s position was, however, affected more by the voting behaviour of the other UN member states than by the Sharpeville incident itself. Osmo Apunen, a researcher of international politics, described the attitude at the Finnish foreign ministry as follows:

The Finnish delegation was not very eager to back even this nearly unanimously adopted resolution—one could even say that the delegation impeded matters as much as was possible in that situation.³

¹ Speech on 5 November 1961. Kekkonen, 1967:166.

² Jakobson, 1983:58–59.

³ Apunen, 1965:139.

In the aftermath of Sharpeville many countries curtailed, albeit temporarily, their economic relations with South Africa. Compared to 1960 there was also a small decrease in the Finnish exports to South Africa in 1961 and 1962. Simultaneously, however, other factors were actually strengthening the economic relations between the two countries.

For example, machinery and equipment used by South Africa's growing forest product industries began to be imported from Finland on a larger scale. Further, the marketing efforts in South Africa of Finnish forest products began to yield results. South Africa's average annual share of Finnmap's total magazine paper exports rose to over seven per cent in the 1960s, compared to less than one per cent in the 1950s. Finnmap's marketing company in South Africa was reorganized in 1964 and renamed Finn-Mills (Pty) Ltd.

The first, and so far only, Finnish manufacturing facility in South Africa became operational in 1962. Vaisala South Africa (Pty.) Ltd. was a subsidiary of the Finnish meteorological instrumentation company, Vaisala Oy. Vaisala's decision to initiate radiosonde production in South Africa was due in part to the rapidly expanding demand for sondes by the South African Weather Bureau. Production at the Vaisala facility reached about 10,000 sondes per annum in the late 1960s, although the facility was always relatively small, employing about ten employees near Alexandra township in Johannesburg.¹

Officially, little significance was given to the Vaisala subsidiary. For example, in 1965 when the UN Secretary General requested information on member states' economic relations with South Africa, the Finnish foreign ministry replied, "There is no information available on private investments in South Africa".²

The foreign ministry, of course, had been informed about Vaisala's investment, and the honorary consul in Johannesburg had enthusiastically reported on the opening of the radiosonde facility.³ Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen also stated in parliament in 1980 that "according to the information available to me, Finland never has had manufacturing investments in South Africa."⁴

In 1963, in the aftermath of the Sharpeville shootings, the UN Security Council adopted Resolutions 181 and 182. The resolutions called upon member states to cease the sale of arms and ammunition to South Africa. The Finnish foreign ministry answered the UN Secretary General's letter on the action taken in the context of these resolutions: "the government of Finland, which has not permitted exports of arms and military equipment to South Africa, has no intention to allow such exports hereafter".⁵

By the late 1950s South Africa had become a substantial export market for civilian weapons and ammunition from Finland. These exports continued after the Security Council's resolutions. After the matter was taken up in parliament by MPs of the Swedish People's Party, however, the government, to avoid unfounded suspicion, in November 1963 took measures to completely stop the export of all types of weapons and ammunition to South Africa.⁶

A few years later Finnish companies recommenced the export civilian weapons to Southern Africa, this time to importers in Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, which form a common customs union with South Africa. Since there was sufficient reason to assume that the weapons actually ended up in South Africa, this export also was ended, although not before the matter was once again put before parliament.¹

¹ Janatuinen, 1986:48.

² Report of the Expert Committee Established in Pursuance of Security Council Resolution/191 (1964), p.61.

³ Johannesburgin konsulinviraston toimintakertomus [Annual report of the consulate in Johannesburg] 1962, Foreign Ministry Archives.

⁴ VP pk, 1980:2204.

⁵ Report by the Secretary-General in Pursuance of the Resolution Adopted by the Security Council, 7 August 1963:15.

⁶ VP pk, 1963:2564–67. Written question by Carl Olof Tallgren, et. al.

Sanctions: an end, not a means

In the UN, Finnish support for the 1961 resolution condemning apartheid represented only a temporary policy shift. It did not affect Finland's basic position on the South African question.

In 1961 the African states had, in vain, tried to include a call for diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa in a UN resolution. In 1962 they succeeded, but at the cost of unanimity.

Resolution 1761 (XVII) of the UN General Assembly is the first UN call for sanctions against South Africa. The resolution was carried with 67 voting in favour, 16 against (western countries), and 23 abstentions (including all the Nordic countries).

The Finnish position held that the problem of apartheid should be settled constructively in cooperation with the South African government. Moreover, the Finnish delegation emphasized that, according to the UN Charter, the imposition of sanctions is within the competence of the Security Council, not that of the General Assembly.

After 1962 the Nordic countries were united in their view that the sanctions policy adopted by the UN majority was counterproductive and politically unrealistic *vis-à-vis* both the South African government and western countries, South Africa's main trading partners.

The Nordic view was expressed by Finland's Ambassador to the UN, Max Jakobson, in his report to the foreign ministry in Helsinki:

African representatives are not interested in the arguments of experts that economic sanctions would remain partial and inadequate, and therefore ineffective. To them sanctions are not a means to achieve a certain objective, the ending of apartheid policy, but an end in itself, a political objective to strive for irrespective of whether the sanctions affect the policies in South Africa or not.²

At a meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers in 1963 constructive approaches to the South African question were sought. One of these was realized in December 1963 when the UN Security Council established an international expert group, headed by the Swedish social researcher, Alva Myrdal, to examine new solutions to the problem.

Given the hard-line approaches of South Africa's Hendrik Verwoerd and John Vorster in the 1960s, the constructive Nordic proposals proved to be just as futile as the sanctions advocated by the UN majority, which were not to be put into practice for another two decades.

Following their 1963 meeting, the Nordic foreign ministers were invited by the South African government to visit the country. The invitation was seen as a tactical manoeuvre and declined.

The Finnish press expressed a mixed reaction to the foreign ministers refusal to accept the invitation. The newspapers *Maakansa* (Centre) and *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Swedish People's Party) backed the refusal, while *Helsingin Sanomat* (independent) and *Uusi Suomi* (Conservative) saw the refusal as a deliberate snub. A sharply-worded editorial in the *Uusi Suomi* claimed:

By refusing the invitation... the foreign minister has offended... a friendly government. But every nation needs friends... Our trade with South Africa is rather brisk and it is an important buyer country, whose goodwill we cannot afford to squander.³

In 1963, Finnish NGO activity on the South African question awakened for the first time. In October 1963 the Federation of the Transport Workers' Unions (Kuljetusalan Ammatiliittojen Federationi) and its major member union, the Finnish Seamen's Union (Merimies-Unioni), headed by the legendary trade union leader, Niilo Wälläri, started a blockade of South African ships and goods in Finnish harbours. The boycott was inspired by initiatives of the international trade union-movement and the National Union of Finnish Students (Suomen ylioppilaskuntien liitto). Niilo Wälläri justified the boycott as follows:

Although Finnish exports and imports with South Africa constitute only a fraction of South Africa's foreign trade and the stopping of the Finnish trade cannot have a decisive

¹ VP ak, 1971:V. Written question No. 31 by Terho Pursianen (People's Democratic League) *et al.*

² Raportti YK:sta [Report from the UN], 11 January 1966. Quoted in Jakobson, 1983:62.

³ *Uusi Suomi*, 29 September 1963. "Etelä-Afrikka ja me" [South Africa and Us].

effect, the boycott has a great moral impact. Even one effective boycott action shows our attitude to the oppressive rule in South Africa and reminds the local slave-masters that boycott measures taken on larger scale can disrupt the economic life of the entire country.¹

However, the blockade was called off practically before it started. Only one ship, the Swedish-registered m/s *Vingaren* was actually boycotted. The boycott decision was reversed when the Department for External Economic Relations of the foreign ministry and the Finnish Foreign Trade Association drew attention to the difficulties the boycott would bring for the export industry and its workers. According to Wälläri, however, the boycott had been a warning to importers to reduce imports from South Africa.

In parliament interest in the South African question was also gradually aroused. In a written question to the government in 1965, 23 Social Democratic MPs remarked on the openly pro-apartheid attitudes of the Finnish paper industry's agents in South Africa. The situation was aggravated by the fact that several agents were also acting as Finland's honorary consuls. In his reply Foreign Minister Karjalainen denied the accusations. For good measure, however, he added that a directive had been issued to agents acting as honorary consuls to conform to official foreign policy in all their future conduct.²

At the UN General Assembly the South African question was placed on the agenda in 1965 after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) by Ian Smith's minority regime in Southern Rhodesia. In Resolution 2054 A (XX) the Security Council's attention was called to the fact that a threat to international peace and security existed in South Africa and that comprehensive economic sanctions were the only means to achieve a peaceful solution.

The resolution, considered by many as the watershed action leading to wider consensus in the UN on measures to be taken on the South African question, was adopted with 80 in favour (including Sweden and Denmark), 2 against, and 16 abstentions (western countries, Finland, Norway, Iceland). Finland's reason for abstaining was that the determination of a threat to international peace and security, as well as sanctions, were only within the competence of the Security Council, not the General Assembly.

In this case, the abstention received strong criticism back home. The newspaper *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, an organ of the Social Democrats, who were in opposition at the time, reacted with an editorial entitled "White Finland's Line" which asserted:

These statements, no matter how beautifully and formally correctly they are worded, put us in a rather awkward position in the eyes of Nordic countries and the enlightened opinion of the whole world. To them we are at the moment part of the reactionary front. Little white Finland is now courting South Africa's favour in order to save its commercial interests and business relations with the white minority rulers of that country. In our view this constitutes a great shame, but that shame rests only with the bourgeoisie of our country and the infamous government.³

Boycotting "Lumumba"

The criticism was followed by the first serious—and successful—attempt by Finnish NGOs to influence Finland's South Africa policy. In January 1966 the boycott of South African goods was reactivated by Niilo Wälläri and the Federation of Transport Workers' Unions. The boycott was directed specifically at alcoholic beverages of South African origin. The boycott forced Finland's state-owned alcohol monopoly, Alko, to cancel its orders from South Africa. The average citizen noticed the effects of the boycott by the disappearance of the popular South African Kap Brandy, known as "Lumumba" in street jargon, from the assortment available at Alko's liquor shops.

¹ *Merimies*, 1963/10.

² VP ak, 1965. Written question No. 67 by Lars Lindeman, *et al.*

³ "Valkoisen Suomen linja", *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 17 December 1965.

To direct the boycott against a state-owned enterprise was an effort to exert direct influence on the government's South Africa policy. In a public letter to the government, the trade unions demanded that Finland join the overwhelming UN majority calling for sanctions against South Africa. It went on to request that state agencies and state-owned companies refrain from South African imports.¹

As the anti-apartheid movement gained momentum, the trade union boycott committee, established on Wälläri's initiative in 1963, was extended to include all blue-collar trade unions. Following international models, the South Africa Committee (Etelä-Afrikka toimikunta) was established in 1966. The committee was supported mainly by student organizations, but cooperated with the Lutheran Church and trade unions as well. The student organizations of all the major political parties participated in the Committee at a time when the political parties themselves were deeply divided as to what stand should be taken on the South African issue.

Left-wing victory

In November 1966, about a month before the South African question was debated at the UN General Assembly, the South Africa Committee organized an "Anti-apartheid Week". The objective of the week was to inform the public about racial discrimination in Southern Africa in order to get Finland and the Finns to oppose apartheid.²

The most important factor to influence Finland's official position on the South African question was the election victory of the left-wing parties in 1966, which resulted in the formation of a "popular front" government of the Left and Centre parties. The new Social Democrat Prime Minister, Rafael Paasio, stated in his UN Day speech:

The alarming developments in South Africa have publicly been called to our attention in recent months in a way which shows that citizen interest has increased. A kind of "international awakening" has clearly taken place, especially among Finnish youth.³

Resolution 2202 (XXI) was adopted in the UN General Assembly in December 1966 by a vote of 84 in favour, 2 against, and 13 abstentions. This time all the Nordic countries, including Finland, voted for the resolution. As on earlier occasions, the Security Council's attention was drawn to the threat to international peace and security constituted by the South Africa situation and it was maintained that comprehensive and mandatory economic sanctions were the only means to achieve a peaceful solution. Moreover, member states were appealed to discourage the establishment of closer economic relations with South Africa and to contribute to humanitarian programmes for victims of apartheid.

Arguments for a change in the Finnish position were based on the aggravated situation in the whole of Southern Africa: "The issue of race runs throughout Southern Africa."⁴ More important to the Finnish foreign ministry and President Kekkonen, however, were the attitudes of other UN member states. It was politically unwise for Finland to remain in the increasingly small group of member states which refused to support these resolutions. In the Finnish foreign ministry realism and moralism were thus combined.⁵ Ambassador Max Jakobson described the basis for the shift as follows:

While preparing in autumn 1966 for the General Assembly I became convinced that it was of no use for Finland to reject the generally accepted double standard of morality on the South African question... By abstaining on the resolutions condemning racial oppression in South Africa as well as recommending the use of economic sanctions, we were left among an ever-dwindling group of states, whose stances were not based on respect for UN principles, but were mainly determined by economic interests. From our behaviour, misleading conclusions could thereby be drawn by the Afro-Asian majority.¹

¹ Kirjelmä valtioneuvostolle [Public letter to the government], *Merimies*, 1966-/1.

² *Ylioppilaslehti*, 18 November 1966.

³ ULA 1966:138–139.

⁴ Ambassador Alholm at the UN, 12 December 1966. ULA 1966:150.

⁵ Törnudd, 1975:140.

Ambassador Jakobson refers to the domestic pressure calling for a changed position only by saying that his proposal for voting for the first time with the UN majority “was not difficult to get approved in Helsinki”.²

The fact that the Finnish delegation voted for the resolution did not, however, mean a change in Finland’s actual policy *vis-à-vis* the South African government and economic sanctions. The change was formal, a step towards a more flexible interpretation of the UN Charter and the resolutions in question. Earlier the Finnish delegation had expressed its support for the resolutions in its addresses to the General Assembly, while abstaining from voting for reasons concerning the competence of the General Assembly. Now Finland showed its support by voting for the resolutions, and expressed its reservations in the addresses.³

Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen confirmed in parliament that nothing changed in practice concerning economic sanctions:

Only the Security Council can adopt resolutions binding member states... Concerning Finnish trade with South Africa, the ending of merely our bilateral trade with South Africa would, of course, in no way affect the South African attitudes, because this trade is so negligible in size. A universal international trade boycott has not been achieved for the time being... The government of Finland has unconditionally... supported the measures in accordance with the UN Charter to end discrimination [based on apartheid].⁴

In a significant move, Finland did announce in 1966 that it intended to contribute to the UN Trust Fund for South Africa, and actually made a US\$10,000 contribution in 1968. Sweden and Denmark had started humanitarian assistance to the victims of apartheid in 1964. Sweden, Denmark and Norway were among the 52 member states sponsoring the establishment of a Trust Fund in the 1965 General Assembly.

With the shift in the Finnish voting pattern, NGO interest in the South African issue was temporarily reduced.⁵ The political right expressed rather low-key criticism of the policy shift.⁶ Max Jakobson answered this criticism in 1968:

South Africa is of course not the only country where human rights are trampled on... The situation in South Africa is, however, unique in one respect. When elsewhere discrimination is carried out against the existing law, in South Africa discrimination is the law, whereas respect for human rights and basic liberties has been declared a crime which is severely punished.¹

Namibia on the agenda

A sharper stand on the Namibian question was also adopted in 1966. In the UN in 1963 and 1965 all the Nordic countries had recommended the pursuit of negotiations in solving the problem and had abstained from voting on the resolutions. However, in 1966 the Nordic countries together with the overwhelming majority of the General Assembly voted for Resolution 2145 (XXI) ending South Africa’s mandate over Namibia and establishing a UN Ad Hoc Committee for South West Africa. Finland’s representative, Max Jakobson, was elected chairman of the Committee.

After Rhodesian UDI, the UN in December 1966 for the first time adopted mandatory sanctions against a specific country. In Finland the sanctions against Rhodesia were at first accomplished with temporary legislation and later, in accordance with the other Nordic

¹ Jakobson, 1983:62.

² *Ibid.* p. 63.

³ Cf Ambassador Alholm’s statement at the UN, 12 December 1966. ULA, 1966:150–151; Törnudd, 1967:102–103.

⁴ VP pk, 1968:797–798. Reply to an oral question by Pekka Pesola (liberal).

⁵ Cf. Erkki Hatakka’s comment in Korhonen, 1967:123. Hatakka was active in the student’s South Africa Committee.

⁶ Cf. Eskola, 1967.

countries, with a special act on the fulfillment of certain obligations of Finland as a member of the United Nations.²

Neither siding with the majority at the UN General Assembly in condemning the South African government nor the assistance given to the victims of apartheid affected official bilateral relations between South Africa and Finland. These relations grew even stronger in 1967 when a South African legation was established in Helsinki.

Based on information received from the Finnish legation in Pretoria, Uola summarizes the South African government's reaction to Finnish policy at the time:

Officially South Africa has... declared that it respects the policy of the Finnish government, and has directed its criticism primarily towards actions against South Africa taken by certain organizations like the Seamen's Union.³

The South African authorities did more than simply discourage criticism. For instance, when Erkki Hatakka visited South Africa in 1964, his trip and the persons he met were closely monitored by the South African security police.¹

In these circumstances the establishment of the South African legation in Helsinki can perhaps be seen as an effort by the South African government to influence the Finnish government and public opinion more effectively.

¹ Jacobsson, 1968b:23.

² AK, 1967/659. Laki eräiden Suomelle Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien jäsenenä kuuluvien velvoitusten täyttämisestä [Law on the fulfilment of certain obligations of Finland as a member of the United Nations].

³ Uola, 1969:108.

As If We Were Morally Concerned, 1967–1978

Outside Europe the main markets consist of the United States, the Argentine, Brazil, South Africa and Australia, South Africa to the horror of our left-wing radicals.

*Nils Gustav Grotenfelt,
Chairman of Finnpap's Board²*

In 1966 Finnish NGOs sought to change Finland's voting pattern in the UN to coincide with the General Assembly's overwhelming majority in condemning South Africa's apartheid policy. This objective was achieved. However, if the NGOs believed that the shift in voting would also curtail bilateral relations between Finland and South Africa, they were wrong. The actual effect was only a more flexible interpretation of the UN Charter and political morality.

The fact that no change had actually occurred was emphasized in a confidential letter from Risto Hyvärinen, Head of the Political Department at the foreign ministry, to the *chargé d'affaires* in Pretoria in 1966:

It is also important to realize the role of the South African question in present day international politics. In my opinion *it is not a moral question, but expressly a question of expediency. Nevertheless, it might be expedient to occasionally behave as if we were morally concerned.* It has to be remembered that the interests of our overall foreign policy surpass our relations with South Africa. In spite of that—and partly just because of that—I find it expedient to maintain relations, especially economic relations, with South Africa and even improve them.³

In the late 1960s economic relations between Finland and South Africa continued much as before, with exports from Finland exceeding imports. From 1967 to 1978 South Africa's annual share was 0.57 per cent of the total value of Finnish exports and 0.21 per cent of total imports.⁴

The main items imported from South Africa were fruit, metals and minerals (most significantly asbestos and manganese).

However, in the early 1970s exports began to decline due to a reduced demand for Finnish magazine paper. Simultaneously, the Finnish paper industry started to concentrate on export to European markets. By the mid-1970s South Africa's annual share of Finnpap magazine paper exports was about five per cent on average.

In an effort to improve economic relations, trade delegations were exchanged. In late 1969, an official Finnish foreign ministry trade delegation toured both Eastern and Southern Africa. The businessmen in the delegation made their own semi-official visit to South Africa. The businessmen's side trip was taken up and denounced in parliament.⁵ The visit did produce at least one concrete result: the four year old boycott of South African alcoholic beverages was called off.

¹ Gordon Winter's letter to the author, 8 February 1985. For more on Winter's intelligence activities, see his book *Inside Boss, South Africa's Secret Police*.

² Speech on the markets of the Finnish paper industry, *Finnpap Bulletin*, 2/1971.

³ Published in *Tricont*, 3/1972. Italics added.

⁴ Suomen virallinen tilasto. Ulkomaankauppa [Official Statistics of Finland. Foreign Trade], 1967–1978.

⁵ VP ak, 1970:IV. Ulkoasiainvaliokunnan mietintö [Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee], No. 10; VP pk, 1971:346–358.

The aftermath of the boycott

After 1966 the Central Association of the Finnish Woodworking Industries, the Department for External Economic Relations of the foreign ministry, and the director general of Alko tried, on several occasions, to persuade transport workers to abandon their boycott. The South African ambassador to Helsinki did likewise, by “almost by toadying up to” the union and by “threatening to take counter-measures.” But to no avail. Wälläri did not yield.¹

In August 1967, Niilo Wälläri, the driving force behind the boycott, died. His successors, however, soon found themselves in a situation where they had to rethink the boycott strategy.

The man who precipitated the situation was Heikki Tavela, a member of the 1969 trade delegation to Southern Africa. Among his numerous other duties, Tavela served on the board of the Finnish Foreign Trade Association and was a major shareholder in a newly formed company named Merika Oy. Merika was established on a revolutionary patent to produce sausage from Baltic herrings.

After discussions with representatives of Alko and the South African legation in Helsinki, Tavela approached Olavi Keitele, the new chairman of the Seamen’s Union. Tavela argued that Merika’s success was in the interest of professional fishermen, who themselves were members of the Seamen’s Union. That meant that Merika needed to be able to export as widely as possible, including markets such as South Africa. The boycott, therefore, hindered Merika’s sales.

Partly on the basis of Tavela’s arguments and partly out of weariness with the boycott, the Federation of the Transport Workers’ Unions very discreetly called off the boycott of South African alcoholic beverages in late 1969.

Ending the boycott was one of Merika’s few successes. The company never managed to develop a marketable herring sausage and eventually went bankrupt. Heikki Tavela fared better. For his services the South African producers of wines and spirits granted him the agency rights for importing South African alcoholic beverages to Finland.

The end of the boycott affected trade relations. “You cannot imagine how much sales were expedited with the ending of the boycott”, a Finnish paper agent was quoted as saying.²

On a larger scale, however, things were not as favourable. Trade actually declined in the early 1970s—a trend that did not go unnoticed at the foreign ministry. As early as 1960 the Finnish Foreign Trade Association had proposed that a commercial secretary be posted in the Pretoria legation. In 1971 a similar proposal was accepted and a commercial secretary was installed the following year. To avoid unwanted attention, the posting was formally classified as that of an “attaché”. In the foreign ministry’s own correspondence, however, the post was referred to as “commercial secretary”.

Concerning the Finnish state’s financial assistance to exporters, including export credits and guarantees, South Africa was treated like any other country. Since the precise details of such assistance has been classed as confidential, the actual extent of export credits and guarantees extended to exporters to South Africa has never been disclosed. One known example, however, is an export credit of about FIM 10 million (about US\$2.4 million) granted in 1972 to the Nokia Corporation for a capacitor delivery to ESCOM.³

The liberalization and internationalization of Finnish capital markets took place long after similar developments elsewhere in Europe and North America. Consequently, Finnish banks participated only on a very small scale in international loans to South Africa. The largest in this respect was Kansallis-Osake-Pankki (KOP), which, as a member of a permanent underwriters’ group, participated in ten loan consortiums to South Africa from 1969 to 1973. The borrowers included ESCOM, ISCOR, and the Anglo American Corporation.

In 1973 Vaisala Oy sold its subsidiary in Johannesburg to the South African Weather Bureau. However, at that time new Finnish companies were being established in South Africa and Swaziland.

Salora Oy, a radio and TV manufacturer, established a subsidiary in Swaziland named Salora Swaziland Ltd in 1975. Salora’s plant assembled television sets for South African

¹ Wälläri, 1967:306–307.

² Rissanen, 1978.

³ VP pk, 1972:963. Oral question by Mirjam Tuominen (People’s Democrats).

markets. These markets were considered to be promising, because regular television broadcasting was planned to commence first in 1976 in South Africa. By establishing the subsidiary in Swaziland, Salora hoped to avoid criticism of its economic relations with South Africa. Eighty per cent of the company's shares were held by Salora and the rest by the Kingdom of Swaziland. In 1976 the factory employed about 300 persons.

However, as a consequence of a tax evasion and bribery scandal involving the parent-company in Finland, Salora decided to sell its shares in the Swaziland subsidiary in 1977. The South African television markets proved to be less lucrative than expected, and the plant was closed at the end of the 1970s.

In 1976 Kymmene Corporation, one of the largest paper producers in Finland, quit Finnapp, the paper industry's joint export organization. Kymmene expected its own marketing companies could perform more efficiently. Kymmene already had a marketing subsidiary in South Africa, Kymmene-Star (Pty) Ltd, established in 1974. South African markets were particularly important to Kymmene's British subsidiary, Star Paper Ltd.

Throughout the 1970s the South African authorities sought to influence Finnish public opinion. For example, many Finnish journalists, who were assumed would report critically on the situation in South Africa, were denied entry to South Africa. "We can manage quite well without reporters from communist papers like the *Helsingin Sanomat* or *Expressen*", remarked the South African Ambassador to Helsinki in a newspaper interview in 1980.¹

Eschel Rhoodie, who once headed both overt and covert information activities at the South African Department of Information, wrote in his memoirs, after the South African "Information Scandal", about the South Africa's activities in Finland:

In the case of Finland we followed a routine procedure to provide friendly Finnish journalists with money for visits to South Africa and to subsidise, in secret, publications of one or two books. Mikko Uhlo [*pro Uola*] is an example.²

The Little League vs. The Gang of Doctors

In the late 1960s, many foreign policy experts divided Finnish post-war foreign policy into three phases:

- *from 1945 to 1955*, the creation of trustworthy relations with the Soviet Union;
- *from 1955 to 1965*, the recognition in the west of the Finnish policy of neutrality;
- *from 1965 onward*, a period of active foreign policy.

The concept of an active foreign policy was based on the view that neutrality and the endeavor to remain outside east-west conflicts were insufficient. President Kekkonen reasoned, "Foreign policy must be carried out so that we are always present when decisions on our fate are made."³

The active phase brought with it "the eternal tension" between national interests on the one hand, and individual moral standards on the other.⁴ Should Finland apply moral standards in foreign policy in specific situations or only on the general level of principle?¹

Adding to this push for a more active foreign policy was the generation born after the war who held far less provincial views than their parents. Many were interested in Third World problems and held leftist views inspired by the student radicalism of the 1960s.

The left-wing majority in parliament from 1966 to 1970 and the "popular front" government, in which the Social Democrats and communists participated after long periods of parliamentary opposition, formed the domestic political underpinning of foreign policy. Väinö

¹ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 20 April 1980.

² Rhoodie, 1983:248. In Uola's case the South African Embassy in Helsinki purchased a certain number of copies of his book after it was printed and distributed. It would seem that the main beneficiary was his publisher.

³ Speech, 6 January 1967. ULA 1967:20.

⁴ Jansson, 1966:4.

Leskinen, a Social Democrat, was appointed as foreign minister in 1970. The appointment was seen as a symbolic end to the period when the Social Democrats were excluded from making foreign policy.

The term “a new type of foreign policy” was used for the first time by a young Social Democrat, Paavo Lipponen, in late 1966. Among the theses presented by Lipponen were that foreign policy should be open to discussion, well-planned, effective, infused with fresh ideas and personnel, as well as leftist in its analyses and approaches. Lastly, foreign policy should be an active policy for peace.²

What followed was the most intense debate on foreign policy ever witnessed in Finland. Divisions emerged quickly. On one side were the foreign ministry’s top officials. Many held centrist or conservative views. Their opponents, primarily young, social democratically oriented individuals at the beginning of their academic or political careers, labeled these officials as the “gang of doctors” (“tohtorikopla”) or “colonels’ junta” (“everstijunta”). The media labeled the young adversaries as the “little league” (“nappulaliiga”). The foreign policy emphasis first on the east and then on the west did not satisfy the younger generation, who wanted a more global approach.³

The central members of the “gang of doctors” were President Kekkonen’s close foreign political confidants and aides: Risto Hyvärinen (head of the Political Department at the Foreign Ministry and currently Ambassador to Hungary); Lieutenant-Colonel Aimo Pajunen (acting Head of Section at the Foreign Ministry and currently Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence); Keijo Korhonen (Head of Section at the Foreign Ministry and currently editor-in-chief of the provincial newspaper *Kainuun Sanomat*); and Max Jakobson (Finnish Ambassador to the UN and currently an independent writer).

Members of the “little league” were Jaakko Blomberg (journalist and currently Director General of the Political Department at the Foreign Ministry); Jaakko Kalela (assistant professor at Helsinki University and currently Secretary General to the President of the Republic); Paavo Lipponen (journalist and currently a Member of Parliament); and Osmo Apunen (assistant professor at Helsinki University, currently a professor of international politics at Tampere University and an active participant in the public debate on foreign policy).

The “little league” directed its criticism toward the foreign ministry but not, interestingly enough, toward President Kekkonen. They did not see themselves as being in total opposition to Finnish foreign policy, but rather wanted it to include new objectives on its agenda. President Kekkonen, on his part, claimed he sympathized with the younger generation. Further, Kekkonen “tried and succeeded” in getting several of the little league members to “sell out” by offering them posts in the foreign ministry.⁴

Where our fate is decided

In accordance with an active foreign policy, the Finnish delegation to the UN gradually loosened “Enckell’s corset”. Finland took initiatives, sought representation in and was elected to various UN bodies. The most significant opportunity was a seat on the Security Council from 1969 to 1970. Finnish UN activity was further intensified during Max Jakobson’s term as Finnish Ambassador to the UN from 1965 to 1972.

Finnish foreign policy even began to “overheat”, for example, during the campaign to get Max Jakobson elected as UN Secretary General in 1971.⁵ In connection with this, the Finnish UN delegation stepped up activity on Southern African issues, in part, because support for the Finnish candidate by African member states was considered important.¹

¹ Möttölä, 1983:41, 57.

² Lipponen, 1966a and b.

³ Cf. Brodin 1973 and 1974; Kalela and Turtola, 1985:13–15.

⁴ Lipponen, 1985.

⁵ Möttölä, 1984:194.

Finland was especially active on the Namibian question. Many UN measures concerning Namibia, e.g. the UN Trust Fund for Namibia (1970), the UN Institute for Namibia (opened in Lusaka in 1976) and the Nationhood Programme for Namibia (1976) were based on Finnish initiatives or sponsored by Finland.

On the South African question, Finland together with the other Nordic countries at the 1967 and 1968 UN General Assemblies voted for Resolutions 2307 (XXII) and 2396 (XXIII). As with earlier resolutions, the tone was sharp and called for sanctions against South Africa.

Simultaneously the Nordic countries became more frustrated with the way the South African question was being treated in the General Assembly. Although the resolutions were sharply worded, and 80 to 90 member states voted for them, the states most vital to the implementation of these resolutions, i.e. Great Britain and the United States, did not support them. Not surprisingly, the issue came to a standstill in the General Assembly, and thus the Nordic countries favoured transferring the matter to the Security Council.²

In 1969 ambassador Max Jakobson voiced his dissatisfaction rather strongly in a speech to the General Assembly:

During the more than twenty years in which the UN has considered the question of the policy of apartheid of the Government of South Africa, the resolutions adopted have advanced from exhortation and appeals to protest and condemnation. This escalation of words has had no visible impact on the reality of life in South Africa... The philosophy of apartheid seems to be impervious to the influence of outside opinion. No wonder many of us... approach our annual debate on the subject with a sense of frustration and futility.³

This frustration was not just verbal. In 1969, unlike the three previous years, all the Nordic countries abstained from voting on Resolution 2506 B (XXIV) calling for concrete sanctions against South Africa. The Nordic countries voted for Resolution 2506 A (XXIV), however, where, on a more general level, the South African government was condemned and solidarity was expressed with the victims of apartheid and with the freedom fighters opposing it.

This Nordic voting behaviour—condemnation on a general level and abstention from proposed concrete action—has in principle remained the same from 1969 onward. The Nordic view is based on the UN Charter which states that mandatory sanctions lie within the competence of the Security Council. Calls for sanctions by the General Assembly decrease the credibility and effectiveness of the UN sanctions' system as a whole and, *de facto* diminish the UN's prospects for solving the problem.⁴

Max Jakobson left the foreign ministry in 1975 to take a position in business life. In his memoirs he sums up his view on the treatment of the South African question in the UN as follows:

The hypocritical resolutions adopted by the great majority at the General Assembly, which were not even meant to be implemented, undermined the credibility of UN views and thereby in practice impaired the possibilities of changing the international structures to become more just than they are today... The annual apartheid vote at the UN has become an absolution ritual. The participating member states' governments, whites as well as blacks, can then claim that they have done their duty toward the oppressed population in South Africa.¹

¹ Saarela, 1980:194.

² Cf. Ulkoministeri Karjalaisen lausunto [Statement by Foreign Minister Karjalainen] 18 December 1968. ULA, 1968:229.

³ YK, 1969:82.

⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 27–28.

Neutral on racism?

Finland's membership on the UN Security Council coincided with increased activity on the Namibian question, while the Rhodesian situation was still on the agenda. From 1969 to 1970, 44 per cent of the topics treated in the Security Council had to do with colonialism and racism in Africa.²

When Southern African affairs were on the agenda in the Security Council, the Finnish representative usually joined the majority view of the Afro-Asian and Socialist member states in condemning the South African government. Finland used its key position on the Security Council to moderate these majority views so that they could be more readily accepted by the western powers. This, however, led to a situation where the main interest was focused on the unanimity of the Security Council, not on solving the causes of the real conflicts. This amounted to *de facto* indirect support for governments in power and "in a position to oppress".³

Jaakko Kalela, in his 1971 study of Finland's behaviour on the Security Council, concluded that Finland's behaviour had been "a masterful demonstration of pure diplomacy". However, Kalela also questioned the Finnish stand:

When it is question of imperialism, colonialism, racism... is it right and expedient to be neutral? ... did the actions by Finland on the Security Council actually promote solutions to the conflicts treated. Or did it only help in maintaining the *status quo* by pouring oil on troubled waters?⁴

Max Jakobson also described the Finnish view:

The treating of African issues had come to a seemingly hopeless dead-end. The Africans demanded economic sanctions against South Africa although they were well aware that Great Britain could not afford this... To win this game the Africans needed the Finnish vote, but it was not in our interest to join in demonstrative politics which had no effect on South Africa, but rather were directed against our important trading partner, Great Britain.⁵

In a newspaper interview at the time, Ambassador Jakobson further emphasized that the Finnish stand on the South African question was based on economic interests: not, however, on those with South Africa, but with Great Britain:

To Finland trade with South Africa is not as important as it is to the United Kingdom, but we have to admit, that for us trade with Great Britain is a vital question. Great Britain is our largest customer... If Finland supported these calls for economic sanctions against South Africa, it would not be wise from the point of view of pure national interests.⁶

In 1969, the Finnish representative on the Security Council abstained from voting on resolutions demanding sharper measures on the Namibian and Rhodesian questions (Resolution 271 and Proposal S/9270, respectively). Finland perceived the resolutions as verbal protests unrealistic to implement without the support of the major western powers. Further, the making of futile resolutions was seen to actually undermine the authority and credibility of the Security Council.⁷

Finland's abstentions did not go unnoticed back home. In September 1969 the foreign ministry was informed that the behaviour of the Finnish representative on the Security Council had been followed with astonishment in Finland. This was done in a public statement with 180 signatures of political representatives with liberal and left-of-centre leanings and of prominent members of the cultural and artistic community. The petition symbolized a growing interest in

¹ Jakobson, 1983:62, 71.

² Kalela, 1971:21–23.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Jakobson, 1983:200–201.

⁶ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 2 February 1970.

⁷ Koivisto, 1989:12–13.

Finland with Southern African issues. For the first time a broad spectrum of public figures demanded that the Finnish government to break off diplomatic and trade relations with South Africa arguing that:

The contradiction between our country's attitude of condemning apartheid in principle while maintaining diplomatic and ever-widening economic relations with the South African minority government continuously undermines the credibility of the policy of neutrality of our country. Recent... Finnish positions seeking to prevent the world organization from intervening, are indications that Finland belongs to those states that in practice support the policy of racial oppression.¹

Opponents of the official Finnish stand argued that the Finnish abstentions—far from protecting the authority of the UN Security Council—actually protected those UN member states which, for ideological or economic reasons, wished to see the racist system in Southern Africa continue.² The signatories included Kalevi Sorsa (Social Democrat, future Prime and Foreign Minister), Pär Stenbäck (Swedish People's Party, future Foreign Minister), Ulf Sundqvist, Matti Louekoski, Arvo Salo and Kaisa Raatikainen (all future social democratic cabinet members).³

Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen replied to the statement by assuring the petitioners that Finland would steadfastly work in the UN for realistic and feasible resolutions on the Southern African question.⁴

In 1970 Finland succeeded in its moderating role. In the Security Council's Resolution 283 member states were called upon to, among other things, terminate their diplomatic and consular representation in Namibia. The resolution was adopted with 13 in favour, none against, and 2 abstentions (Great Britain, France). The Finnish representative not only voted for the resolution, but sponsored it and participated actively in its formulation in the Security Council sub-committee.

In accordance with the Security Council's resolution, Finland, after an internal debate in the foreign ministry concerning the juridical status of Walvis Bay, closed down its honorary consulate at Walvis Bay in April 1971. Finland was slightly behind other Nordic countries on this matter: Sweden had terminated its honorary consulate at Windhoek in 1966, while Denmark and Norway quickly responded to the Security Council resolution by closing their honorary consulates in August and October 1970.

In the course of the South Africa debate, little attention has been paid to the fact that on the Namibian question in 1970, and simultaneously with Finland's campaign for the post of Secretary General, the foreign ministry was prepared to carry out diplomatic sanctions, although on a minor scale, against the South African government on the basis of the Security Council's recommendation.

The next time diplomatic sanctions against South Africa were proposed in Finland was in 1971. The initiative was taken by Jaakko Lyytinen, Finnish *chargé d'affaires* in Pretoria, in a confidential letter to the foreign ministry. Lyytinen proposed that the Finnish legation in Pretoria should be terminated and diplomatic representation carried out on a consular level similar to Denmark and Norway. This would be the starting point for the breaking off relations on all levels.⁵

In 1973 Lyytinen went public with his proposal. He pointed out that only 21 states had diplomatic missions above consular level in Pretoria. Lyytinen categorized the countries as follows: eleven western industrial countries (the United States, Great Britain, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Canada and Australia); five military governments (Portugal, Spain, Greece, Argentina, Brazil); two neighboring states (Rhodesia, Malawi); Israel; and two Nordic countries (Finland, Sweden).

Further, the economic interests of the Swedish companies operating in South Africa were the primary reason for Sweden maintaining its diplomatic relations with Pretoria. Lacking

¹ Julkilausuma Ulkoministeriölle [Petition to the Foreign Ministry], 28 August 1969. Archives of the National Union of Finnish Students.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 September 1969.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ VP ak, 1972:V. Written question No. 271 by Ilkka Taipale (Social Democrat), *et al.*

similar economic involvement, Lyytinen saw no compelling reason why Finland should be diplomatically represented in Pretoria. It simply gave credibility and legitimacy to the South African minority government.¹

The proposal produced no results, aside from the fact that Jaakko Lyytinen was relieved of his post in late 1971 and dismissed from the foreign ministry altogether in 1973. The reasons for the disciplinary action against Lyytinen remain confidential, but it has been assumed that Lyytinen's private efforts to break off relations, his connections with the ANC and SWAPO, and dissatisfaction on the part of the Finnish forest industry's export organizations led to his dismissal.

South Africa in the Finnish Parliament

From 1960 to 1966 the South African question was handled only twice in parliament. From 1967 to 1978 the question was raised on 27 occasions. In 1971, 1973 and 1978 relations with South Africa appeared on the parliamentary agenda four times each year. Throughout the 1970s the debate focused on diplomatic relations while concerns about economic relations remained rather limited. This was partly due to the debate between the "little league" and the "gang of doctors", which centred on the objectives of foreign policy and the actions of the foreign ministry.

In parliament a proposal for the termination of diplomatic relations with South Africa was taken up for the first time in late 1972 by 22 MPs representing the Social Democratic Party, the People's Democratic League and the Rural Party.²

In his short reply Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen repeated the principle that "no state should be excluded from international cooperation or from the international community", because that would be counterproductive to the implementation of UN objectives. Most of Karjalainen's reply dealt with how Jaakko Lyytinen's confidential proposal for cutting diplomatic relations with South Africa had been leaked to the public, and what actions the foreign ministry had taken to deal with the leak³.

In 1973 concern about the breaking off of diplomatic relations with South Africa mounted. In a rare statement on apartheid, President Kekkonen told participants at the June 1973 ILO conference that while the promotion of compromises and consensus is the basic element in Finnish foreign policy, nevertheless,

... there are matters, we believe, where compromise is unacceptable. Such is, for instance, our attitude towards racism and colonialism. Racial oppression is still a constant threat to lasting peace. Like the other Nordic countries Finland cannot under any circumstances tolerate racial discrimination nor support the remnants of colonialism. Finland supports in all appropriate ways the justified pursuits of the national liberation movements.⁴

The breaking off of diplomatic relations with South Africa was also under consideration by the government led by Prime Minister Kalevi Sorsa. His cabinet consisted of Social Democrats and representatives of the Centre and Liberal Parties. The supplementary protocol to the government programme in November 1973 stated:

The development of the political situation in the Portuguese colonies, the Republic of South Africa, Namibia, and Rhodesia is being monitored and active political and humanitarian assistance is being given to the independence movements and action against racial oppression mentioned in the UN resolutions. In addition, we are examining whether

¹ Lyytinen, 1973.

² VP ak, 1972:V. Written question No. 271 by Ilkka Taipale (Social Democrat) *et al.* and Foreign Minister Karjalainen's reply.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ ULA, 1973:279.

the maintaining of relations with the Republic of South Africa is in accordance with the objectives mentioned.¹

After this supplementary protocol, news spread that Finland was terminating diplomatic relations with South Africa. According to the Helsinki correspondent for the Swedish newspaper, *Dagens Nyheter*, the parties in the government had reached an understanding that diplomatic relations will be broken on a suitable occasion.²

However, the news was premature. Later in November, Foreign Minister Karjalainen stated that the foreign ministry would study on which level Finland would maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa. Karjalainen felt that, instead of unilaterally breaking off diplomatic relations, Finland should work through the UN towards the widest possible international consensus on the issue.

The People's Democrats and left-wing Social Democrats proposed breaking off diplomatic relations again in 1973 and 1975. However, these were put aside and were never handled in the Foreign Affairs Committee of parliament.

The far-left also proposed breaking off trade relations with South Africa in 1974. Karjalainen replied that while no mandatory resolution has been adopted in the UN, ... the Finnish government does not think that it can unilaterally restrict Finnish companies' trade with the South African companies, especially taking into account the fact that many other governments actually encourage enterprises to strengthen economic and commercial relations with South African enterprises, in spite of political and economic arguments.³

The sports connection

At the 1971 UN General Assembly, all Nordic countries voted for Resolution 2775 D (XXVI) which called upon member states to refrain from sports contacts with South Africa. However, certain Finnish sports organizations continued to maintain contacts with South Africa and even participated in a sporting event in Pretoria.

In 1973 parliament's attention was drawn to the fact that sports contacts still continued. The contacts were seen to be in conflict with the UN resolution, so the government was urged to take appropriate measures with the sports organizations. Special weight was given to the matter by the fact that it was signed by MPs from all parties represented in parliament. Even Paavo Väyrynen (Centre), rarely active in parliament on the South Africa question, was among the signatories.⁴

Marjatta Väänänen (Centre) Minister of Education, responsible for sport affairs, replied to parliament that participation in the sporting event in Pretoria had been a mistake, and that a recurrence of such incidents should be avoided by all possible means in the future. Väänänen emphasized that the government had effective means at its disposal to direct sports organizations' conduct: the financial support given to the organizations by the state. She indicated that the state was in a position to withhold such support if the need arose.⁵

After this initiative by the political parties, sports contacts with South Africa were discontinued. The stand was reinforced by a detailed joint Nordic Programme of Action adopted on the sports issue in late 1978. Kalevi Kivistö (People's Democrats), Minister of Education in 1976 and from 1977 to 1978, was particularly active in monitoring the adherence of the sports organizations to official policy.⁶

¹ Hallitusohjelman lisäpöytäkirja [Supplementary protocol to the government's programme], 1 November 1973, Archives of the Prime Minister's Office.

² *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 November 1973.

³ VP ak, 1974:V. Reply to written question No. 248 by Taisto Sinisalo (People's Democrats).

⁴ VP ak, 1973:V. Written question No. 108 by Erkki Tuomioja (Social Democrat) *et al.* and reply by the Minister of Education, Marjatta Väänänen.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Cf. Urheilu ja Etelä-Afrikka [Sports and South Africa], 1990.

Consequently, sports contacts, apart from professional sports such as car racing and tennis, have been the sphere where Finland has effectively applied extensive sanctions against South Africa. This was possible in part due to the marginal significance of Finnish sports contacts with South Africa.

Aid to liberation movements

In 1968 Finland contributed to the UN trust fund for victims of apartheid. However, it took six years before Finland was prepared to give direct humanitarian aid to the liberation movements in Southern Africa.

Financial assistance to liberation movements was initiated as a voluntary activity by NGOs, taken up by the political parties and, finally, ended up as official measures taken by the government and the foreign ministry.

The first significant assistance project was "Operation One Day's Work" (Taksvärkki) organized in 1969 by the Union of the Secondary School Students (Teiniliitto) to collect educational materials for the liberated areas in Mozambique. This fund-raiser was repeated in 1971. A heated public debate on the principle of assisting liberation movements took place in connection with these campaigns.

The One Day's Work collections brought in about US\$110,000 in 1969 and about US\$180,000 in 1971. The sums were of a larger order of magnitude than the official Finnish assistance given to Southern Africa, which was about US\$10,000 in 1969 and about US\$70,000 in 1971.

The political parties followed the lead of the students' organizations. In 1970 the Social Democratic Party established the International Solidarity Foundation, which donated about US\$1,500 to SWAPO the following year.

When presenting the donations, party secretary Kalevi Sorsa demanded that solidarity activities should be taken into the sphere of official Finnish foreign policy. Sorsa added that Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands all gave direct financial aid to liberation movements. According to Sorsa, officials at the foreign ministry had been giving misleading information on the assistance being provided by neutral and western countries to liberation movements.¹

A few days later *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* editorialized on the role of foreign ministry officials in Finnish aid to the liberation movements:

Those foreign ministry officials who have formulated the arguments against relations with liberation movements are working for a wrong cause. They try to give the picture that liberation movements are the violent party, and then hypocritically state that Finland cannot support violent movements... The truth has been turned upside down at the foreign ministry. The liberation movements have been established to defend the people against violence by their oppressors... at the foreign ministry a stand has actually been taken to clear the reputation of the oppressors. There is a wish to be... on good terms with the colonialist powers and with other countries specialized in exploiting developing countries.²

Suomen Sosialidemokraatti is here referring, in particular, to a conference on liberation movements organized in Helsinki by the National Union of Finnish Students in cooperation with the liberation movements of Southern Africa. The foreign ministry had refused to give financial support to the conference.

Some MPs reacted to the foreign ministry's refusal to support the conference. In his reply, prepared in cooperation with foreign ministry officials, Social Democratic Foreign Minister Väinö Leskinen stated that Finland does not support violent activities anywhere, including Africa. In a reply to an additional question, Leskinen was obliged to give his personal

¹ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 27 February 1971.

² "Kenen joukoissa seisot, Suomi?" [Which side are you on, Finland?], *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 3 March 1971.

impromptu view, according to which Finland in the matters of colonialism should be on the side of freedom and self-determination against oppression.¹

NGOs and political parties were able to influence foreign policy using concrete actions such as fund-raising campaigns. In 1972 Finland started to provide humanitarian aid to liberation movements through the African Liberation Fund of the OAU (Organization for African Unity). Direct aid to liberation movements was to come later, after further NGO activity.

In 1971 the Africa Committee (Afrikkakomitea) was established as part of the Finnish Peace Committee. The first objective of the Africa Committee was the extension of direct official Finnish development aid to the liberation movements.

On the initiative of the Africa Committee an open letter was addressed to the foreign ministry in late 1972. The letter proposed that the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies should be included in Finland's bilateral humanitarian development assistance programmes. The proposal carried particularly strong weight because it was signed by all the political parties represented in parliament.²

Foreign ministry officials opposed aid to liberation movements on two counts. First, the giving of such aid ran counter to the non-intervention principles of the UN Charter. Second, there seemed to be a contradiction in giving aid to liberation movements while simultaneously maintaining diplomatic relations with the governments the liberation movements were opposing. For these reasons, the Africa Committee's open letter was suddenly about "to become forgotten" in the foreign ministry.³

In December 1972 Foreign Minister Karjalainen established an *ad hoc* working group in the foreign ministry to examine the question of aid to the liberation movements. In contrast to normal procedure, the working group was mostly composed of experts from outside the foreign ministry, who represented the government parties.

The working group quickly came to conclusions that differed from the policy at the foreign ministry. Following the example of Sweden, which gave aid to liberation movements while maintaining diplomatic relations with the governments the movements opposed, and considering the human rights principles of the UN Charter, the working group saw no obstacle to giving direct official humanitarian aid to liberation movements. On this basis, the working group proposed that humanitarian aid should be given to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. Later, they also recommended aid to the liberation movements in Namibia, South Africa, and Rhodesia.⁴

Accordingly in 1973 the Finnish government started giving humanitarian aid to the liberation movements recognized by the OAU. At first aid went to the liberation movements in the Portuguese colonies. Later, in 1974, it went to SWAPO of Namibia and finally, in 1978, aid was given to the ANC of South Africa.

Finnish aid to the liberation movements came later and in smaller amounts than the aid provided by other Nordic countries. Sweden launched its assistance programme in 1968, Norway in 1969, and Denmark in the fiscal year 1972/1973. Finland has, however, been among the most significant contributors to the UN Trust Fund for South Africa. By 1972 the Fund had received donations to the sum of about US\$1.7 million. Five countries—Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, and the Netherlands—donated about seventy per cent of the total funds.

In 1972 Prime Minister Sorsa voiced his appreciation of the role played by public opinion in Finnish foreign policy. According to Sorsa, public opinion had been especially valuable on issues not traditionally within the realm of the foreign policy, particularly on questions related to colonialism and racial discrimination in Southern Africa:

From the beginning of the 1960s Finnish public opinion has taken... an even stronger stand on these issues and has also forced the directors of foreign policy to take action.⁵

Max Jakobson expressed a view closer to that of foreign ministry officials:

¹ VP pk, 1971:153-154. Oral question by Erkki Tuomioja (Social Democrat) and Foreign Minister Väinö Leskinen's reply.

² Muistio Portugalin siirtomaista [A memorandum on the Portuguese colonies], *Tricont*, 7/1972.

³ *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 30 May 1973.

⁴ Ulkoministeriön lehdistötiedote [Press release by the foreign ministry], 3 April 1973. Foreign Ministry Archives.

⁵ Sorsa, 1972:5.

Later on, especially in the 1970s, the difference between the policy of neutrality and the politics of protest started to vanish. The politics of protest came into fashion; political parties and several politicians became fascinated with playing the role of judge on the international scene.¹

Protest in Soweto

The “Captains’ Revolution” in Portugal in 1974 and the liberation of the Portuguese colonies the following year created a new situation in Southern Africa. New perspectives on abolishing apartheid seemed to open.

Soweto exploded in June 1976. Peacefully protesting black school pupils were confronted by fully-armed police. In the uprising which followed, hundreds of people were killed. Photographs of unarmed black children and youth being shot by the South African police enraged the entire world about the behaviour of the South African government.

In Finland the debate on South Africa also culminated in 1976, only partly influenced by the upheaval that started in Soweto. Earlier that year, Social Democratic and Centre Party ministers seriously considered breaking off economic relations with South Africa. These considerations were made public during Tanzanian President Nyerere’s visit to Finland. “‘Stop trade with South Africa’, demands trade minister”, read the main headline of a local tabloid. In the lead article, Minister of Trade and Industry, Eero Rantala, was quoted as saying that Finland together with the other Nordic countries should implement economic sanctions against South Africa as called for by the UN General Assembly.²

In May 1976 President Kekkonen informed a surprised group of West German journalists that Finland planned to terminate economic relations with South Africa. The foreign ministry was quick to deny the president’s statement, responding that Finland’s trade with South Africa was being studied in the foreign ministry with regard to the obligations imposed on Finland as a UN member.³

In October 1976 sanctions against South Africa were again raised in parliament. In connection with sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, parliament stated, “Parliament requires the government to urgently study the possibilities... to tighten... the sanctions policy directed against countries practicing racist policies in Southern Africa.” This stand was approved by a large majority, with 129 in favour, and only 10 against.⁴

The foreign ministry study was completed by late 1976.⁵ The report remains confidential, although reliable sources have said that four alternatives concerning future diplomatic relations with South Africa were presented. Aside from maintaining the *status quo*, the other three alternatives were: complete termination of diplomatic relations; reducing relations to the consular level; and issuing a sharply-worded condemnation of apartheid in the UN without any change in actual diplomatic relations.

In the preparations for the study Finnish honorary consuls, i.e. Finnmap agents, and the Department for External Economic Relations of the foreign ministry emphasized the difficulties for trade that would be caused by any curtailment of diplomatic relations. The study estimated that in 1976 the exports to South Africa provided employment for about 1,000 persons in Finland.

Other matters in the report included the principle of universality applied in Finnish foreign policy: that no country should be excluded from the international community. Attention was also drawn to the significance of the legation in Pretoria as a supplier of first-hand information on developments in South Africa.

On the basis of these considerations the third alternative, i.e. the maintaining of the diplomatic relations accompanied with a sharply-worded statement in the UN, was chosen. This

¹ Jakobson, 1980:243.

² *Ilta-Sanomat*, 11 May 1976.

³ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 21 May 1976.

⁴ VP pk, 1976:1836–37, 1845–50.

⁵ Cf. *Kansan Uutiset*, 21 November 1976.

alternative was favoured by foreign ministry officials and must have been approved by President Kekkonen as well.

Consequently, Keijo Korhonen, Foreign Minister in the newly formed Cabinet, addressed the UN General Assembly in October 1976. This speech was the most sharply-worded official Finnish statement ever issued on apartheid:

The imperative of today can be put very simply: that imperative is majority rule in Southern Africa... Let us make it clear to the present rulers in Southern Africa: there is only one way open—a total change.¹

In accordance with the policy alternative chosen, however, a plan of action was conspicuously missing from the Finnish statement. Korhonen implied that diplomatic or economic sanctions applied by the Finnish government against South Africa were more tightly than ever bound to the mandatory resolutions of the UN Security Council:

The principle of collective responsibility in the United Nations also implies that no Member is called upon to make such sacrifices as would be an unreasonable strain on that Member while contributing but little to the solution of the problem or remaining an isolated act of demonstration.²

In Finland, comprehension of the full content of Korhonen's statement, not to speak of criticism of it, was sparse. One of the few critics was Osmo Apunen, who predicted that the western powers, due to their economic, political and military interests in South Africa, would continue long into future to obstruct mandatory sanctions by the UN Security Council. Therefore, according to Apunen, the alternative of unilateral sanctions should have been left open in Finnish foreign policy.

Apunen concluded that "the Finnish government tailors demands for UN that the organization couldn't get through even if you greased it".³

Joint Nordic action

After the uprising in Soweto and its violent crushing, the South African question became a central issue at the August 1976 meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers. A five-point programme on the South African issue was adopted at the meeting. Most important was the objective of using all means available to establish an effective international sanctions policy within the UN framework.

Of the eleven resolutions on the South African question adopted at the UN General Assembly in 1976, the Nordic countries voted for seven (31/6 A–D, F, G and K). Resolution 31/6 K, in which the Security Council was asked to consider measures to curtail new investments to South Africa, was sponsored by the Nordic countries.

Arguing that the use of force as a means of settling conflicts should not be advocated by the UN, the Nordic countries abstained or voted against Resolution 31/6 I on the "Situation in South Africa". This resolution stated that liberation movements were justified in using all possible means in their struggle. Likewise the Nordic countries either voted against or abstained on Resolution 31/6 E on the "Relations between Israel and South Africa". According to the Nordic view, it was inappropriate to single out individual countries in this context.⁴ In this respect Nordic voting behaviour remained the same in subsequent years.

In 1977, in the aftermath of Soweto and Steve Biko's death while in detention, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 418 for a mandatory arms embargo against South Africa. In accordance with the resolution, in December 1977 the Finnish government issued a decree

¹ YK, 1976:290, 296.

² *Ibid.* p. 295.

³ Apunen, 1976.

⁴ YK, 1976:64–68, 301–303.

prohibiting the export of all types of weapons, ammunition, and military equipment from Finland to South Africa.¹

At the March 1978 meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers a joint Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa was adopted as a step towards unilateral Nordic sanctions. According to newspaper reports, the Norwegian foreign minister was prepared to endorse more far-reaching economic sanctions, but failed to gain the support of the other foreign ministers.²

In the programme the Nordic countries agreed to curtail economic relations with South Africa by discouraging new investments and by negotiating with the Nordic enterprises there in order to restrict their production in South Africa. Further, it was stated that the Nordic countries would refrain from offering export credit guarantees and export promotion activities in their trade with South Africa. The Nordic delegations were also to work in the UN for the adoption of a Security Council resolution against new investments in South Africa.

The Programme of Action recommended that sports and cultural contacts should be discontinued and that visas should be required from the South African citizens entering the Nordic countries.

For Finland the joint Nordic programme had a very limited effect. Unlike the other Nordic countries, Finland did require visas from South African citizens, sports contacts had been effectively discontinued, and no Finnish manufacturing companies existed in South Africa. By 1976 the Finnish Academy had also stopped subsidizing participation in scientific conferences held in South Africa.

With regard to the promotion of exports to South Africa, the Finnish parliament unanimously stated in 1978:

It is necessary that Finland refrains from all new investments or engagements in the Republic of South Africa and... from granting credit guarantees or other financial assistance to exports to the Republic of South Africa.³

In accordance with the joint Nordic programme and the statement by parliament, in late 1978 the Finnish government withdrew the post of the commercial secretary from the legation in Pretoria. The export credits and guarantees to trade with South Africa were consequently terminated within a few years. The Division for Export Promotion of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, however, continued to give financial support to businessmen's visits to and export promotion activities in South Africa until the mid-1980s.

The Programme of Action was prepared by a joint Nordic working group established in 1977. After 1978 the working group, composed of senior foreign ministry officials, continued to monitor and coordinate the implementation of the joint Nordic programme as well as to study possibilities for expanded economic measures against South Africa.

Sanctions against South Africa were on the agenda of the Finnish parliament again in 1977 and 1978.⁴ A scathing critique of the foreign ministry's approach was issued in 1978 by parliament. The statement noted that the situation in South Africa "demands that serious consideration is given to refraining from the maintaining of diplomatic and economic relations with the Republic of South Africa."¹

Even this unanimously-backed statement by parliament did, however, not sway Finnish policy on South Africa, where the basic course had been set by the foreign ministry back in 1976.

Parliament, faced with the intransigence of the foreign ministry, lost interest in the South African question. By 1979 parliament was content to simply refer to its earlier statements

¹ AK,1000/1977. Asetus Yhdistyneiden Kansakuntien turvallisuusneuvoston tättämisestä [Decree of obligations based on a decision of the UN Security Council on South Africa]; VP pk, 1978:331–341.

² *Helsingin Sanomat*, 9 March 1978.

³ VP ak, 1978:C1. Ulkoasiain valiokunnan mietintö [Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee], No. 30:2.

⁴ VP ak, 1977:C1. Ulkoasiain valiokunnan mietintö [Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee], No. 15; VP pk, 1977:2834–39, 2866–74.

concerning the urgency of diplomatic and economic sanctions against South Africa. The following year the topic was not even taken up in the Foreign Affairs committee's report.²

Jan-Magnus Jansson, a professor of political science at the University of Helsinki, observed, mainly on the basis of international examples, that parliaments generally do not formulate foreign policy. A parliament's role in foreign policy is, rather, to prevent the fulfillment of specific measures initiated at the executive level of foreign policy by the president, the government, or the foreign minister.³

Jansson's observation aptly applies to the handling of the South African question in the Finnish parliament during the 1970s. Parliament was unable to influence the foreign ministry's policy of maintaining diplomatic relations with South Africa. It could only influence specific cases, such as arms exports, export credits, and sports contacts with South Africa.

In other Nordic countries the joint Programme of Action was a starting point for intensifying activity on the South African issue. For Finland, the Nordic programme was the epilogue to a decade of debate and interest on the subject. By the late 1970s public and parliamentary interest turned away from problems related to the Third World, underdevelopment, and racial discrimination. Finnish communists were caught up in their own internal disputes between "breshnevite" and "eurocommunist" factions. The Social Democrats committed themselves to promoting economic recovery and emphasized advancement of the private sector. Little room was left to questions of international inequality or solidarity. The "little league" had been grafted into the foreign ministry.

Aging President Kekkonen came under the increasing influence of his confidants and advisors in the foreign ministry. They emphasized realism or "neo-realism",⁴ the antithesis to moralism, as a principle to be applied in Finnish foreign policy. "Neo-realism—the ideology of the twilight years" was a phrase coined by Apunen to describe President Kekkonen's approach to foreign policy in his later years.¹

¹ VP ak, 1978:C1. Ulkoasiain valiokunnan mietintö [Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee], No. 30:2; VP pk, 1978:4906–07, 4927.

² VP ak, 1979:C1. Ulkoasiain valiokunnan mietintö [Report of the Foreign Affairs Committee], No. 9.

³ Jansson, 1966:1–2.

⁴ A phrase used in Korhonen, 1980:338.

Harming Ourselves, 1979–1987

Today, we are all bound to study very carefully our relations with South Africa to determine, individually and collectively, what more we can do. By introducing and implementing national measures we, together with the other Nordic countries, stand as an example. We urge further measures taken by other countries, especially those who have largest number of links and are major trading partners with South Africa. Now more than ever, words are not enough and sanctions are the deeds we need.

Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen's speech on 18 June 1986 at the World Conference on Sanctions against Racist South Africa²

In the late 1960s and early 1970s Finnish foreign policy and the foreign ministry faced new issues of a global nature. Old concepts such as “neutrality” and “impartiality” were inadequate in creating a new, workable foreign policy doctrine. Thus, by the end of the 1970s a set of “rules”³ which could be used to apply a doctrine emerged at the foreign ministry.

The new doctrine featured a policy of exclusion. Many political measures were excluded as instruments in Finnish foreign policy. Consequently, foreign policy options were reduced and the possibilities and need for foreign political activity diminished.

Although the new doctrine was applied extensively, instances where the doctrine as a whole was actually subjected to public scrutiny have been rare. Among the few critics of this doctrine was Osmo Apunen. According to Apunen, himself a Social Democrat, individual stands taken on particular situations had been extrapolated to form an all-embracing foreign policy doctrine far beyond their original intentions.⁴ Apunen claimed, “Finland strives to be consistent in matters which are too complicated to be consistent”.⁵

Apunen's view is congruent with Max Jakobson's description of how the doctrine evolved at the foreign ministry. For example, Finland found itself in the position where it did not give diplomatic recognition to either West or East Germany as a result of gradual developments:

This original Finnish approach... did not come about as a result of far-sighted or clever foreign policy planning, rather it evolved over the years gradually and almost without notice as a response to practical solutions required by the changing circumstances. Our task as officials at the foreign ministry was to combine the pieces into a complete doctrine of a policy of neutrality... Practical decisions may precede foreign policy doctrines.¹

Consistency in an inconsistent world

All Nordic countries have formally examined their policies on South Africa. Sweden, for example, has undertaken extensive evaluations of its political and economic relations with South

¹ Apunen, 1984:170.

² ULA, 1986:142.

³ A term used in Törnudd, 1982:85–92.

⁴ Apunen, 1984:181–182.

⁵ Apunen, 1986.

Africa.² Norway published two reports on its relations with South Africa in 1984.³ In 1976 and 1985 the Finnish foreign ministry also produced reports on relations with South Africa.

Finland's reports differ—possibly due to traditions of official secrecy dating from the time of the Czars—in that none of the reports were ever made public. Finland's foreign policy doctrine on the South African question must, therefore, be inferred through analysis of various public statements.⁴ The following principles were applied up to the mid-1980s:

First, Finland will not be neutral on the South African issue. The situation in South Africa is so grave that traditional policies of impartiality *vis-à-vis* the opponents in a conflict shall be abandoned. Simultaneously, however, great emphasis should be given to the fact that South Africa is one of the few, if not the only, exception to the policy of impartiality.

Second, the rule that Finland shall refrain from taking a moral stand on foreign policy shall not be applied in the case of South Africa. From 1966 onwards Finland has condemned the policy of apartheid in the UN. Apart from verbal condemnation, however, Finland refrained from implementing concrete measures, such as unilateral diplomatic or economic sanctions, against South Africa.

Finland's stand is double-edged. On the one hand, Finland does not favour the taking of a moral stand in its relations with other countries. On the other hand, Finland's own position is strengthened by the general advancement of a moral stand in international relations.

Max Jakobson, the "ultra-realist"⁵ in this matter, also emphasized the importance of taking a moral stand:

A small nation that wishes to defend the rights and freedoms of its own citizens has no reason to turn down or even doubt them [i.e. new trends in international politics for the realization of universal human rights]. On the contrary: in the long run our own interests require that we take active measures to strengthen tendencies which strive to create an international order based on respect for human rights.⁶

Jakobson's view was supported by Klaus Törnudd: "As a long-term strategy for small states, efforts to strengthen morality and justice in international relations are undoubtedly realistic."⁷

Korhonen adds that moral condemnation of apartheid also benefits Finland:

It pays Finland to maintain a consistent non-accepting policy toward apartheid in the Republic of South Africa, because it is in accordance with the sense of justice of the Finnish people and at the same time is a part of Finland's political image and profile, especially in the eyes of African countries.⁸

Third, Finnish foreign policy should be consistent and credible. Consistency in foreign policy brings about predictability and credibility, which increase the impact and significance of Finland's statements and initiatives. Törnudd writes,

Consistency... helps to create and maintain the image of the country in question in the eyes of other foreign policy makers, primarily those in the governments of other countries. Thereby the surroundings receive a clear picture of how a given state will act in future situations.⁹

Apunen interprets:

¹ Jakobson, 1981:166–167; cf also Jakobson 1968a:53.

² Statens Offentliga Utredningar [Official Reports of the Swedish Government], SOU 1978:53, 1984:52 and 1990:6.

³ Norsk Sör-Afrika-politikk [Norwegian Policy on South Africa], 1984; Rapport fra den interdepartementale arbeidsgruppe for å vurdere mulige tiltak mot Sör-Afrika [Report of the interdepartmental working group to evaluate possible measures against South Africa], 1984.

⁴ Cf. Väyrynen, 1989a:162–166.

⁵ An expression coined by his detractors. Jakobson, 1983:60.

⁶ Jakobson, 1986b:23.

⁷ Törnudd, 1975:141.

⁸ Korhonen, 1984:74.

⁹ Törnudd, 1982:90.

Foreign powers were expected to assume that if Finland today refrains from joining in a group of critics in taking a side for [a given country], it will refrain from taking a side against [a given country] tomorrow.¹

The striving for consistency combined with the principles of impartiality and restraint from taking a moral stand may, however, promote passivity, a lack of initiative, and even indolence. Thus, Apunen infers, that the doctrine of Finnish foreign policy has become the basis for “a policy of passivity”. Finland had essentially become a “professional bystander”.²

This striving for far-reaching consistency has been criticized by President Koivisto. In 1983 Koivisto said, “One should not go backwards into future situations with concern only for making sure that one is leaving a straight wake”.³

Risto Hyvärinen, a top official in the foreign ministry, and one of the “gang of doctors”, embodied the risk-aversion type of thinking at the ministry when he wrote in 1967, “It is self-evident that the more often stands are taken, the greater the number of failed stands”.⁴

Fourth, Finland grants diplomatic recognition only to states, not governments. Either to establish or to terminate diplomatic relations in response to the political performance of governments is not within the scope of Finnish foreign policy. This rule, writes Törnudd, “makes all morally or politically based classification of other countries unnecessary”.⁵ This principle is combined with the view that maintaining relations with a certain state is not understood as taking a stance, *pro* or *con*, toward the regime of the state in question.⁶

In the case of South Africa, this rule can be bent to a degree. Finland’s legation in Pretoria was headed by a *chargé d’affaires*, not an Ambassador. Among Finnish foreign missions, Pretoria was the only one without the status of an embassy.

Fifth, Finland trades with all countries. The principle of universality of trade was argued by Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen in 1979:

If Finland, as a small country, either alone or together with just a few countries, breaks off its trade relations with some country, it would have no effect worth mentioning as far as the targeted country is concerned. As long as other countries continue to trade, the targeted country could easily find substitutes for our exports and imports by using those of other countries. Naturally we would be harming ourselves, since we would lose some markets for our products as well as some jobs in our country.⁷

The stand on universality of trade was reinforced by the view that the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) articles forbid unilateral discrimination of individual parties to the GATT agreement.⁸ Only a mandatory resolution by the UN Security Council can make it possible to deviate from the principle of the universality of trade.

The Finnish foreign ministry sees as the essential arena for the handling of the South African issue the United Nations. Since the adoption of the Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa in 1978, Finland has increasingly committed itself to the joint Nordic stand on the South African issue and to measures it advocates.

Apparently these were the doctrinal cornerstones on which Finland had cemented its position by the late 1970s. At the same time domestic political interest in the South African question dwindled, making room for a new expansion in Finnish-South African economic relations.

Neither the discouragement of new investments, agreed upon in the Nordic Programme of Action in 1978, nor the restraint from new economic engagements, called upon unanimously by the Finnish parliament in the same year, were obstacles to, for example, the establishment of new Finnish marketing subsidiaries in South Africa.

¹ Apunen, 1984:212.

² *Ibid.* pp.181–182, 212.

³ Speech, 25 November 1983. Archives of the Office of the President of the Republic.

⁴ Hyvärinen, 1967:85.

⁵ Törnudd, 1982:88.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Speech, 10 December 1976. ULA, 1979:36.

⁸ VP ak, 1985:F1. Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen’s reply to written question No. 139 by Ensio Laine (People’s Democrats) *et al.*

Paper and paper machines

At the end of the 1970s Finnish exports to South Africa began to expand rapidly. Exports from Finland to South Africa rose from FIM 130 million in 1979 to FIM 547 million in 1984.¹ South Africa's share of Finland's export trade remained small but significant. From 1979 to 1984 South Africa's annual share of the total value of Finnish exports averaged 0.48 per cent.²

Finnish foreign trade has traditionally been directed at a few countries. In 1984, for example, more than a half of all exports went to the Soviet Union, Sweden, Great Britain or West Germany. Finnish exports to South Africa represented only 0.68 per cent of the total in 1984, although they were greater than exports to any socialist country in Europe besides the Soviet Union, or to any Asian country, except Japan.

Imports from South Africa to Finland continued to be smaller than exports. From 1979 to 1984 South Africa's share of the total value of Finnish imports averaged 0.14 per cent annually.³

Among the countries listed in South African statistics in 1984, Finland ranked 18th in imports and 29th in exports to and from South Africa. Among the Nordic countries, Finland came third in imports to South Africa after Sweden and Norway. In exports from South Africa, Denmark, due to the large import of coal, was in the first place. Finland came fourth after Norway and Sweden.⁴

Paper continued to be the major export item from Finland to South Africa. In 1984 South Africa's share of the total value of Finnish paper exports was 1.5 per cent. The most important export item was magazine paper of which South Africa's share was 3.8 per cent.

From the South African point of view, the above figures were more significant. Of the total paper imports to South Africa in 1984, Finland's share was over ten per cent.⁵ Of magazine paper imported to South Africa, Finland's share was as much as one third.⁶

In 1984 the major paper companies exporting to South Africa were Myllykoski Oy (about one-fifth of the total Finnish paper export to South Africa), Kymmene Corporation, Kajaani Oy, as well as the two state-owned enterprises, Enso-Gutzeit Oy and Veitsiluoto Oy. Even for the leading exporter, Myllykoski, South Africa's share of its total sales was little over three per cent, which constitutes only two or three weeks production each year.

As in previous years, the marketing of Finnish paper in South Africa was carried out by Finn-Mills and Kymmene-Star. In 1985 Finn-Mills, the joint marketing company, had about 40 employees, while Kymmene's marketing subsidiary, Kymmene-Star, employed about 60.

In 1984 another subsidiary of Kymmene Corporation, Stromberg (S.A.) (Pty) Ltd, was established in Johannesburg. It marketed electronic equipment produced by the Strömberg division of the Kymmene Corporation. In 1985 Stromberg (S.A.) had about 20 employees. Compared to Sweden, the number and size of Finnish subsidiaries in South Africa remained diminutive. In the early 1980s Swedish companies had about 20 subsidiaries in South Africa with a combined total of over 3,000 employees.¹

From the early 1970s onwards paper products' share of Finnish exports to South Africa diminished proportionally. This was due to the vastly expanding export of machines from Finland for the South African paper and pulp industry.

¹ Due to a boycott by the Transport Workers' Union in October 1985, 1984 was the last normal year in trade relations.

² Suomen virallinen tilasto. Ulkomaankauappu [Official Statistics of Finland. Foreign Trade], 1979–1984.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ RSA Foreign Trade Statistics, 1984:113–122.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 116.

⁶ Jokelin, 1985.

In the beginning of the 1980s both major South African paper producers, SAPPI (of the Gencor group) and Mondi (a subsidiary of the Anglo American Corporation), simultaneously started expansion projects for their paper mills. Both expansions were completed by the mid-1980s.

All five internationally significant paper and pulp machine producers in Finland: Rauma-Repola Oy, Ahlström Oy, Tampella Oy, Wärtsilä Oy and the state-owned Valmet Oy delivered equipment to South Africa. The biggest suppliers were Tampella and Ahlström, which participated in the expansion of SAPPI's Ngodwana mill. Ahlström made its deliveries both directly from Finland and via its Nordic partnership company, Kamy AB, through its mills in the United States and Brazil.

Mondi's major project was the pulp and board mill complex at Richards Bay. The entire engineering for the mill was carried out by a Finnish consulting company, Jaakko Pöyry Oy. Major deliveries were also made by Valmet, which in 1984 established a minor maintenance and marketing subsidiary in Durban. Valmet's office in Durban was formally attached to Valmet's German subsidiary, in deference to Finland's official policy of discouraging new investments in South Africa.

The mining industry is far more important to the South African economy than its paper industry. A major Finnish supplier of drilling equipment to the South African markets was Tamrock, a member of the Tampella group. Tamrock is one of the leading drilling equipment producers in the world.² Another major supplier of mining technology to South Africa was the state-owned Outokumpu Oy.

As in the past, major items imported from South Africa to Finland were fruits, metals and minerals (asbestos, etc.) and viscose pulp.

In discussions on South Africa's role in the world economy, emphasis is often placed on the importance of strategic raw materials.³ For Finland the import of these materials, at least directly from South Africa, had no strategic significance.

In 1982 Boart Oy, a South African company, was established in Finland in the city of Kuopio. Boart Oy is a subsidiary of Longyear International B.V. (previously Boart Drilling International) in the Netherlands. The Dutch company, through a network of subsidiaries, is part of the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa Limited, a financial empire owned by the Oppenheimer family. In the late 1980s Boart Oy had five employees and was involved in the marketing of drilling equipment produced at Boart's plants in Norway and Ireland.

Compared to Sweden, the number of South African owned subsidiary companies remained small. In the early 1980s there were four South African subsidiaries in Sweden, which employed over 300 persons.⁴

Objective mathematical calculations

In November 1982 the International Monetary Fund granted a loan of US\$1.1 billion to South Africa. The loan was the largest ever granted to South Africa by the international financial markets.¹ The Nordic representative on the IMF executive board at the time, Leiv Vidvei from Norway, permitted the granting of the loan.

The granting of the loan did not unnoticed back home. In the parliaments of Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland attention was drawn to the loan. Finland's foreign minister, Pär Stenbäck (Swedish People's Party), stated that from the political point of view the granting of the loan was "questionable". However, continued Stenbäck, according to the Nordic view, the

¹ Statens Offentliga Utredningar [Official Reports of the Swedish Government], SOU 1984:52, pp.87-91.

² Erland, Forsgren and Olsson, 1986:23.

³ Cf. Gustafsson, Odén and Tegen, 1990.

⁴ Scandiamant, Craelius AB, Boart (Sweden) and Wendt Sliptechnik AB.

decisions in the IMF should not be made on political grounds. The matters should be decided only on the basis of “objective mathematical calculations and pure economic evaluations”.²

On the initiative of NGOs from Sweden, Norway and Denmark, the foreign ministries started to revise the Nordic view on IMF lending policies. At the March 1983 meeting of Nordic foreign ministers, Sweden was prepared to take a stand opposing all future loans by the IMF to South Africa. However, according to newspaper reports, the Swedish foreign minister was not supported by the other foreign ministers.³

At the meeting in September 1983, the foreign ministers of Sweden, Norway and Denmark were unanimous in opposing further IMF loans to South Africa. A joint Nordic stand could not be taken, however, because the Finnish Foreign Minister, Paavo Väyrynen, passively backed by the foreign minister of Iceland, did not agree.⁴

In November 1983 the US Congress passed a bill, according to which the US representative in the IMF was to refuse IMF loans to countries which practice apartheid.⁵ Subsequently, at the March 1984 meeting of the Nordic foreign ministers, Finland and Iceland joined the other Nordic foreign ministers on the issue. “Finally there is unanimity among the Nordic countries”, said the Danish foreign minister in the Danish parliament.⁶ The Nordic stance on the question was confirmed in the revised Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa in 1985.

At the UN General Assembly in the late 1970s and early 1980s the handling of the South African question followed a familiar pattern. Several resolutions were adopted, a peak being reached in 1979 and 1980 when a total of 18 resolutions on the South African issue was adopted. The resolutions led to no concrete results, however, because of the veto of the western powers in the Security Council. All in all, the treatment of the issue became “power routine” and “relatively lacklustre” according to the Finnish foreign ministry’s report on the proceedings at the 1981 General Assembly.¹

To resolve the deadlock, the Nordic countries sought measures on which widest possible consensus could be achieved in the UN. One of these was a proposal to the Security Council to prevent new foreign investments and financial loans to South Africa. Similar resolutions had been sponsored by the Nordic countries since the 1976 General Assembly.

On the basis of the Nordic action, the 1984 General Assembly adopted Resolution 39/72 G for “Concerted international action for the elimination of apartheid”. This resolution was drafted by the Nordic countries in cooperation with several African states in an attempt to redirect the General Assembly toward a more positive and realistic course. The contents of three resolutions adopted at the previous General Assembly were incorporated into the new resolution. The Security Council was urged to adopt mandatory sanctions against South Africa.

While these were pending, an appeal was made to member states to consider adopting unilateral sanctions against South Africa, such as cessation of further investments, an end to all promotion of trade and an end to nuclear collaboration with South Africa.

The resolution was adopted by 146 in favour, 2 against (the United States, Great Britain), and 6 abstentions (western European countries). In the UN the resolution was regarded as a qualitative improvement, because it laid emphasis on cooperation and other measures on which a wide international consensus could be attained.

The 1984 General Assembly also adopted a traditional toughly worded resolution for “Comprehensive sanctions against the apartheid regime and support to the liberation struggle in South Africa” (39/72 A). The resolution was adopted by a vote of 123 in favour, 15 against (western countries, including Denmark and Norway), and 15 abstentions (including Finland and Sweden).

Firm adherence to the principles of the UN Charter formed the basis of the Finnish and joint Nordic stands on the South African issue. In 1984 the Finnish Ambassador to the UN,

¹ Militz, 1985:10–11.

² VP pk, 1982: 2678–79, Foreign Minister Per Stenbäck’s reply to an oral question by Ensio Laine (People’s Democrats).

³ Swedberg, 1984:21.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 22; Cuculiza, 1983.

⁵ United States Statutes at Large, 1983:1271.

⁶ Folketingstidende forhandlingerne, 1983–84:1642.

Keijo Korhonen, when presenting a joint Nordic explanation of vote summed up the principles as follows:

1. *Universality*, a basic principle of the UN, cannot be put in doubt.
2. *The UN is obliged to encourage peaceful solutions to problems*. Endorsement of armed struggle is unacceptable.
3. *The singling out of individual countries' relations* with South Africa is inappropriate and arbitrary as well as disadvantageous to the maintaining of the international consensus in the struggle against apartheid.
4. *Only the Security Council is competent to adopt resolutions binding on member states*.
5. *Resolutions cannot conflict with the constitutional rights of Nordic citizens*, which should not be encroached upon.
6. *Only free democratic elections can determine who can represent the South African people*. Thus, Nordic countries cannot back resolutions in which liberation movements are described as "the authentic representative of the people of South Africa".²

During the same session of the General Assembly Keijo Korhonen once again stated Finland's position on apartheid:

The Government and People of Finland condemn institutionalized racism and the practices that devolve from it. We denounce it in its totality as incompatible with our Nordic conception of justice, equality and dignity of every human being. The only form of legal racism that still exists in the world is in South Africa: that is the regime and policy of apartheid... There will be no peace in Southern Africa until apartheid is eradicated. Further measures by the UN, and by the Security Council in particular, are needed to increase the pressure on South Africa.³

In 1989 in his memoirs Korhonen revealed a different view of Finland's policy on South Africa:

Finland's relations with the RSA [Republic of South Africa] have stopped being foreign policy in the proper meaning of the word. They have become a new dimension of domestic and party politics and simultaneously an important instrument for foreign political self-indulgence. If foreign policy is bread, so Finland's RSA policy is circuses... The RSA is really the Kingdom of Evil which we preach against as 17th century Lutheran priests in Finland preached against the Devil.⁴

An unneeded law

In the five years from 1979 to 1984 relations with Southern Africa were discussed in the Finnish parliament on 24 occasions. As in the case of the UN described earlier, the treatment of the issue became "routine". In the 1980s interest in breaking off diplomatic relations diminished, and most discussion focused on economic relations and specific economic transactions, such as the import of coal and viscose pulp from South Africa.⁵

It was proposed in parliament in 1982 and 1983 that Finland, in compliance with the majority resolutions adopted at the UN General Assembly, should engage in unilateral sanctions against South Africa. Foreign ministers Per Stenbäck and Paavo Väyrynen each

¹ YK, 1881:53.

² YK, 1984:265.

³ Address, 20 November 1984. YK, 1984:263–264.

⁴ Korhonen, 1989:93–94.

⁵ VP pk, 1981:1772–73, oral question by Sten Söderström (People's Democrats); VP pk, 1981:2247–48, oral question by Mikko Kuoppa (People's Democrats); VP pk, 1982:757, oral question by Mikko Kuoppa; VP ak, 1981:F3, written question No. 397 by Mikko Kuoppa *et al.*

replied that the measures proposed were not in accordance with the general principles of Finnish foreign policy.¹

In 1979 a bill was passed in Sweden which prohibited new investments in South Africa. A proposal that Finland should follow the Swedish example was put forward in the Finnish parliament. Foreign Minister Väyrynen replied that since no Finnish manufacturing investments existed nor were planned for South Africa, the government considered “that there is no reason to strain the legislative mechanism by making laws, which in view of the present situation are totally unneeded”.² Five years later Foreign Minister Väyrynen himself introduced and defended in parliament similar “unneeded” legislation.

In late 1984 pressure for change in South Africa began to mount. The turmoil was sparked by opposition to the tricameral parliament and municipal councils in black townships. A state of emergency was declared in 1985 to quash the unrest. Images of the South African police beating black people with *sjamboks* were broadcast and printed all over the world. The violent measures used by the authorities aroused the outrage of the entire international community.

In Finland NGOs mobilized their forces and joined with the political parties in parliament to pressurize the Finnish government to take action on the South African issue. UN member states also began to shift their stance on South Africa.

The most influential actions to affect the Finnish government were the trade union-inspired boycotts and decisions taken by the governments of the other Nordic countries in response to their own NGO pressures. The joint Nordic position, taken originally in 1976, finally began to have an impact on the Finnish position. Väyrynen observes, “When the other Nordic countries went ahead with sanctions without appropriate decisions by the UN, it became impossible for Finland to extricate itself from this course of action.”³

A pressure group, the “Isolate South Africa Campaign” (Eristäkää Etelä-Afrikka kampanja, EELAK), had been established in 1983 in Finland. It was modelled on a similar Swedish organization, the Isolate South Africa Committee or ISAK, founded in 1979. As an umbrella organization, EELAK coordinated the activities of various NGOs, including the trade unions and the Lutheran Church. EELAK operations took off with the aggravated situation in South Africa and became the new focal point for NGO efforts.

EELAK’s first major campaign was to circulate a petition demanding the breaking off of economic relations with South Africa. The petition, signed by 26,000 Finns, was delivered to the foreign ministry in May 1985. Many church congregations had been active in collecting signatures for the petition.

The political parties were also mobilized on the South African issue. In March 1985 the Conservatives, in opposition at the time, proposed that trade with South Africa should be gradually curtailed. In November 1985 Social Democrats proposed that the Finnish *chargé d’affaires* should be withdrawn from Pretoria. Similar demands were also presented by the People’s Democratic League. Of the major parties only the Centre Party remained aloof on this issue. On several occasions, including a meeting of the Centre Party delegation in April 1985, Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen, then chairman of the Centre Party, precluded the possibility of an official party stand which contradicted the official foreign policy view at the time.¹

Parliament took up the South African question again. In 1984 relations with South Africa had been routinely treated on four occasions. In 1985 the question was dealt with on 14 occasions, and parliament took the initiative on Finnish South Africa policy by pushing the foreign ministry to move on the matter.

In early 1985 an unofficial *ad hoc* working group was established in parliament. The group’s mission was to initiate and coordinate parliamentary actions on the issue as well as to cooperate with the Association of West European Parliamentarians for Action Against Apartheid (AWEPAA).

¹ VP ak, 1982:F1, Foreign Minister Per Stenbäck’s reply to written question No. 153 by Terhi Nieminen-Mäkynen (Liberal) *et al.*; VP pk, 1983:2480–81, Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen’s reply to an oral question by Ensio Laine (People’s Democrats).

² VP pk, 1980:2204–05, Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen’s reply to an oral question by Kaarina Suonio (Social Democrat).

³ Väyrynen, 1990b:174.

Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee formulated a letter to the government in June 1985. The committee's letter criticized the government and the foreign ministry for its passivity on the South African question:

Everywhere in the world and also in Finland public support has grown for the idea that all countries should restrict their dealings with South Africa and increase economic and political pressure in order to make South Africa end the practice of apartheid policy. In the opinion of the Foreign Affairs Committee Finland should also take new, more effective measures in pressuring South Africa.²

The Foreign Affairs Committee proposed the prohibition of all investments, and encouraged the government to start negotiations with the business community to abstain voluntarily from economic relations with South Africa, in much the same manner that sports and cultural organizations had done previously.

At the March 1985 meeting of the Nordic foreign ministers, the Norwegian foreign minister made detailed proposals for the widening of the Nordic Programme of Action. In fact, the Danish parliament had already called for a revision of the programme, including the gradual termination of trade between the Nordic countries and South Africa. The Finnish foreign minister tabled a discussion on revising the programme of action, so the proposal was transferred for study by the revived Nordic foreign ministries' Working Group on Measures against South Africa. According to Foreign Minister Väyrynen, new measures for the programme were "not easy" to find and were "technically complicated" to apply.³

In December 1984 the UN Security Council, in response to the aggravated situation, recommended in Resolution 558 that member states refrain from importing arms, ammunition and military vehicles from South Africa.

In June 1985 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 569 by a vote of 13 in favour, none against, and 2 abstentions (the United States, Great Britain). The resolution was sponsored by France, which had changed its stand. In the resolution member states were urged to suspend all new investments and no longer issue guaranteed export loans to South Africa. The resolution further urged that no member states should permit new contracts for nuclear technology or the sale of Krugerrands. Member states were also urged to restrict sports and cultural contacts with South Africa. The resolution was the strongest UN action on the South African issue since the mandatory arms embargo in 1977. The resolution was, however, only a recommendation, since the US and Great Britain used their veto to prevent a mandatory resolution.

In early 1985 the leaders of Finnish foreign policy continued to take a cautious and reserved stand on the South African issue. In April 1985 Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen stated unequivocally that Finland will engage in economic sanctions only on a binding decision by the UN Security Council.⁴

In a newspaper interview President Koivisto declined to take a clear position on unilateral Finnish sanctions. Koivisto reminded the public that Finland still sought to avoid taking a moral stand on foreign policy:

If we take a morally condemning position on one issue we soon will be asked why we have not taken a similar position on another issue... If a gradual and soft transition to majority rule does not take place [in South Africa] the changes will be abrupt. Then all western countries will have to face troublesome moral questions.⁵

With increasing domestic pressure from parliament and the NGOs, the Finnish foreign ministry also reacted, first with voluntary measures, such as negotiations with the business community, then with government-level decisions, and finally with deliberate legislative measures on relatively minor aspects of South Africa relations.

Discussions with the business community were carried by at the Ministry of Trade and Industry in August 1985. The central retail trade organizations were willing to refrain from

¹ *Suomenmaa*, 30 April 1985.

² Kirje hallitukselle [Letter to the Government], 11 June 1985.

³ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 30 March 1985.

⁴ VP ak, 1985:F1, Foreign Minister Väyrynen's reply to written question No. 132 by Esko Almgren (Christian League) *et al.* and to written question No. 139 by Ensio Laine (People's Democrats) *et al.*

⁵ Interview, *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 20 April 1985.

importing fresh and preserved fruits from South Africa. It was possible to monitor the effects of this voluntary action using the automatic licensing of fruit imports that started in September.¹ On their own initiative, certain retail trading companies and Alko had already stopped importing from South Africa.

Finnpap and the Central Association of Finnish Forest Industries (Suomen Metsäteollisuuden Keskusliitto) did, however, not respond well to the idea put forward by the trade ministry. In its reply the Central Association of Finnish Forest Industries stated that it was not possible to curtail the export of forest industry products to South Africa on a voluntary basis. The Association explained that Finnish papermakers had spent decades developing their markets in South Africa and had attained a respectable share of the market. Further, they argued, cessation of the export of forest industry products from Finland would have a minimal effect on the South African economy overall and would, in fact, be welcomed by South Africa's domestic forest industry.²

In accordance with the resolutions of the UN Security Council, the Finnish government in August and September 1985 decided to establish an embargo on arms imports from South Africa and to prohibit state organizations from importing from South Africa. One rationalization put forward by the government was that actual arms imports or intercourse by state organizations with South Africa were either non-existent or of a very sporadic nature.³

With regard to the other measures called for in the Security Council's Resolution 569, measures taken earlier by the Finnish government, although not directly in connection with South Africa, had effectively stopped the import of Krugerrands to Finland and also given the government the power to monitor and stop potential nuclear collaboration with South Africa.

In February 1985 Sweden tightened its 1979 law restricting new investment in South Africa. Denmark did likewise in June 1985, and later withdrew its consular envoy from Pretoria. Norway started to license all imports from South Africa in August 1985. In order to bring Finnish responses into line with the actions of the other Nordic countries, the foreign ministry started to prepare a law prohibiting Finnish investments in South Africa in August 1985. At the time, however, there were no Finnish manufacturing companies with investments there.

In his speech on Namibia Day in August 1985 the Lutheran Archbishop of Finland, John Vikström, accused the Finnish government of hypocrisy on the South African issue:

In our country at the moment an act is being prepared, which as its most important feature forbids Finnish investment in South Africa. This is a good thing in itself, but if the government and parliament restrict their actions only to forbid things that nobody has actually done, I don't believe that our citizens will be satisfied... Many surely regard it as hypocritical to pass [such] an act... and simultaneously to let the State's own companies continue or perhaps even increase their trade with South Africa... Now it is not enough that declarations and statements of principle are issued, now it is time to act.⁴

In its reply to the Archbishop's speech the foreign ministry emphasized that in addition to the prohibition of investments other measures were also being taken or planned by the government.¹ The ministry failed to point out that these other measures also concerned economic transactions that were either non-existent or sporadic in nature.

The debate concerning the role of morality in foreign policy continued in the latter half of the year when the Archbishop and the Church Council for Foreign Affairs (Kirkon ulkomaanasiain neuvosto) proposed that the government implement a trade embargo against South Africa. A simultaneous appeal by the Lutheran Church to 60 Finnish companies to end trade with South Africa failed to generate a large response.

¹ SK, 1985/748. Kauppa- ja teollisuusministeriön päätös [Decision of the Ministry of Trade and Industry].

² Metsäteollisuustuotteiden vienti Etelä-Afrikkaan [The export of forest industry products to South Africa], memorandum, 14 August 1985, from the Central Association of the Finnish Forest Industries. *Helsingin Sanomat*, 23 August 1985.

³ Valtioneuvoston päätös [Decision of the Council of State], 22 and 26 August 1985, Archives of the Prime Minister's Office.

⁴ Speech, 26 August 1985, Archives of the Information Centre of the Church.

In a typical reaction, Fredrik Castrén, CEO of the Kymmene Corporation, replied, “I don’t regard the Church as any sort of a negotiation partner in these matters”.² Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen stressed to Archbishop Vikström that the Church should be consistent in its foreign policy just as the foreign ministry was.³

Something has to be done

In October 1985 economic relations between Finland and South Africa entered a new phase. On 20 October 1985 the Finnish Transport Workers’ Union (Auto- ja Kuljetusalan Työntekijäliitto, AKT) started a blockade of goods being shipped to and from South Africa. The blockade effectively stopped all direct trade between Finland and South Africa.

Risto Kuisma, chairman of the Transport Workers’ Union, argued for the boycott as follows:

International solidarity has been mentioned in the trade unions’ programmes for a hundred years. If it is written into the programme, then something also should be done. One cannot simply write manifestos against the South African government knowing all the time that something more could be done.⁴

The action taken by the Transport Workers’ Union was supported by the Central Organization of the Finnish Trade Unions (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö, SAK). The Central Organization regretted that measures by the government to stop trade had been so slow. Other trade unions joined the transport workers in actions against South Africa. Postal traffic between Finland and South Africa was cut off for a fortnight in November 1985 by a boycott by the Postal Workers’ Union. The actions of the Finnish transport workers received international attention.⁵

Central Association of the Forest Industries stated that the boycott was “immoral”, because the people bearing its consequences were not the transport workers but the workers in the paper industry.⁶ The Paper Workers’ Union joined the boycott, however, and cooperated with the transport workers in carrying out the blockade.

The Finnish government had mixed feelings about the boycott. The Social Democratic ministers favoured the boycott. Jermu Laine, the Minister of Trade and Industry, stated in parliament: “The government states that in opposing the apartheid system, the objectives of the government are similar to those of the trade union movement”.⁷ President Koivisto stated in a television interview that the measures taken by the government and the trade union movement were along the same lines.⁸

The approving stand of the Social Democratic ministers reflects the advantages gained by allowing the trade unions to implement the trade embargo. Finland could be seen as taking action even though the government itself was absolved of any responsibility for these actions and, therefore, the government could not be taken to task for violation of international agreements.

The ministers of the Centre Party were explicitly against the boycott. Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen stated in parliament:

If these boycotts continue, they are going to worsen the employment situation and cause losses to very many workers and their families... These boycotts will have no effect on

¹ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 28 August 1985.

² *Uusi Suomi*, 10 September 1985.

³ Cf. Väyrynen, 1988.

⁴ Interview, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 May 1986.

⁵ Hanlon and Omond, 1987:275, 283.

⁶ Interview with Matti Pekkanen, CEO of the Central Association, *Hufvudstabladet*, 9 October 1985.

⁷ VP ak, 1985:F2. Reply to written question No. 364 by Tuure Junnila (Conservative).

⁸ Interview, *Ajankohtainen kakkonen*, 22 October 1985.

the Republic of South Africa, if the example is not followed by the trade unions in other countries... This well-intentioned effort seems unfortunately to have come to nothing.¹

On several occasions Paavo Väyrynen confirmed the government's and the foreign ministry's stand on the boycott: "The Finnish government has not decided to terminate trade relations with the Republic of South Africa".²

The Nordic foreign ministers adopted a renewed Nordic Programme of Action against South Africa at their meeting in October 1985. In a 15-point programme, new Nordic investments were prohibited or discouraged and Nordic enterprises were advised to restrict their production in South Africa and limit import and export trade. All state support for the promotion of trade was prohibited and technology transfer discouraged. Visa regulations for South African citizens were tightened.

According to newspaper reports, the Finnish foreign minister proposed more far-reaching measures regarding the prohibition of new investments, but was opposed by Sweden, which had more investments in South Africa than any of the other Nordic countries.³ The Danish foreign minister suggested further curtailing of diplomatic relations, but was rebuffed by Sweden and Finland, both of which had diplomatic representation in South Africa.⁴

After adopting the Nordic Programme of Action, the Finnish government in November 1985 introduced a bill on Certain Measures Directed at South Africa.⁵ The act represented a fundamental change in Finnish foreign policy. Earlier the Finnish position had been that economic sanctions could be applied only after a binding decision from the UN Security Council. Now, with a precedent set by legislation passed in other Nordic countries, Finland engaged in unilateral sanctions against South Africa with only the Security Council's recommendation to go on.

The measures passed in the Finnish act were in accordance with the Nordic Programme of Action. Investments as well as loans and guarantees to South Africa were prohibited. Exempted from the law were payment, credit and guarantee arrangements customary in international trade transactions. Loans to organizations opposing apartheid and to the churches were also exempted. Leasing by enterprises in South Africa as well as the transfer of patents and manufacturing licenses to South Africa were prohibited.

In fact, the act essentially banned economic transactions which were either non-existent or of marginal importance. Trade relations were left intact. Responding to criticism on this point, Foreign Minister Väyrynen replied that the breaking off trade with South Africa was contrary to GATT regulations. Moreover, the termination of trade would cause unemployment in the Finnish paper industry, while having no effect on South Africa. A trade embargo would be effective only if based on the mandatory resolution by the UN Security Council.⁶

The act was unanimously adopted in parliament and came into effect on 1 January 1986. Motions for the withdrawal of the *chargé d'affaires* from Pretoria and for a trade embargo, proposed by the People's Democrats and the Greens, were defeated in parliament. Among the initial signatories to the trade boycott motion were several Social Democratic MPs. However, on demand from Foreign Minister Väyrynen, Prime Minister Sorsa and President Koivisto, the Social Democratic MPs as representatives of the government coalition, withdrew their support for the motion.⁷

After the passing of the South Africa Act, Max Jakobson argued that Finnish foreign policy had changed to a more moralizing and populist direction, compared to the Kekkonen era.⁸ Jakobson's article generated a lively debate on the relation of morality to foreign policy. In

¹ VP pk, 1985: 3686.

² Ibid., p. 4195, cf. p. 3975.

³ *Dagens Nyheter*, 19 October 1985.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18 October 1985.

⁵ SK, 1985/1104–06. Laki eräistä Etelä-Afrikkaan kohdistuvista toimenpiteistä; Asetus Etelä-Afrikkaan kohdistetusta sijoituskiellosta [Decree on a Ban on Investments in South Africa]; Valtioneuvoston päätös Etelä-Afrikalle myönnettävistä luotoista [Decision of the Council of State on the Credits extended to South Africa].

⁶ VP pk, 1985: 3685–86.

⁷ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 May 1986.

⁸ Jakobson, 1986.

the debate, Osmo Apunen, remarked that the question at issue was not the relation between morals and foreign policy, but rather between morals and trade.¹

Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen also took part in the discussion. In a letter sent from the Sheraton Hotel in Harare, Zimbabwe, Väyrynen replied to Jakobson that Finnish foreign policy had not “changed” rather it had “developed”. However, Väyrynen agreed with Jakobson that public opinion had begun to have a disproportionately large influence on foreign policy in recent years:

Public opinion, in certain respects, has begun to take an alarming direction. This can become a problem if the matter is not acknowledged and taken into account. Changes in public opinion are often emotional and not always consistent... However, in a democratic country the government cannot act against public opinion. That’s why we badly need an open discussion on foreign policy... It is right to expect that the government is not driven by public opinion even in seemingly second-rate issues.²

Olli Kivinen, Foreign Editor for the *Helsingin Sanomat*, opposed this view and argued in his column:

South Africa is an excellent signpost to far away countries which trouble themselves on how to credibly combine morality with foreign policy and national interests. The South Africa lesson is simple. It may be worthwhile to look the other way [in some matters], but when really great wrongs are at stake, no civilized country can stick its head in the sand.³

Prime Minister Kalevi Sorsa participated in the debate in early 1987 by saying,

When oppression becomes as cruel as it is in South Africa now, the international rules of trade no longer apply. To defend the rights of the oppressed is a question of humanism, not business.⁴

In the second coach

The transport workers’ blockade effectively stopped all direct trade between Finland and South Africa. Nevertheless, indirect trade via third countries continued. In early 1986 all the Finnish subsidiaries in South Africa, Finn-Mills, Kymmene-Star, Stromberg and Valmet, were conducting business as usual.

The managing director of Valmet’s subsidiary stated in an interview that his company had “not lost a single order on account of the blockade... Valmet is an international company with diverse activities outside Finland.”⁵ The managing director of Finn-Mills then added “We sell paper from stocks, and increasingly paper from world markets. It is not for us to examine where this paper comes from”.⁶

Thus, indirect trade was allowed to continue partly on the understanding that the Finnish government had not specifically prohibited such trade with South Africa; a fact that Foreign Minister Paavo Väyrynen repeatedly emphasized.

In May 1986 the Danish parliament passed a law prohibiting trade with South Africa. At the same time it was announced that Norway was planning similar measures, which were then passed in November 1986.

A bill outlawing the export and import trade with South Africa was also proposed in the Finnish parliament in May 1986. The motion was signed by 57 MPs, including MPs from the

¹ Apunen, 1986.

² *Uusi Suomi*, 2 February 1986.

³ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 2 February 1986.

⁴ Sorsa, 1987:12.

⁵ *Kaupparehti*, 27 February 1986.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 February, 1986.

People's Democrats, the populist Rural Party, the Greens, and even Social Democrats.¹ "It is more or less a permitted hobby", Prime Minister Sorsa was now quoted as saying.²

In the summer of 1986, while the other Nordic countries prepared sanctions laws and pressure for action mounted in the Finnish parliament, the Finnish government took to action to terminate trade. Even at this stage, legislation was still avoided.

The Transport Workers' Union had evidence that the Kymmene Corporation had exported paper to South Africa via West Germany and the Netherlands. Consequently the transport workers threatened to broaden their blockade to include all Kymmene's exports. To avoid an unstable situation, the representatives of the business community requested a clear statement from the government, on which the enterprises could base their actions.³

In June 1986 the government officially appealed to the organizations representing business interests to urge their member enterprises to immediately terminate all direct and indirect trade with South Africa.

In the Cabinet the appeal was taken up by Prime Minister Sorsa, not by Foreign Minister Väyrynen. Foreign Minister Väyrynen commented: "This is naturally a recommendation and it is up to companies to consider what they will do". The response from the Central Association of the Finnish Forest Industries was clear: "We will follow to the letter the appeal by the government... We stand by the government's trade policy".⁴

A memorandum circulated to the member enterprises of the Central Association of the Finnish Forest Industries explained:

On account of the appeal by the government... we request member companies and the industry's joint export organizations to act so that the measures presented in the appeal are implemented immediately and followed to the letter... Our earlier policy has been to behave in this matter according to the directions and wishes of the government and the foreign trade authorities. We shall do likewise this time, too.⁵

The appeal to the business community was followed by a decision by the Ministry of Trade and Industry to start the automatic licensing of all imports and exports with South Africa on 15 July 1986.⁶

After these measures were taken, Foreign Minister Väyrynen stated his view of Finnish sanctions against South Africa: Finland was "in the second coach of the first train".¹ The phrase accurately depicts how both the direction and the pace of the measures taken by the Finnish government and foreign ministry were *de facto* decided by the other Nordic countries.

Prior to the meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers in August 1986 the Finnish foreign ministry announced that a bill on a total stop to trade with South Africa was in preparation. At the meeting all other Nordic countries, except Sweden, expressed readiness to start a trade embargo at the beginning of 1987. Sweden agreed in principle on the joint Nordic action, but had reservations concerning the proposed date.

The unilateral Nordic sanctions against South Africa were partly based on the hope that other countries would follow suit and, consequently, that a UN Security Council resolution imposing effective sanctions against South Africa would follow.

The Security Council did not, however, deal with the South African issue in 1986. In February and April 1987 mandatory selective economic sanctions against South Africa were proposed, but the veto powers of the United States and Great Britain prevented the adoption of these resolutions.

The UN General Assembly adopted eight resolutions on the South African issue in 1986. From the Finnish and Nordic point of view Resolution 41/35 H was the most significant and called for "Concerted International Action for the Elimination of Apartheid". This resolution

¹ VP ak, 1986:E1. Legislative motion No. 65 by Reino Paasilinna (Social Democrat) *et al.* The motion was left untreated by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

² Interview, *Suomenmaa*, 10 June 1986.

³ *Helsingin Sanomat* and *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 27 June 1986.

⁴ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 27 June 1986.

⁵ Kirje [Memorandum] by the Central Organization of the Finnish Forest Industries, 27 June 1986.

⁶ SK, 1986/525. Kauppa- ja teollisuusministeriön päätös [Decision of the Ministry of Trade and Industry].

was negotiated by the Nordic countries and the African states, and drafted and presented by Finland. The resolution was adopted for the third time, by 149 in favour, 2 against (the United States, Great Britain), and 5 abstentions. A similar resolution (42/23 G) was adopted in 1987.

One of the positive Nordic approaches to the South African question was the aid given the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, SADCC. SADCC, composed of Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, was established in 1980, after Zimbabwe's transition to majority rule in the same year.

The objectives of SADCC were to increase the economic independence of the countries and, accordingly, to lessen their dependence on South Africa. The Nordic countries have participated in SADCC from the beginning. On the initiative of Prime Minister Sorsa, a 13-point declaration was signed in Harare in 1986 on increased economic and cultural cooperation between SADCC countries and Nordic countries.

Go to hell!

The boycott by transport workers as well as the measures taken by the government curtailed trade between Finland and South Africa. From 1984 onwards it dropped rapidly, to a mere trickle in 1986.

Year	Finnish exports to SA		Finnish imports from SA	
	(millions)		(millions)	
1984	FIM 547	US\$ 91	FIM 124	US\$ 21
1985	FIM 320	US\$ 52	FIM 108	US\$ 17
1986	FIM 13	US\$ 3	FIM 4	US\$ 0.8

Source: Suomen virallinen tilasto. Ulkomaankauppa [Official Statistics of Finland. Foreign Trade], 1984–1986. Helsinki:Tullihallitus [Board of Customs], 1985–1987.

Because of the appeal by the government to the business community, the Finnish marketing subsidiaries in South Africa curtailed their activities. By the beginning of 1987 all companies had ceased operations.

Finn-Mills was bought by its local management and renamed Forest Mills, becoming a domestic South African company in the process. The company continued to receive deliveries from other western European sources and sought to maintain contacts with former clients of the Finnish paper producers. During the discussions leading to the management buying the South African subsidiary, the option for Finnmap to reacquire the company after the lifting of sanctions was raised.²

The selling of Finnish Strömberg to Swedish ASEA and the subsequent merger of ASEA with Brown Boveri of Switzerland, entailed that Stromberg (S.A.) became part of the Asea Brown Boveri Group (ABB).³

Kymmene-Star was sold to the Haddons Group; Valmet simply closed its doors.

A 1985 estimate stated that exports to South Africa provided employment for about 500 Finns.⁴ Cessation of trade did not, however, increase unemployment in Finland. Rather, it caused a marginal fall in plant capacity at companies involved in trade with South Africa. In certain cases it was possible to divert export products to alternative markets.

Only a few companies were actually unable to avoid financial damage.⁵ One such company, the state-owned mining and metallurgy company, Outokumpu Oy, reported that the trade embargo cost it tens of millions of finnmars annually.⁶

In October in 1986 the US Congress decided on limited trade sanctions against South Africa. Laws prohibiting trade with South Africa went into effect in Denmark in December

¹ *Helsingin Sanomat*, 3 July 1986.

² *Tekniikka ja talous*, 8 March 1991.

³ Cf. Adolfsson, 1988:22–31.

⁴ Kiljunen, 1985:52.

⁵ Cf. Oksanen; Rettig yhtiöt, vuosikertomus [Annual report], 1985:29.

⁶ *Ilta-Sanomat*, 18 July 1990.

1986 and in Norway in March 1987. In March 1987 the Swedish government introduced a similar bill in its parliament. At the meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers in March 1987 it was stated that a Nordic trade embargo would soon become a reality. Finland, the last of the Nordic countries, introduced boycott legislation in May 1987.

The bill was introduced by the new “left-right” government, formed after the elections in early 1987 and based on a coalition of Conservatives and Social Democrats, which left the Centre Party without a seat in the Cabinet of Ministers. Actually, the government coalition played a minor role in introducing the legislation. The bill had already been prepared in the foreign ministry under directions from the previous government and was in accord with the joint Nordic position.

Technically, the act was an amendment to the previous South Africa Act. The new act prohibited all export of goods from Finland to South Africa and Namibia, and all import to Finland of goods originating from South Africa or Namibia.¹ The government was given the power to grant exemptions for the export of spare parts for equipment delivered prior to the act. Goods for medical and humanitarian purposes were also exempted.²

The preamble to the bill stressed that the exceptional situation in South Africa demanded and justified exceptional measures:

The apartheid system in South Africa is to be regarded as such an extraordinary phenomenon that it can be opposed with extraordinary measures. The trade embargo against South Africa signifies no change in the Finnish position concerning the utilization of sanctions and it is not a precedent to corresponding measures in some other situation.³

The preamble also stated that the actual economic effects of the embargo would be very limited because most trade had already been terminated due to measures taken in 1985 and 1986. It added that the worst effects of the boycott were most likely to be suffered by Finnish manufacturers of mining equipment.

In parliament attention was called to the fact that the proposed act concerned only direct trade between Finland and South Africa, not indirect trade via third countries.⁴ Thus, the Foreign Affairs Committee required further measures to be taken by the government to prevent export and import via third countries.⁵

Foreign Minister Kalevi Sorsa replied that the government had no information on exports from Finland to South Africa via third countries. “If”, said Sorsa, “those who present the allegations have evidence of such transactions, the government will gladly accept and examine the evidence and will take the appropriate measures.”⁶ A proposal to prohibit indirect trade, put forward by the People’s Democrats, was defeated in parliament.

The Foreign Affairs Committee report also stated that the government should consider the possibility of downgrading the level of Finnish diplomatic representation in Pretoria or to temporarily withdraw the diplomatic representative. A proposal on downgrading diplomatic contacts was defeated in parliament.

The South Africa Act was unanimously adopted by the Finnish parliament on 16 June 1987. It went into effect on 1 July 1987, simultaneously with a similar act passed by the Swedish parliament.

In South Africa far more interest and criticism was generated by the Swedish action than by Finnish sanctions. In early 1987, *The Citizen*, a pro-South African government newspaper, expressed its stand on Sweden’s policy on South Africa in an editorial entitled “Go to hell”.¹

¹ SK, 1987/599. Laki eräistä Etelä-Afrikkaan kohdistuvista toimenpiteistä annetun lain muuttamisesta [Act on the Amendment of the Act on Certain Measures Directed at South Africa].

² SK, 1987/600 & 601. Valtioneuvoston päätös tavaroiden viennistä ja tuonnista Suomen ja Etelä-Afrikan tasavallan välillä [Decision of the Council of State on the Export and Import of Goods between Finland and the Republic of South Africa]; Valtioneuvoston päätös Etelä-Afrikalle myönnettävistä luotoista annetun valtioneuvoston päätöksen muuttamisesta [Decision of the Council of State amending the Council of State’s Decision on the Credits Extended to South Africa].

³ VP ak, 1987:A1. Government proposal No. 16.

⁴ VP pk, 1987:649-650. Speech by Marjatta Stenius-Kaukonen (People’s Democrats).

⁵ VP ak, 1987:C. Report No. 5 by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

⁶ Vp pk, 1987:652.

A Positive Signal, 1988–1991

We have shown the world that we can be trusted.

Johan C. Lötter, South African Ambassador to Finland²

On 29 June 1991 *The Citizen* offered a more upbeat headline on Nordic sanctions: “Finland to lift SA trade bans”. The paper presented Finland’s reasons for lifting sanctions, stating, Progress has been made. South Africa has repealed all four of the main apartheid laws that formed the principal basis for Finland’s voluntary imposition of a total embargo on South Africa... [However,] the reform process within South Africa is not complete. The Finnish government will not, therefore, repeal all sanctions [e.g. the ban on new investments] against South Africa at once, but is advancing gradually to encourage continuation of reforms.³

The item also made reference to the UN Special Committee against apartheid, which had expressed “deep disappointment” at Finland’s decision:

The Special Committee is particularly disappointed because Finland has a long history of solidarity with the struggling people of South Africa... It would now seem that Finland is abandoning the struggle during the last crucial mile in the march towards a united non-racial and democratic South Africa.⁴

Finnish policy shifted because the situation in South Africa had changed. When President Frederik de Klerk took office in August 1989, he started to take steps to dismantle apartheid, something his predecessor, Pieter Botha, never had the courage to do. Furthermore, Namibia, the focus of Finnish missionary activity, gained its independence on 21 March 1990; an extremely important event from the Finnish point of view.

Tough competition

After the passage of the 1987 South Africa Act, the interest of Finnish NGOs and parliament focused on indirect trade between Finland and South Africa. The Finnish government adhered to a strictly formal interpretation of the law. Even in cases where indirect trade had obviously occurred, no measures were taken, as the letter of the law had not been formally violated.

The attitude of the government toward indirect trade with South Africa was summed up by Minister of Trade and Industry, Ilkka Suominen (Conservative), in his reply to allegations that Finland was importing vanadium of South African origin:

It would be a rather overwhelming task, to start to require that companies involved in foreign trade examine the country of origin of each trading partner’s every component, and every component of every component... it is not reasonable to insist that companies go into such detail.⁵

The South African issue was discussed in parliament eight times during each of the three years from 1987 to 1989. The People’s Democrats made the most of the initiatives, but as they were in opposition their actions had no concrete results.

¹ *The Citizen*, 3 March 1987.

² Interview, *Uusi Suomi*, 8 May 1989

³ *The Citizen*, 29 June 1991.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ VP pk, 1987:118. Minister Suominen’s reply to an oral question by Esko-Juhani Tennilä (People’s Democrats).

Parliament's attention was also called to the fact that the state-owned Rautaruukki Oy was apparently importing South African manganese via Norway to Finland. The manganese was imported to Norway by the Norwegian company Elkem, as manganses had been granted an exemption from the Norwegian South Africa Act.

In his reply the Minister for Foreign Trade, Pertti Salolainen (Conservative), did not deny that some kind of manganese ore or concentrate was being shipped from South Africa to Norway. However, noted Minister Salolainen, the South African product was being processed in Norway into a silica ferromanganese concentrate, which he claimed was a different product with a different customs code. Norway was, therefore, classified as the country of origin, so these imports did not fall within the scope of the Finnish South Africa legislation. "The authorities interpret the law. The Board of Customs interprets the law. The Board of Customs interprets the law in such a way that the product in question is a different product," concluded Minister Salolainen.¹

The response was similar when 90 MPs—nearly half of all members of parliament—from all political parties represented in parliament, drew attention to the import of uranium oxide originating in South Africa. Trade Minister Suominen replied that even if the uranium oxide originated from South Africa, it was further processed in France and in the Soviet Union. Again, this made it a product with a different customs code, and, consequently, its import was not at odds with Finnish law.²

The confusion surrounding the processing of metal products led to a proposal in parliament that the Finnish South Africa Act be extended to more clearly prohibit trade via third countries. The motion, signed by ten MPs from the People's Democrats, Social Democrats, Greens, and even the Centre Party was never taken up by the Foreign Affairs Committee.³

In 1989 Sweden allocated greater resources to its customs authorities in order to detect violations of the South Africa trade embargo, including trade via third-countries.⁴ Similar measures were seen as unnecessary in Finland. The only case in which a violation of the South Africa Act resulted in legal punishment was a small fine levied in May 1990 for the illegal import of car parts from South Africa to Finland.

The limits of the Finnish South Africa Act were tested when a Finnish company was accused of participating in the exploitation of Namibian natural resources. The case centred around a Finnish fur auction company, Finnish Fur Sales Co. Ltd (Turkistuottajat Oy), which had acquired a London-based auction company, Hudson Bay & Annings Ltd. (HBA) in February 1987. HBA was itself in partnership with Eastwood & Holt Ltd, and together these companies held a monopoly of the trade in Namibian karakul pelts.

Marketed under the trade name of Swakara, the Namibian pelts were sorted and shipped by Eastwood & Holt and then auctioned in London by Hudson Bay & Annings Ltd. A third of the stocks of Eastwood & Holt were owned by HBA, the rest by three South African and Namibian karakul farmers' cooperatives. Eastwood & Holt, even though registered in Great Britain, was *de facto* a joint Finnish-South African company.⁵

The activities of Hudson Bay & Annings Ltd. could be regarded as contrary to the Decree for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia by the UN Council for Namibia. The decree sought to protect the Namibian natural resources for the future independent nation stating that

No person or entity... may... sell, export, or distribute any natural resource, whether animal or mineral,... produced in... the Territory of Namibia... without the consent and permission of the United Nations Council for Namibia.⁶

¹ VP pk, 1989:1362. Minister Salolainen's reply to an oral question by Ensio Laine (People's Democrats).

² VP ak, 1989:F3. Minister Suominen's reply to written question No. 603 by Arja Alho (Social Democrat) *et al.*

³ VP ak, 1988:E1. Legislative motion No. 12 by Ensio Lane (People's Democrats) *et al.*; VP pk, 1988:236.

⁴ Statens Offentliga Utredningar [Official Reports of the Swedish Government], SOU 1990:6, p. 55.

⁵ Pekkarinen, 1988.

⁶ Decree No. 1 for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia, Report of the United Nations council for Namibia 1974, Vol. I, p. 154.

The decree, included in Resolution 3295, was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1974. Finland was among the 112 states voting for the resolution.

Attention was first drawn to the activities of Finnish Fur Sales and Hudson Bay & Annings by NGOs, and subsequently this was pointed out in parliament on three occasions. Foreign Minister Kalevi Sorsa acknowledged that these activities might be seen as a violation of the Decree for the Protection of the Natural Resources of Namibia.

According to Minister Sorsa, however, it was more significant that both HBA and Eastwood & Holt were registered in Great Britain, so the activities of Finnish Fur Sales and the other companies in question could not be seen as a violation of the Finnish South Africa Act. Sorsa did add, however, that beyond the law, the government's 1986 appeal to the business community to terminate all direct and indirect trade with South Africa still applied.¹ When the issue was handled on the other occasions in parliament, the ministers similarly emphasized that the company's activities were not in violation of the Finnish South Africa Act.²

In early 1989 the Finnish company Tamrock bought the US mining equipment producer, Baker Hughes Inc. Baker Hughes had a subsidiary in South Africa, Eimco Jarvis Clark, with over 300 employees producing underground mining machinery. No conflict with the act occurred because the South African subsidiary was sold to its management in South Africa.

Likewise, no Finnish government intervention occurred when the Kymmene Corporation in 1990 sold its subsidiary Star Paper and its two paper mills in Great Britain to South African SAPPI, which was beginning its expansion in Europe.

The South Africa Act allowed the Finnish government to grant exemptions. From 1987 to 1991, export exemptions were granted to seven Finnish companies for a total of FIM 7.7 million. Three exemptions with a total value of FIM 3.1 million were granted to Outokumpu Oy. Ara Oy, a division of Tamrock, was granted exemptions worth FIM 2.5 million. Only an exemption application by Instrumentarium Oy was denied.

The exemptions for Outokumpu were taken up in parliament. There, Trade Minister Ilkka Suominen stated that these requests covered spare parts for deliveries of equipment made before the trade embargo went into effect. Suominen added:

From Outokumpu Oy's standpoint the question is how to protect the company's reputation outside the Republic of South Africa... in a field where international competition is very tough.¹

Policy in transition

The March 1988 meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers adopted a revised Nordic Programme of Action against apartheid. The revision took into account the trade embargoes implemented by each of the Nordic countries. In addition, the programme emphasized the importance of international measures that could be taken on the widest possible scale within the framework of the UN, as well as increased Nordic humanitarian assistance to victims and opponents of apartheid and to SADC member states.

At their meeting a year later, in March 1989, the Nordic Foreign Ministers were in a position to express satisfaction over the positive changes in Southern Africa. In December 1988 the negotiation process leading to the independence of Namibia had begun. Finland's role in the independence process was significant. Over 800 Finnish soldiers were part of the peace-keeping force in the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) in Namibia from 1989 to 1990. In addition, the operation was headed by the UN Secretary General's Special Representative, Martti Ahtisaari of Finland.

¹ VP pk, 1987: 2465-67. Minister Sorsa's reply to an oral question by Marjatta Stenius-Kaukonen (People's Democrats).

² VP ak, 1988:F2. Minister Pekka Vennamo's (Rural Party) reply to written question No. 397 by Marjatta Stenius-Kaukonen (People's Democrats) *et al.*; VP ak, 1988:F3. Minister Pertti Salolainen's reply to written question No. 669 by Marjatta Stenius-Kaukonen *et al.*

With regard to the situation in South Africa, the Nordic Foreign Ministers stated in March 1989 that conditions within South Africa did not give rise to optimism concerning a rapid abolition of apartheid. This was, however, to change soon.

In February 1990 President F.W. de Klerk announced the unbanning of the ANC and other organizations and the release of Nelson Mandela. This surprise move started a transition period which resulted in the repeal of the main apartheid laws by mid-1991. At the time of writing, however, no democratic, non-racial constitution exists and three-fourths of the people of South Africa still do not have the vote.

The positive developments in South Africa have caused many countries to re-evaluate their own positions. The idea of reassessing the joint Nordic measures against South Africa was discussed at the meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers in March 1990. All ministers agreed that the Nordic countries would modify their visa restrictions concerning South African citizens to show their willingness to increase opportunities for contacts that could contribute to furthering dialogue and the democratization process in South Africa.

Finland's new stand materialized faster than in other Nordic countries. 1990 marked a watershed in the handling of the South African question in the Finnish parliament. The previous year the emphasis in parliamentary discussions had been on finding loopholes in the South Africa Act and generating proposals to patch them. In 1990, three of the five occasions when the South African question was discussed involved proposals to lift sanctions. Simultaneously the foreign ministry began to study options for the lifting of sanctions.

With Namibian independence, trade with Namibia was placed outside the Finnish trade embargo.² Foreign Minister Pertti Paasio (Social Democrat) hinted to parliament that the Finnish stand concerning the sanctions against South Africa was also in transition:

The development which has begun in South Africa under the present government is encouraging, but one has to keep in mind... that an actual breakthrough has not taken place as long as the state of emergency is still in force and the apartheid laws have not been repealed. But we have every reason to believe that in the near future such a development might take place.³

In December 1990 parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee took up the matter of South Africa sanctions. Without defining concrete actions, the Committee in principle supported the easing of sanctions:

With regard to the developments that have taken place in the Republic of South Africa, the Foreign Affairs Committee has taken the view that the government should consider measures which encourage positive development.⁴

Even the traditionally vocal MPs in the Left-Wing Alliance only uttered mild criticism of the report during a plenary session of parliament.⁵ Even though the report made no specific recommendations on how sanctions were to be lifted, the acceptance of the Foreign Affairs Committee report by parliament was interpreted by the government as a blessing for the lifting of the trade embargo given by the majority of the parliamentary parties.

The interests of Finnish exporters also formed a base for a changed position by the Foreign Affairs Committee. Markus Aaltonen, Social Democratic Chairman of the Committee, stated that naive "blue-eyed" Finland and its export industries ran the risk of standing on sidelines watching while other countries enjoyed the fruits of renewed trade with South Africa.¹

¹ VP pk, 1989:1045. Minister Suominen's reply to an oral question by Ensio Laine (People's Democrats).

² SK, 1990/248. Asetus eräistä Etelä-Afrikkaan kohdistuvista toimenpiteistä annetun lain säädösten soveltamisen lakkaamisesta Namibian osalta [Decree on the Abolition, on the Part of Namibia, of the Act on Certain Measures Directed Against South Africa].

³ VP pk, 1990:1007. Minister Paasio's reply to an oral question by Jörn Donner (Swedish People's Party); cf. VP ak, 1990:F1. Foreign Minister Pertti Paasio's (Social Democrat) reply to written question No. 55 by Tuure Junnila (Conservative).

⁴ VP ak, 1990. Report No. 20 by the Foreign Affairs Committee.

⁵ VP pk, 1991. Plenary sessions on 15 and 22 January.

Committee Vice Chairman, Ingvar S. Melin (Swedish People's Party) added: "Finland is one of the few countries that still maintains a trade embargo that leaves a significant market unutilized".²

Speedy action

In 1990 the UN General Assembly adopted eight resolutions on the South African issue. The most significant was Resolution 45/176 A on "International Efforts to Eradicate Apartheid". It was adopted by consensus without a vote. The resolution called upon governments, organizations and financial institutions to use concerted and effective measures, particularly in the areas of economic and financial relations with South Africa, aimed at applying pressure to ensure a swift end to apartheid.

The Nordic countries dropped their earlier resolution on "Concerted International Action for the Elimination of Apartheid", because certain provisions in it were now incorporated in the new consensus resolution.

In December 1990 the European Community lifted its ban on new investments in South Africa. Accordingly, Ingvar S. Melin inquired in parliament if the government was prepared to lift sanctions, since, he argued, the action taken by the EC put Finnish companies at a disadvantage compared to their European competitors. Prime Minister Harri Holkeri (Conservative) replied:

The Finnish government has envisaged a ready programme of action of gradual change in the policy we have applied so far, and we strive to coordinate it... with the other Nordic countries. If for some reason it should happen that the other Nordic countries do not perceive the situation in the same manner as we do, our starting point is that it is in our interest to monitor very carefully the development of the situation in South Africa and to react accordingly.³

At the March 1991 meeting of the Nordic Foreign Ministers it was evident that the joint Nordic stand on the South African question, which had lasted from 1976, was to be jettisoned. Sweden and Norway were not prepared to lift sanctions until a democratic constitution was implemented in South Africa, or genuine negotiations for one had started. Finland, however, was prepared to give a positive signal to the South African government on the basis of reforms which had already taken place.

The first sign of a policy shift was the elevation of the status of diplomatic representation. On the initiative of the Finnish foreign ministry, Finland and South Africa agreed in March 1991 that their legations in both countries would be elevated to embassy status headed by Ambassadors.

The next Finnish move was the lifting of trade sanctions against South Africa. This surprising decision, taken on 27 June, went into effect on 1 July 1991.⁴ Other sanctions against South Africa, such as the ban on new investments remained in place.

The decision to end the trade embargo was taken by the new "centre-right" government, formed after the elections in early 1991. Foreign minister for the new government was veteran

¹ *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, 20 December 1990.

² Interview, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 18 December 1990.

³ VP pk, 14 February 1991.

⁴ SK, 1991/994-996. Asetus eräistä Etelä-Afrikkaan kohdistuvista toimenpiteistä annetun lain 2 a pykälän soveltamisen lakkaamisesta [Decree on the Abolition of Section 2a of the Act on Certain Measures Directed at South Africa]; Valtioneuvoston päätös Etelä-Afrikalle myönnettävistä luotoista annetun valtioneuvoston päätöksen 1 pykälän muuttamisesta [Decision of the Council of State amending Section 1 of the Council of State's Decision on the credits extended to South Africa]; Valtioneuvoston päätös tavaroiden viennistä ja tuonnista Suomen ja Etelä-Afrikan välillä annetun valtioneuvoston päätöksen kumoamisesta [Decision of the Council of State on the Repeal of the Council of State's Decision on the Export and Import of Goods between Finland and the Republic of South Africa].

Paavo Väyrynen. In fact, the decision to end sanctions had been prepared under the previous government, when the foreign ministry was headed by Pertti Paasio (Social Democrat).

The foreign ministry argued for ending the trade embargo after seeing positive developments in South Africa and because the EC and the United States were lifting their sanctions. The interests of the Finnish export industries were also noted:

The continuance as such [of Finland's trade sanctions] in the present situation no longer supports the democratization process [in South Africa] but does harm Finland's economic interests in comparison to other countries in the long term.¹

To prepare for the lifting of sanctions, the foreign ministry in cooperation with the Finnish Foreign Trade Association decided in April 1991 to send an envoy to South Africa to study the market situation. When the government made the decision to lift trade sanctions in June, a Finnish business delegation, headed by Pertti Voutilainen, CEO of Outokumpu Oy, was already in South Africa on a fact-finding mission studying trade possibilities.

The lifting of trade sanctions was done swiftly. Technically the 1987 trade embargo was an amendment to the original South Africa Act of 1986 and, therefore, revoking the amendment in 1991 only required a decision of the government with legal formalization in the form of a decree signed by the president. This opportunity was utilized.

The ban on new investments in South Africa remained in place to emphasize that the lifting of the sanctions was being done in steps. Further, the foreign ministry reasoned that the ban on investments, as part of the original act, could not be lifted by decree, but rather had to be treated as a change in a law passed by parliament.²

The public discussion that followed the ending of the trade embargo was far less intense than the pre-sanctions debate. MPs from the Left-Wing Alliance (formerly People's Democrats) and the Greens expressed their opposition to the decision. The Church Council for Foreign Affairs expressed its opinion that sanctions should have been lifted only when the changes in South Africa were irreversible. The Central Organization of the Finnish Trade Unions and the Transport Workers' Union, stated that the trade unions' boycott would continue regardless of the government's decision. Risto Kuisma, Chairman of the Transport Workers' Union, stated that the boycott would only be ended when South African trade unions and black opposition organizations let it be known that sanctions were no longer needed.³

In the press, opinion on the government's decision was split. The newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* (independent) and the weekly newsmagazine *Suomen Kuvalehti* (independent) supported the speedy decision by Finnish government.⁴ Criticism came from the tabloid *Italehti* (independent), which stated that "negligent and gullible" Finland was "in a hurry to start trade".⁵ The newspaper *Kaleva* (independent) stated:

Finland broke rank with the joint Nordic stand. Why [does the government] in such questions make such a big issue of the whole joint Nordic line, when [the government] has no intention of adhering to that line? By making this decision the government did not leave any option open to parliament or its Foreign Affairs Committee to influence the issue, rather it left them with a done deal. What the government has done in this case is legally permissible, but it shows no respect for the spirit of parliamentary procedure. The decision is in accordance with the tradition of the Finnish foreign policy, whereby interests of trade override moral policy.⁶

¹ Liitemuistio [Memorandum] No. 182, 20 June 1991. Archives of the Prime Minister's Office.

² In March 1992 a bill to abolish the ban on investments as well as other remaining sanctions against South Africa was proposed by the government to the parliament

³ Interview, *Italehti*, 19 July 1991. The transport workers ended their boycott in February 1992 on the basis of the positive developments in South Africa.

⁴ "Etelä-Afrikka tulossa takaisin" [South Africa makes a comeback], *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 July 1991; "Kuisman sooloilu jatkuu" [Kuisma continues to follow his own line], *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 19 July 1991.

⁵ "Tukeeko Suomi rotusortoa" [Does Finland support racial oppression], *Italehti*, 26 July 1991.

⁶ "Pakotteet purettiin kiireellä" [Sanctions lifted in a hurry], *Kaleva*, 30 June, 1991.

From words to deeds

Four factors affected the Finnish government's decision to lift trade sanctions against South Africa:

- a political evaluation of the situation in South Africa,
- “doctrinal” opposition to unilateral Finnish sanctions,
- the interests of Finnish exporters, and
- the attitudes of political parties and NGOs.

During 1990 the foreign ministry considered the idea of responding to positive developments in South Africa with a positive signal from Finland. This idea was given further impetus by similar actions on the part of the EC and the United States. Under these circumstances, the joint Nordic line was not perceived to be as constraining as previously.

After all, a main “rule” of the Finnish foreign policy doctrine was the universality of trade. Divergence from the rule normally required a mandatory resolution by the UN Security Council. Paavo Väyrynen, who had repeatedly stressed the importance of strict adherence to a consistent foreign policy doctrine, stated that in the case of unilateral Finnish sanctions against South Africa, public opinion had been given far too large an influence on the foreign policy decision-making process:

The South African issue is a typical example of how pressure from public opinion has led to a partial collapse of the general principles of the neutrality policy.¹

As leader of the opposition from 1987 to 1990, former—and future—Foreign Minister Väyrynen proposed the easing of the Finnish sanctions on several occasions. Furthermore, Väyrynen regretted that Finland had not pressed the other Nordic countries sufficiently to change their joint sanctions policy.² In an interview Väyrynen complained that the way Finland had related to the South African question showed little understanding of the subtleties surrounding the issue, or, in his own words, Finland's attitudes had been “very black and white”.³

About a week before trade sanctions were lifted, an editorial in the *Helsingin Sanomat* reminded Foreign Minister Väyrynen of his earlier statements on the issue:

Both de Klerk and the black population deserve support. Two years ago the then opposition leader, and current Foreign Minister, Paavo Väyrynen, demanded that Finland lift its sanctions against South Africa because of the positive developments taking place in that country. Now Mr. Väyrynen has the opportunity to put his words into deeds.⁴

The government saw that it was in Finland's economic interests to end the trade embargo. Timo Relander, Director General of the Confederation of Finnish Industries (Teollisuuden keskusliitto) said in September 1990 that the time had come for the lifting of Finnish sanctions.⁵

The Department for External Economic Relations of the foreign ministry echoed the statements of the Finnish exporters. It estimated that Finnish exports to South Africa, which had been worth about FIM 550 million in 1984, could easily be escalated to about FIM one billion annually if the boycott were ended.⁶ Pertti Vuotilainen, CEO of Outokumpu Oy, was especially critical of the losses caused by the continuation of the boycott.⁷ Not surprisingly, Outokumpu Electronics and JA-RO, another Outokumpu company, were among the first Finnish companies to sign agreements with South African customers after the sanctions were lifted.¹

¹ Väyrynen, 1987:114.

² Väyrynen, 1988; 1990a; 1990b:173–175.

³ Interview, *Ilta-Sanomat*, 6 May 1989.

⁴ “Etelä-Afrikasta normaali valtio” [South Africa, a normal nation], *Helsingin Sanomat*, 19 June 1991.

⁵ Interview, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, 1 September 1990.

⁶ *Kaupapolitiikka*, 1991/2.

⁷ Interview with Vuotilainen “Outokumpu haluaa Etelä-Afrikaan” [Outokumpu wants to be in South Africa], *Ilta-Sanomat*, 18 July 1990.

Containing the Pressure Groups

A small nation wishing to defend the rights and freedoms of its own citizens, must, in its own interest, strive to take active measures to strengthen the atmosphere of international joint responsibility and thereby advance an international order based on respect for human rights.

Max Jakobson, former Finnish Ambassador to the UN²

The situation in South Africa is changing. The extent to which this change has been influenced by international sanctions is beyond the scope of this study.³ During a December 1990 visit to South Africa, however, nearly all the South Africans I met shared the opinion that it had been sanctions, particularly actions by the international banking community, that had obliged President F.W. de Klerk to start talks with black opposition organizations.

The preoccupation of the international community with sanctions may, however, have resulted in the neglect of other means of influencing the situation. For example, although it became clear that, due to the veto power held by Great Britain and the US, comprehensive and mandatory sanctions by the UN would not be implemented, other measures were not seriously explored by most member states. In this respect, Nordic assistance to the SADCC countries represented a novel, and to some degree effective, approach.

Creative and innovative

There has been no lack of imaginative strategies by the Finnish foreign ministry in handling the South African question. The ministry's objectives have been to maintain economic and diplomatic relations with South Africa, based on the foreign policy doctrine that Finland is willing to trade with all countries and that demonstrative establishment or termination of diplomatic relations in response to the political behaviour of other governments is not within the scope of Finnish foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the objectives of the Finnish NGOs have been in direct conflict with this policy. NGOs have sought various ways to break off economic and diplomatic relations with the apartheid regime in order to promote change in South Africa. Every pressure from the NGOs has been met by a response from the foreign ministry, and all pressures from the NGOs have persistently been contained by the foreign ministry. When an NGO position has been recognized, the ministry has always found ways to neutralise that position.

For example, after a decade of reluctance, the foreign ministry in 1966 conceded and condemned, in principle, the racial policies of the South African government at the United Nations. In practice, the condemnation at the UN in no way affected actual relations between the two countries.

Again, in 1973 the foreign ministry was pressed to start humanitarian assistance to Southern African liberation movements. This happened only after the ministry had become convinced that such aid would not affect Finland's ongoing diplomatic relations with the governments those liberation movements were opposing.

In the early 1970s the foreign ministry showed no objections to sanctions against South Africa, as they concerned insignificant issues such as the banning of sports contacts, which could be painlessly implemented while keeping major trade and diplomatic relations intact.

¹ *Outokumpu News*, 1991/1.

² Jakobson, 1983:60.

³ Cf. e.g. Hanlon & Omond, 1987; Hermele & Odén, 1988; Paul, 1985.

In 1976 the foreign ministry succeeded in containing a decade-long debate on ending relations with South Africa. By sharply raising the tone of Finnish criticism of South Africa at the UN the foreign ministry was able to portray itself as committed to an anti-apartheid course.

At the same time Finnish sanctions were more tightly linked to a mandatory resolution of the UN Security Council, a policy shift which went unnoticed by most of the Finnish public. The ministry fully expected that the veto powers of Great Britain and the US would effectively obstruct any future UN action on the issue.

In 1976 the joint Nordic stand on the South African issue was adopted. The full impact of this decision was felt when Finland under pressure from other Nordic countries and Finnish NGOs, actually took action against South Africa in 1985.

The foreign ministry sought to avoid concrete legislative action as long as possible. At first, the foreign ministry proceeded with measures of a voluntary nature. These included appeals to the business community to terminate trade with South Africa and decisions by the government to cease transactions which, by the government's own admission, were either non-existent or sporadic in nature. When legislation was finally introduced, it concerned only matters of minor importance at that time.

With the persistence of the joint Nordic stand and influenced by their own NGOs, Finland—and Sweden—had to follow the examples of Norway and Denmark in 1987 and legally terminate trade with South Africa. The Finnish government adhered strictly to a formal interpretation of the act. The foreign ministry declined to take any action on indirect trade between Finland and South Africa as such trade was not specifically prohibited.

In June 1991 Finland became the first Nordic country to lift its trade sanctions against South Africa. The foreign ministry explained that larger questions than the joint Nordic stand were now at stake. A legal technicality made it permissible to lift the trade embargo simply through a decision of the government. This obviated having to deal with the matter in parliament and the opportunity was utilized by the foreign ministry.

Official Finnish South Africa policy has long been influenced by the positions of other UN member states and, most importantly, by the views of the other Nordic countries. Actual policy shifts, however, have stemmed from NGO action. The 1966 shift in Finland's position at the UN followed the formation by students of the South Africa Committee, a boycott of alcoholic beverages by the Finnish Seamen's Union and an electoral victory of left-wing parties.

Finland's official aid to liberation movements in 1973 was initiated by NGO fund-raising campaigns and by actions of the Africa Committee. Sports contacts were effectively curtailed after the matter was brought up in parliament. The South Africa Acts of 1985 and 1987 were preceded by the establishment of the "Isolate South Africa Campaign", activities by the Lutheran Church and parliament and, most significantly, by actions of the Transport Workers' Union.

Who ultimately decides foreign policy?

The developers of the Finnish foreign policy doctrine, including Jakobson and Törnudd, emphasize that it is in the interests of small nations to support the taking of moral stands in international politics. Yet, they also warn Finland itself to be very reserved in taking such stands.¹

As a result, claims Apunen, Finland has become a "professional bystander" in international politics.² One might even say that Finland has become a "moral freeloader", enjoying the benefits of moral standards advanced in international politics, while in its own actions doing little to promote such standards.

In Sweden and Norway, relations with South Africa have been analyzed in published official reports which deal with the effects of sanctions down to the level of individual exporters. In contrast, reports prepared by the Finnish foreign ministry have never been publicly released.

¹ Jakobson, 1983:60; Törnudd, 1975:140–141.

² Apunen, 1984:212.

This overly secretive behaviour at the ministry seems quaint and unjustified in the prevailing political circumstances.

The directors of Finnish foreign policy do acknowledge the need for open discussion on foreign policy. Open discussion, however, requires that the relevant information is available to all participants in that discussion. Even Max Jakobson, who understands and supports foreign policy decision-making behind closed doors, has criticized the extent to which foreign policy has been generated in secrecy in Finland:

Without doubt the officials handling foreign policy have a tendency to be overly secretive. For them it is more pleasant to operate if they can select what is released to the public by using their own judgement. One effective way to block criticism is to declare: If you knew what we knew, but unfortunately cannot tell you, you would not be so quick to criticize us. And sometimes they speak about national interests when the objective is simply to save face for the government.¹

The directors of Finnish foreign policy, while acknowledging the role of public opinion, stress that it may only play a minor role in the actual shaping of foreign policy.² The group of individuals who actually do have an influence on Finnish foreign policy has traditionally been extremely small, partly because the foreign ministry had succeeded in staying beyond the realm of parliamentary control. It has been argued, with only a little exaggeration that during the Kekkonen era President Kekkonen and an elite group of three or four foreign ministry officials essentially made Finnish foreign policy.³ But this is changing: foreign ministries in many countries are losing their near-monopoly over the administration of international politics.⁴

In Finland the question of South Africa has been virtually the only issue where NGOs have directly challenged the foreign ministry's monopoly on foreign affairs. In the 1980s global environmental issues and international cooperation in the Arctic region have also been brought forward by NGOs.

NGO activity and initiative in the area of foreign policy is likely to increase. Foreign policy decision-making may also include greater interaction between NGOs and foreign policy administrators. If this is the case, then Finland's South Africa policy has been a precursor of this type of process.

¹ Jakobson, 1972.

² Cf. Korhonen, 1989:60–69; Värynen, 1990b:172–179.

³ Joenniemi, 1990:183–188.

⁴ Goldmann, 1986:26.

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