

**THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND
IMPERIAL CONTEXT OF THE FINNISH
LANGUAGE DECREE OF 1850**

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When we are studying the development of the Finnish press freedom and censorship during the 19th century we must take into account two equally important aspects: 1) the distinct cultural, administrative and legal heritage of Finland that originated from the Swedish era and 2) the inescapable fact that Finland after all was a part of the vast Russian empire and the shifts in the political situation in Russia were felt more or less immediately in the little Grand-Duchy¹. Many phenomena that from the traditional Finnish nationalist historical point of view seem to originate from a certain anti-Finnish clique in the Russian governmental circles, are more understandable if we set them in a general Russian and international context. This applies even to the main object of my presentation, the language decree of 1850. The language decree also is interesting from another angle: it is in itself a remarkable historical event but it has also been used during the course of Finnish history for political reasons.

Before the coming of the socialist movement into Finland in the end of the 19th century, the political field was divided roughly along language lines. On the other side was the Finnish-language party or Fennomans, and on the other side the Swedish-language party or Svecomans. The language decree was naturally used by the Fennomans as an example of the suppressed state of the Finnish language and it was insinuated that even the Swedish-speaking Finnish high bureaucrats were responsible for its birth. Thus the decree was a ready tool in political debates, even if the Swedish-speaking bureaucrats of the 1840s and 1850s had not much to do with the Swedish party of the late 19th century. A Swedish speaking historian has written that the decree "has served as number one in the Finnish agitation" [1, 229].

¹ The general events and basic facts about Finnish history described in this article can easily be found in Thaden [13] or in standard histories of Finland, such as Jutikkala & Pirinen [5].

Still in his book published in 1947 [10] Yrjö Nurmio, a Finnish-language historian, used a great deal of energy to find out, if the bureaucrats had anything to do with the birth of the decree. His book is the most thorough study on the subject, and what comes to facts my chief source in this article², but even he could find nothing that would directly bind the Finnish bureaucratic elite to the writing of the decree, although they very well accepted its goals. Still he seems to have been sure that there must be a connection, almost a conspiracy.

Nurmio belonged to a generation of historians heavily influenced by the Finnish-nationalistic and language-based ideology. Newer generations of Finnish historians have reduced the language decree into its natural proportions. Matti Klinge, one of the outstanding contemporary historians, links in his book on the Finnish 19th century the decree with the long-term policies of the administration "that strived to enhance enlightenment of the people and economic well-being but avoid the politicization in the spirit of French socialism of these matters"³[6, 158]. Klinge does not paint the picture as black and white as Nurmio and avoids using moralistic arguments. That is also pursued in this article.

The Swedish heritage of the Finnish legal and administrative organization

The Swedish legislation that formed the basis of the Finnish legal and administrative system during the 19th century was formed during the reign of Gustav III († 1793). Some of its parts that functioned as constitutional laws made Finland in practice a constitutional monarchy even after it was separated from Sweden, whereas Russia was an autocracy. In this respect Finland was almost in the same position as the Polish kingdom in the beginning of the 19th century. When Finland had in practice its own legislation, administrative organs and its own educational and clerical system, it is not unjust to call the period from 1809 to 1917 the era of autonomy, as it is the custom to do, although the content of the autonomy was formed only gradually during the 19th century. Finland had been taken from Sweden by the emperor Alexander I to be a buffer state to protect St Petersburg. Thus the politics of Alexander I were

² I am greatly indebted to Nurmio's two books on Finnish censorship, Nurmio 1934 [9] and Nurmio 1947 [10].

³ Klinge has presented his views already in his earlier publications. Also Thaden [13, 218] writes along the same lines. Klinge's book is the most up-to-date general presentation and interpretation of the Finnish 19th century. It has also formed my views about the period studied in this article. In fact, to gain a balanced view of the situation in Finland during the period described in this article, Klinge's book should be read parallel with the reading of Nurmio's books [9;10].

directed to pacify Finland and guarantee the loyalty of its people to the Emperor-Grand Duke.

The "pacification" of Finland was in line with Alexander's benign attitude towards Poland. He, for example, allowed the Polish diet to convene. Many people in Finland expected that also the Finnish diet could convene, but the rest of Alexander's time was not so favorable and liberal as the beginning and after Nicholas I came to power in 1825 there was no talk of diets or other political reforms.

After the rebellion of 1830 Poland could no more act as a model for the Finnish development. The majority of Finns remained loyal to the Emperor in all the turns of the 19th century. This attitude brought advantage especially during the reign of the "good emperor", Alexander II. He summoned the Finnish Diet after decades of waiting in 1863, that is, during another crisis and repression in Poland and Lithuania.

Until the Crimean War one of the causes of nervousness of the Russian government were the close ties of Finland's Swedish-speaking upper class with Sweden. On the other hand the threat that the international revolutionary movements might spread among the large Finnish-speaking majority of the population was as great.

The development of the Finnish censorship system

The Gustavian constitution of 1773 was advantageous from the point of view of Alexander I, because Gustav III had effectively concentrated the power in the hands of the sovereign, and this also was the case of press freedom and censorship legislation.

The constitution was not altered after Gustav III died in 1793, so the next king Gustav IV Adolf could use the powers he had to concentrate all the matters concerning printing, press and book shops etc. under the Hofkantzler (Chancellor of the Court) in the instruction that he signed in 1801. The Hofkantzler could demand information about everything that was in the presses and he could interrupt the printing of any publication, if he deemed the text unsuitable. He could confiscate any book that he thought suspicious. If the Hofkantzler used his powers to their full effect, the situation was not far from a total system of preventive censorship [9, 15]. The concept of preventive censorship had been abolished in Sweden in the liberal press legislation of 1766 (apart from religious works), and although this legislation was annulled by Gustav III, the concept of preventive legislation was not welcome in the country.

In any case, in the legislation brought into force by Gustav III, there were elements of the preventive censorship, and for example scholarly and religious works and theater pieces had to be checked by the authorities before printing [9, 95].

When Finland was attached to the Russian empire and its internal administration was organized, the matters concerning censorship, bookshops and printing became

concentrated under the Finnish Senate or government. It acquired the same powers as the office of Hofkantzler during the Swedish time and even the instructions of the Hofkantzler remained virtually unchanged. Finland became a reservation of the old Swedish form of government and legislation, because in the revolution of 1809 the system in Sweden was thoroughly changed. During the 19th century the Swedish politics developed more and more towards a liberal direction, whereas the Finnish circumstances remained unchanged for decades. Finland was a connecting point between the liberal Swedish and autocratic-conservative Russian realities.

The Gustavian legislation could rather flexibly be used by the new monarch of Finland for his own objectives. Thus the new censorship decree of 1829 that brought the preventive censorship into the Finnish legislation was completely compatible with the constitution, even if it went much longer than the old censorship system of the Swedish times [9, 20].

The Finnish position as a neighbour to the liberal Sweden and the continuing engagement of the Finnish educated classes in the cultural life of the former mother country – reading Swedish books, subscribing to Swedish newspapers, sending their sons to Swedish universities etc. – caused a situation sensitive to disturbances, when the Russian government felt threatened by the infiltration of harmful ideas from Sweden into Finland and perhaps also over the language barrier into the Finnish common people.

As long as the original literature in Finland, be it in Swedish or Finnish, was undeveloped, the cultural exchange with Sweden was rather unilateral, which meant that until the end of the 1820s there was not much work in censoring the literature produced in Finland (except newspapers), but the biggest problem was the import of publications from Sweden into Finland.

For the censoring of the books that were imported there existed initially a system that was not very effective. The Swedish-speaking educated people were accustomed to bring with them any books from their visits to Sweden that they wanted and until the 1820s even the officials were not eager to go into details. Forbidden books were smuggled regularly into the country [2; 3; 9].

Literature produced in the country was until 1828 censored by the council (consistory) of the University of Turku (Åbo Akademi, later Alexander's University in Helsinki). The imported newspapers were strictly censored by the head of the Finnish General Post Office: many issues of papers were seized and import of some newspapers was forbidden. The Finnish system of censorship was not directly subordinated to the Russian one, but through the Finnish Governor-General the systems were in contact [9, 124–141]. The Finnish censorship was so much distinct from the Russian that Finland is not usually even named in the studies of Russian censorship, such as Ruud [12].

The instructions concerning the import of books were made stricter in 1823. Now the lists of forbidden books compiled in Russia began to be used when the books imported into Finland were checked, but still there were holes in the system [9, 195–209].

In any case it is clear that the censorship and surveillance of literary culture in Finland did not go as far as it was the case in Russia. Through some incidents and helpful bureaucrats this state of affairs became known also to the new emperor Nicholas I, who in 1826 ordered a revision of Finnish censorship regulations in the light of the new Russian censorship act. The aim was to get rid of the "contradictory regulations" in the Finnish and Russian systems [9, 327]. The new Russian censorship decree of 1826 prepared by the Russian ministry for education was based on an extremely strict preventive censorship and its regulations were painfully detailed. A Finnish official commented (in private of course) on the Russian regulations that "it was a total administrative and legislative monster, such that it could not be followed in Russia, and it would be object of scorn in the whole Europe". The Emperor himself agreed and ordered a new decree to be outlined [9, 330]. The new Russian decree of 1828 that also formed the basis of the Finnish decree was administratively more rational, although from the Finnish point of view it was a big step backwards.

The new Finnish censorship decree of 1829 brought into Finland a total system of preventive censorship, imposed, on the suggestion of the Russian Governor-General in Finland, by the Emperor against the will of the Finnish Senate.

A special organization for the censorship was established in the country. The Board of Censorship consisting of the vice chancellor of the university, the head of the office of the Senate and the Attorney General of the Senate took the responsibility of the supervision of the censorship in Finland and the matters having principal character. The Censorship Committee with a chairman and four members took care of the concrete work, censoring the domestic literary production and imported books. The Committee had local censors in the larger towns of the country.

The new statute obliged domestic manuscripts to be checked by the censorship authorities. Also the lists of all imported books were to be sent to the Board of Censors for approval. Even library catalogues were required for inspection [10].

The rise of the Finnish language poses problems

As long as the educational and cultural system stayed the same as it had been for centuries, that is, the Swedish-speaking upper and middle classes producing and consuming the worldly literary production, there were no big problems and the work of the censorship authorities was rather mechanical. The change came with the

diversification of the Finnish-language literary production, with newspapers having even political ambitions, and modern fictional literature, in the first place translated novels. The political elite and Russian governmental circles began to fear that even Finnish-speaking common people, over a million inhabitants would be engaged politically.

This state of affairs also made the writers careful with their words, both out of consideration for censorship, but partly, because they also shared the fear for what too free a speech would cause in the uneducated readers. Let me give one example. One of the first Finnish-language writings on public or popular libraries was published in 1841 by a clergyman, A. J. Europeus, in the newspaper *Sanan Saattaja Viipurista* (23.1.1841). He was compelled to anticipate many obstacles in the way for libraries both from the part of authorities but also of the conservative country people, religious revivalists etc. The writer states that there are among the various kinds of books unworthy texts that cause more danger than enlightenment in their readers and “in some countries simple people have been made wild by lighthearted and evil stories”. But it was a consolation “that in the Finnish language that kind of books do not exist, because our fathers have only published books that are religious and those that strive towards the spiritual growth of men”⁴.

From “the Crazy Year 1848” to the decree of 1850

The end of the 1840s and the beginning of the 1850s was politically a sensitive time because of the events in the continental Europe in 1848. The Russian government wanted to keep the common people unaware of the dangerous ideas that were circulating in Europe. This fear consisted both of a political and an esthetic aspect. Especially the French modern novel seems to have enclosed in itself all the possible dangerous aspects.

After the news about the French revolution on February 22, 1848 reached St Petersburg, a feverish activity arose in the leading circles near the Emperor. The disclosure of the Petrashevsky conspiracy in 1849 even worsened the situation. Rivaling statesmen presented their thoughts to Nicholas trying to surpass one another in designing new ways to tighten the censorship. Despite its seeming ubiquity the censorship organization was poorly resourced and the censors crumbled under their excessive workload, and thus there was much to do to make the system more effective. Already five days after the revolutionary news arrived in the capital, Nicholas made some

⁴ Finnish newspapers of the 19th century are accessible through Internet: http://digi.lib.helsinki.fi/index_cn.html

decisive moves. He, for instance, created a committee "to provide me with proof where it finds dereliction of the censorship and its command, the Ministry of Public Education, and which journals have departed from their programs" [12, 84–5].

The committee, which was chaired by Prince Alexander S. Menshikov, filed its report on April 2, 1848. Besides more direct actions towards some journals, the committee recommended that a permanent group would oversee censorship and improve the quality of censors and that a new censorship statute be written [12, 85]. A new smaller committee was founded, and it started energetically to carry out the propositions of the Menshikov committee. Prince Menshikov was not among its members. He had more important duties, such as being naval minister and Governor-General of Finland.

As Governor-General of Finland Menshikov is remembered as strict and authoritarian, but he always defended the autonomy of Finnish legislation and administration; the Grand Duchy was his responsibility, with which he did not allow anybody else to meddle [13, 202, 218].

During the preparations against the deluge of foreign revolutionary influences Menshikov must have all the time thought what he should do in Finland, because the legislation and administrative manoeuvres in Russia did not automatically affect Finland. The situation in Finland with its language-based division of the population into educated and uneducated parts was in a way simpler than in Russia, where peasants could in principle read what was printed for the upper class, if they were literate, what they rarely were. In Finland at mid-19th century practically everything more sophisticated was published in Swedish, whereas the Finnish language publications were almost totally either religious or practical in nature. On the other hand, most of the Finnish common people could read. This may have given Menshikov the idea of solving the Finnish censorship question with a barrier between the languages.

Governor-General's troubles with Finnish censorship

Menshikov had for many years been struggling to make the Finnish censorship organization to work along the lines he thought were suitable. He had tried to concentrate the censorship powers in the hands of the Governor-General, i.e. himself, and got in 1847 the right to decide about the permits to establish newspapers and about their suppression. He was not at all satisfied with the work of the Finnish censors, especially concerning newspapers.

Here we see two traditions clash against one another. The Finnish censorship regulations and censors themselves were still attached to the Swedish legalistic tradition, whereas Menshikov represented the Russian administrative tradition. The Finnish censors were not eager to forbid a text, if it was not clearly against the letter of

the law, and they thought that they should have defensible grounds for forbidding a text, but Menshikov believed that censors could act without worrying about public explanations, if they thought there was something wrong with the texts. The newspapers could in any case not publicly refer to the actions of the censors [11, 144–7].

There was another aspect in the Finnish censorship that greatly annoyed Menshikov. Just before the language decree was given, he became aware of the fact that many censors in Finland could not properly understand Finnish. Some disturbing articles and news had been slipped through the censors into the Finnish-language newspapers, because the censors had not understood them or had ignored them. Nurmio thinks that this might have given Menshikov the last determination to try to solve the Finnish problem once and for all [11, 178–181].

During the year 1849 the rivalries in the Russian political elite were raging intensively and one of its outcomes was the departure from office of the long-time minister of public education Uvarov, in whose place a more straightforward man was put. In the censorship reigned an even more strict adherence to the principles of autocracy. The new minister of public education ruled that books for the common people must be “penetrated with the living spirit of the Orthodox church and with loyalty to the throne, state and social order” [12, 90–1]. Even this could not be applied directly in Finland, because the country was almost totally Lutheran.

In Finland some alarming phenomena were disturbing the Governor General's peace of mind. There was news in the press that a society meant for publishing Finnish language translations of foreign novels was about to be established. People could sign shares in the society to finance its activities. It was felt that one of the best ways to enhance Finnish literature was to translate into the language specimens of the best works of the world literature, such books that were sure to arouse the appetite for reading. In a way the books were not in the first place intended for the common people, but for the women of the educated fennophile families, who could find in them interesting reading in the Finnish language. Even the people who advocated the advancement of the Finnish-language literature were Swedish as regards to their mother tongue. The project of the “Society for Finnish Belles Lettres” was abandoned in 1849 after a general tightening of the Finnish statutes concerning societies. The establishment of new societies was made extremely difficult and even the already existing societies had to renew their approval by the authorities [11, 135–144].

Menshikov new about the project of the Society for Finnish Belles Lettres and already that alarmed him. It seems that a special thorn in the flesh of Menshikov was the Finnish translation of a small publication by Alexandre Dumas “Tale of Wilhelm Tell and the liberation of the Swiss people”, which as a text was much more harmless than its lofty title, but it belonged to the doubly suspicious class of texts: it was both a French novel (or novelette) and a brochure, only little over 50 pages. The name

of the author, Alexandre Dumas, was highly suspicious, and tens of his books were on the list of forbidden books, but in this particular case the name of the author was not mentioned in the translation [11, 133].

In early 1850 Menshikov began to draft a new censorship measure for Finland. He referred in his memorandum to the emperor directly to the fact that “recently in Finland French novels and other products of the foul literature have been beginning to appear as commercial ventures”. He stated that, in principle, if the original works were not forbidden, then the translations were not in contradiction with censorship regulations either. According to Menshikov one had, on the other hand, to take into consideration “that a book that for an educated person is without danger, can be misunderstood by the man of the common people, and that purposeless reading can be harmful to the common man even for the reason that it can seduce him from serious work and, furthermore, that persons, who understand only Finnish, all belong to the working and rural class” [11, 231–2; 8, 277–9].

The decree was given in March 1850 in the form Menshikov proposed: “Only such new books that, while applying to the general censorship regulations, to both their spirit and mode of representation are either religiously or economically educative, can be published in the Finnish language; it is strictly forbidden to publish in this language political news or information about crimes abroad, as well it is forbidden to publish novels, and forbidden also are those books that the censorship has allowed in other languages” [11, 231–2].

At the same date when the language decree was officially received by the Finnish Senate, two other initiatives of the Emperor transmitted by Prince Menshikov were also put in the records of the Senate. The Emperor wanted to make possible the use of the Finnish language in administration and courts, but the implementation of this initiative was stalled by the bureaucrats of the country till later decades. The second initiative, establishing a professorship in Finnish at the University of Helsinki, was realized after a couple of years. These three seemingly contradictory measures of the imperial administration show that the situation was not simply a question of the suppression of the Finnish language, but more general political goals. The contradiction is only superficial. Better knowledge of Finnish among bureaucrats and judges was compatible with keeping the Finnish population outside the higher cultural and political affairs, out of the danger of subversive ideas [6, 156–166].

Reactionaries or reformists?

To illustrate the complex situation that makes the boundaries between the reactionaries and reformists more fluid than one might expect, it may be rewarding to be acquainted with one of the close collaborators of Menshikov, baron Casimir von

Kothen (1807–1880), who at the time of the language decree was governor of the province of Viipuri (Vyborg). He has also been accused by Nurmio and others for urging Menshikov to give the decree, but there is no direct proof of that. He evidently shared to a great degree the views of Menshikov, as did many of the other top bureaucrats in Finland, but he had his own vision of the future of Finland in the Russian realm. von Kothen, officer and administrator, who was close both to Menshikov and the Emperor, was a curious mixture of extreme reactionary and modern visionary. His modernizing urge became apparent, e.g., in his willingness to develop the Finnish secondary school system to a new direction that would enhance natural sciences and technology. He also was a steady supporter of the popular education and a strong support of Uno Cygnaeus, the man who designed the Finnish elementary school system during the 1860s. von Kothen was also nominated as the first director of the Finnish Board of Schools 1872. He wanted to educate the boys of the educated classes to competent and loyal servants of the empire so that they could take important positions in the Russian army, administration and economic life, but all this he wanted to happen without changing anything fundamental in the fabric of the society. The children of the common people should be taught enough to make them able to work in a modern society, but the academic education and high culture was not for them. That is why he saw nothing wrong in that the Finnish-speaking common people would be denied access to French novels and needlessly advanced scholarly knowledge, which they had no possibility to understand. von Kothen's activities were of course not well received by the Fennomans and he met strong opposition in many matters. Klinge believes that what annoyed in von Kothen was his "bureaucratic-aristocratic style à la St Petersburg" [6, 258–269; 14].

Application of the decree

In the beginning the decree was applied strictly. No books or newspaper articles in Finnish were allowed on any other subjects than religious and economic, however useful and harmless they might have been. Finnish-language newspapers had to fill their pages with sermons or biblical histories, or close down temporarily, as did after a deep frustration one of the few Finnish newspapers, *Suometar*, in 1850. At the same time both original and translated, even French, novels could be published and circulated in the country in the Swedish language.

The more detailed instructions in the application of the decree paid special attention to small brochures under 64 pages. Manuscripts that were of that size (when printed) were to be sent to the Governor-General himself to be inspected (that is they were translated for him into Russian). Menshikov lived in St Petersburg, which meant that all manuscripts under 64 pages had to be sent to him in the capital.

Because the decree, as it was approved by the Emperor, was difficult, almost impossible to apply, there soon came alleviations to it. Books that had previously been published in Finnish, could be republished. Furthermore, books concerning Finnish history, folk tales, old folk songs or folk poetry were allowed, but otherwise the application remained strict for some years.

The tightening of the censorship had a direct effect on the attitude of the authorities on many things concerning the public life. One of the obvious objects of a heightened interest was popular libraries. This became clear when the newly appointed archbishop Edvard Bergenheim made his inspection visit on the Åland island in 1851. There he was shown the library of the Hammarland parish that had been functioning almost ten years. The archbishop was in principle content with the library and wished it a good future, but he wanted emphatically to remind that he relied much more on the judgment of the clergy than the worldly censorship. According to him it was not enough that the books were approved by the official censors, but the clergy should still check the books individually so that "they would not under any circumstances contribute to the distribution of socialist and communist ideas contrary to the Christian faith and legal social order. Even the Swedish popular literature (folkskrifter) is not entirely free of them." The archbishop had reason to be worried, because most of the Swedish-language popular literature circulating among the Swedish speaking rural population in Finland was imported from Sweden. In this statement we can clearly hear the resonance of the language decree and Menshikov's letters to the bishop's councils informing about the need for stricter censorship. Religious literature was censored by the bishop's councils, but the parish libraries evidently also included worldly books. The decree mentioned only publications in the Finnish language, but the politically very careful and wellinformed archbishop did not want to expect troubles concerning the Swedish popular literature either [8, 279–280; 14, 166].

How to get rid of the decree?

It was a great luck for the Finnish-language cultural development that the language decree was not applied in full force more than four and a half years. As long as Menshikov was active as Governor-General there was no question of lifting the ban. As the decree was born out of a political crisis, so was also its dissolution the result of another crisis.

When Prince Menshikov became 1853 engaged in the Crimean War first in a diplomatic mission, then as the commander of the Russian forces, his duties as Governor-General of Finland were assumed by the vice-Governor-General General Platon I. Rokassovsky, a simple soldier. During the war British naval squadrons attacked Finnish harbour towns, burned merchant goods, seized Finnish merchant

ships, invaded the Åland islands and destroyed the great fortress Bomarsund there. News about these extraordinary events could not be printed in the Finnish-language newspapers because of the language decree. This created an information vacuum that threatened to be filled by totally uncontrolled rumours. To avoid this to happen, Rokassovsky let moderate the application of the censorship on Finnish newspapers. War news could be printed also in Finnish as they were printed already in Swedish, which was a wise move, because when the Finnish people read about the destruction caused by the British fleet in their own country, their loyalty to the Emperor only grew. The circulation of Finnish-language newspapers grew enormously [13, 219].

During and after the war the censorship on Finnish-language publications was gradually eased. As a result of the lost war Menshikov resigned in 1855 both from his post as commander of the Russian army and Governor-General of Finland. Nicholas I died in 1855 and the new Emperor Alexander II turned the course of Finnish history by opening a great reformist era in the country. The successor of Menshikov count F. W. R. Berg put eagerly into practice Alexander's ideas. Easing censorship was well in line with both the Emperor's and Governor-General's views, but still the official abolition of the decree was not a simple procedure, because it after all was signed by Alexander's father. Not until ten years after its signing, 1860, the decree was officially abolished, but it had long ago lost its practical effect.

Preventive censorship remained in force in Finland for the rest of the 19th century (except for a short period during the 1860s), but for many decades there were no as acute problems with the censors as the language decree of 1850, until the end of the 19th century with the Russification campaigns and Governor-General Bobrikov. In 1905 the preventive censorship was definitively abolished in Finland [7].

Submitted in January 2005

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THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND IMPERIAL CONTEXT OF THE FINNISH LANGUAGE DECREE OF 1850

ILKKA MÄKINEN

Abstract

The notorious language decree that forbade publishing in the Finnish language other than publications of religious or practical economic nature was given by the emperor Nicholas I in March 1850. The chief architect of the decree was the Russian Governor-General in Finland, Prince Menshikov. The decree had a traumatic effect on the beginning publishing activities in Finnish, although it was applied in full force only four and a half years. Later Finnish nationalist historians have seen in the decree a political move with a goal to suppress the emergence of a Finnish language culture in Finland, where administration, jurisprudence and higher education had been for centuries the domain of the Swedish-speaking middle and upper class. Swedish-speaking high bureaucrats have also been accused of backing or even instigating Menshikov to urge the emperor to sign the decree, even if nobody has been able to find proof of this. This article strives to put the decree into its historical context, especially in relation to Russian politics in the face of the revolutionary movements in the late 1840s. Special attention is given to the Finnish legal tradition stemming from the Swedish era, where preventive censorship and arbitrary handling of press freedom were not in favor. This tradition collided with the Russian autocratic tradition. Prince Menshikov was not content with the Finnish censors who seemed to be too much bound by legal scruples. He wanted to make Finnish censorship tighter especially concerning publications in Finnish aimed at the majority of the population. Traditionally Finnish speakers had been kept apart from politics and other higher cultural things. During the 1840s the Finnish language press was getting stronger

and more political telling news also from abroad, and there were plans to begin to publish translated, even French novels, which were dreaded by the Russian government because they were supposed to spread revolutionary ideas among the Finnish country people. An additional reason to suspect the Finnish censorship was the fact that censors in Finland did not always know enough Finnish to evaluate the texts, because their mother tongue was Swedish. After the French revolution and other incidents in 1848 the atmosphere in Russia and in the governmental circles became extremely reactionary and the censorship in Russia was taken into extremes. The language decree designed by Menshikov fits well into the general picture as a means to keep Finland calm. After the giving of the decree there became a paradoxical situation in Finland, because in Swedish or even in Russian it was allowed to publish books that were not allowed in Finnish. The notoriousness of the decree comes from the facts that it effectively delayed the emergence of Finnish belles lettres and that it was so blatantly against the traditional legal and cultural values in the country. The decree was kept in full force as long as Prince Menshikov was the Governor-General in Finland. During the Crimean War, when Menshikov was replaced by Vice-Governor-General, it became necessary to let even Finnish-language newspapers to publish war news and after that the decree was gradually put aside, but officially it was abolished in 1860 during the reign of Alexander II.

1850 METŲ SUOMIŲ KALBOS DEKRETO ISTORINĖS APLINKYBĖS IR IMPERINIS KONTEKSTAS

ILKKA MÄKINEN

Santrauka

1850 metų kovą imperatorius Nikolajus I paskelbė garsųj kalbos dekretą, draudžiantį leidybą suomių kalba, išskyrus religinių ir praktinių ekonomikos leidinių. Pagrindinis dekreto autorius buvo Rusijos generalgubernatorius Suomijoje Menšikovas. Dekretas dramatiškai sutrikdė gimstančią Suomijos leidybą, nors visa jėga buvo taikomas tik 4,5 metų. Vėliau suomių nacionalistai istorikai traktavo dekretą kaip politinį veiksma, kuriuo buvo siekiama nuslopinti suomių kalbos kultūros įsigalėjimą Suomijoje. Šalies administracija, teisė ir aukštasis mokslas šimtmečiais priklausė švediškai kalbančioms viduriniajai ir aukštesniajai klaseis. Aukštieji švediškai kalbantys pareigūnai taip pat buvo kaltinami kurstę Menšikovą skatinti imperatorių, kad šis pasirašytų dekretą, nors niekas to nepajėgė įrodyti. Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti dekreto istorinį kontekstą, ypač jo ryšį su Rusijos politika, kuri XIX a. 5 dešimtmetį susidūrė su revoliuciniais judėjimais. Ypatingas dėmesys kreipiamas į Suomijos teisės tradiciją nuo Švedijos laikų. Ši tradicija nerėmė preventyvos cenzūros ir šališko manipuliavimo spaudos laisve ir susidūrė su Rusijos autokratinė tradicija. Menšikovas buvo nepatenkintas suomių cenzoriais, kuriuos per daug varžė teisiniai skrupulai. Jis pageidavo griežtesnės cenzūros Suomijoje, ypač tų suomiškų leidinių, kurie buvo skiriami gyventojų daugumai. Tradiciškai suomiškai kalbantys gyventojai buvo atskirti nuo politikos ir aukštosios kultūros. XIX a. 5 dešimtmetį suomių kalba vis labiau įsigali, ja perduodama daugiau užsienio žinių, netgi rengiamasi versti prancūzų romanus, kurių Rusijos vyriausybė baiminosi dėl to, kad jie paskleisų revoliucines idėjas tarp Suomijos valstiečių. Dar viena priežastis nepasitikėti suomių cenzoriais buvo ta, kad šie nepakankamai mokėjo suomių kalbą, kad galėtų vertinti tekstus, nes jų gimtoji kalba buvo švedų. Po prancūzų revoliucijos ir kitų 1848 metų įvykių atmosfera Rusijos vyriausybės sluoksniuose tapo ypač reakcinga, o cenzūra – kraštutinė. Šioje situacijoje Menšikovo suplanuotas kalbos dekretas

tapo priemone ramybei išlaikyti Suomijoje. Išleidus dekretą Suomijos padėtis tapo paradoksali, nes švedų ir net rusų kalbomis buvo galima leisti knygas, draudžiamas leisti suomių kalba. Šis dekretas liūdnai pagarsėjo todėl, kad smarkiai suvėlino suomių grožinės literatūros radimąsi, buvo visiškai priešingas šalies teisinėms ir kultūros vertybėms. Dekretas galiojo tol, kol Menšikovas buvo Suomijos generalgubernatoriumi. Vykstant Krymo karui, Menšikovą pakeitė vicegeneralgubernatorius. Suomiškiems laikraščiams teko leisti spausdinti karo naujienas, todėl dekretas pamažu nustojo galioti, nors oficialiai buvo panaikintas tik 1860 metais, valdant Aleksandrui II.