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		<i>Ruska</i> <i>Hälsing</i>  Eno		
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Title:

*The weapons cache case*

Location:

62°51'01.2"N 30°08'00.6"E

In October 1944, two soldiers carried wooden crates into a forest near the village of Eno, near Joensuu, Finland. The crates - containing small arms, grenades and ammunition - were hidden inside a cracked boulder. Two soldiers responsible for the cache were captain Lauri Törni (later a Hauptsturmführer in the SS and even later a major in the U.S. Army) and his weaponry-NCO Arvo Männistö. The two feared that the Soviet Union might attempt to occupy Finland despite the recent armistice. Even though this particular weapons cache was a result of private initiative, an official scheme organized by the Finnish Army created thousands of similar stashes around the country.

Following more than three years of bitter fighting, Finland and the Soviet Union signed an armistice on the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1944, ending the conflict known as the Continuation War. Finland retained her independence (again), but the price was heavy: large territories had to be ceded to the Soviets, substantial reparations were to be paid, an allied control commission (mostly consisting of Soviet military officers) was to be allowed to monitor the situation in Finland, a military base had to be rented to the Soviet navy near Helsinki, the Finnish Army had to be demobilized and remaining German allies had to be driven out of the country by force (resulting in the Lapland War of 1944-1945). As a result, a general fear arose that the Soviet Union might take advantage of this unstable situation and occupy the country.




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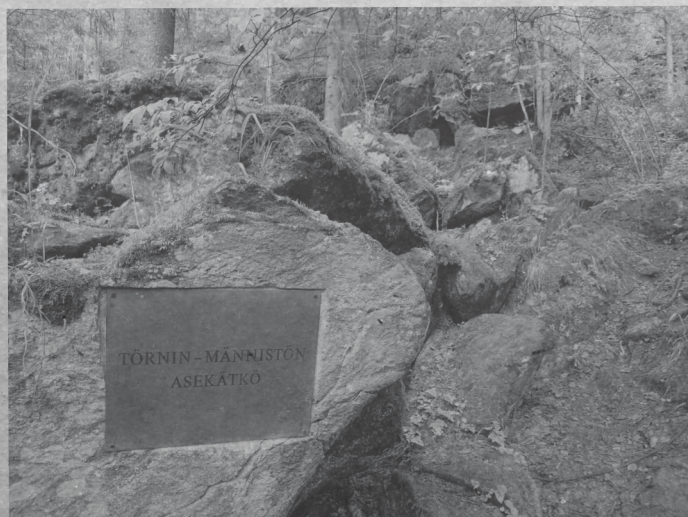
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As a precaution, the Finnish Army devised a secret plan of hiding weaponry and other materiel in caches around the country, officially calling the plan "decentralized warehousing". With these stockpiles, it was hoped that an effective guerrilla campaign could be mounted against a possible Soviet occupation. Large amounts of small arms, artillery, explosives and ammunition were hidden, but stashes were also organized for communication-, engineering-, and medical supplies, proving that the Army aimed for large-scale resistance operations. Indeed, all in all enough materiel was hidden to equip 35 000 soldiers.

The caches themselves were situated in various places. For example, materiel was hidden into forests, barns and even into attics of houses owned by reliable families. Most of the caches were relatively small to make them easier to hide.



*Former president of Finland Mauno Koivisto (in office 1982-1994) served with Törni in the Continuation War. One of the light machine guns recovered from the Weapon Cache of Törni-Männistö in 1993 had been used by Mauno. The weapon is now on display at the Military museum of Finland.*



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The plan, however, came to light in the spring of 1945 when a former soldier Lauri Kumpulainen, who had taken part in "decentralizing" the equipment, was caught selling foodstuff stolen from a cache. When police tried to arrest Kumpulainen for this, he contacted the allied control commission, and spilled the beans on the weapons caches. The control commission sent an extremely stern letter to the Finnish government informing them that the plan was not at all acceptable. Furthermore, the commission called for an investigation and punishing of the perpetrators. These demands were strongly seconded by Finnish communists, who had become a strong political force after the parliament elections of 1945. The Finnish government was put into a tough position, as it was feared that the weapons cache case could result in a harsh counter-reaction from the Soviet Union, or they could even use it as an excuse for occupying the country.

As a result, a thorough official investigation was begun to appease the Soviets. Around 2000 arrests were made and at least 5780 people were interrogated about the "decentralizing". Furthermore, 45 000 pages of documents were created on the course of the inquiry.

There was one problem though: the whole weapons cache affair was entirely legal as per the Finnish law, and as such the "perpetrators" could not be punished. To resolve this issue, a new retroactive law, wholly



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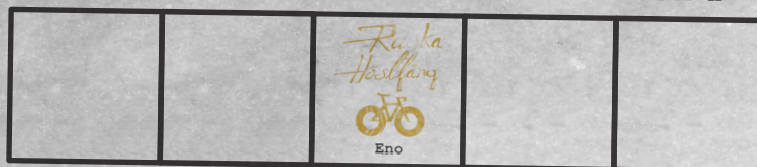
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contrary to western legal principles, was drafted and accepted by the Finnish parliament. As a result, 1488 people were punished and altogether over 400 years of prison sentences were dished out for persons who organized the caches. The legal proceedings lasted until 1950.

But what happened to all the hidden materiel? It seems that most of the caches were dismantled by the same people who built them when the whole affair came to light. However, some caches also remained hidden, sometimes being found by chance during later decades.

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