

# Stella Polaris - what was behind the operation

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The main reason behind the Stella Polaris operation was apparently to provide possibilities for a further Finnish resistance in case of a Soviet occupation of Finland.

When the Stella Polaris-operation was planned and agreed (undercover) with the Swedish intelligence counterparts in mid-June 1944, Soviet occupation of Finland was very much a real risk. However, the Finnish-Soviet front stabilized in mid-July, and the immediate risk of a Soviet occupation decreased for the time being.

However, the signing of the Finnish-Soviet armistice in mid-September 1944 provided for arrival of an "Allied" (=Soviet) Control Commission (ACC) led by Col.Gen Zhdanov in Finland. The arrival of the ACC was quite logically seen as the first step of the occupation and/or sovietization of Finland.

Very well remembering the literal butchering of the intelligence officers of the Baltic states in summer 1940 (led by Zhdanov!), it is very understandable that the "go"-button was pressed, and the Finnish intelligence archive and personnel disappeared virtually under the nose of the arriving Russians.

The original Stella-plans provided for a "stay-behind" guerilla warfare against the occupation forces, led by the Intelligence dept with its radio interception and code-breaking capability intact safely relocated in Sweden, and apparently planned to support a Finnish emigree government likewise operating from Sweden.

Simultaneously the execution of the Stella-operation saved the identity of a number of Baltic informers, ex-POWs, refugees etc working for the Finnish intelligence (by Zhdanov formally considered Soviet citizens!) from being revealed to NKVD (with very much again the Baltic 1940 experience in mind - note that also members of family were physically suffering from NKVD reprisal actions!).

Gradually it became clear that Zhdanov did not have occupation of Finland on his prime agenda (but he had however in April 1945 requested a completely illegal handover to NKVD of 20 Russian emigrees, including Finnish citizens, who had worked for the Finnish Intelligence dept), and most of the Intelligence personnel with families gradually returned from Sweden to Finland.

Several of "Zhdanov's 20 prisoners" also returned from "NKVD's Gulag" to Finland in the 1950s. This affair had also led to the demission of the Communist Minister of Interior who had accepted Zhdanov's illegal request.

However, as had been repeatedly stated, the major part of the Finnish Intelligence archive has never turned up. According to Nigel West's recent book "Venona", the Finnish Stella Polaris material was essential for the American success in breaking the Soviet diplomatic codes in the late 1940s and early 1950s, which enabled FBI to catch the "atom spy ring" in USA!