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Finnish nobility between nation and empire (The Swedish legacy and the Diet of Porvoo in 1809)

Finnish nobility at the beginning of the Autonomy era (1809–1917) consisted mostly of creations by the Swedish crown, both ancient and recent, some of local, some of mainland-Swedish origin, added with a few naturalised families with origins elsewhere in Europe. It had functioned as an integral part of the Swedish nobility since the Middle Ages. Its political and cultural traditions had been developed within the Swedish context and its loyalty was sworn to the Swedish crown.

By 1721, the Swedish empire had lost most of the Baltic provinces it had acquired in the early modern period, leaving only the two core areas, the Sweden proper and the eastern, Finnish provinces. By the 18th century, the nobility on the Finnish side of the Gulf of Bothnia had started to develop something of a distinct identity, with a heightened focus on the local concerns. For them, the nobility of mainland Sweden no doubt sometimes seemed remote, spending its time enjoying political freedoms and engaging in parliamentary debates, reaping the benefits of a well-developed material culture and enthusing about new war campaigns — whereas the nobility on the Finnish side experienced the wars between Russia and Sweden on their own soil, fought them hands-on, and dealt with their consequences.

The prime example of the early localising attitude among the Finnish noblemen were the Anjala conspirators — or traitors, as they would be called by the more Swedish-patriotic-minded Finnish 19th century authors — who during the 1788–1790 King Gustav's War designed a more peaceful future for the hitherto war-ridden eastern province as an independent nation protected by Russia. Rehabilitating

the remaining Anjala men, and reinstating their families among the local nobility, was one of the first tasks of the new government. It caused considerable resentment among those who still saw them as disloyal within the Swedish context[1].

As a result of the War of 1808–1809, Finland became an autonomous state within the Russian empire. The sovereign pledge given by Emperor Alexander I in Porvoo guaranteed to keep the constitution unchanged and to govern Finland in accordance with her old laws, allowing the continuing practice of the Lutheran religion. By promising to keep the privileges of the estates intact, the emperor assured the nobility of the continuity of their political position and the economic and legal basis of the way of life they had been accustomed to. To ensure the near-future loyalty of the Finnish nobility to the Russian crown, as well as to ease the transitional period, state pensions were granted to the retiring generation of the noble militaries.

Nobility at the age of bourgeois nationalism

After 1809, the position of the local nobility changed as the political and governmental context shifted. For the first time, there was a political unit with a Finnish-speaking majority, with a set of newly founded state institutions of her own.

The 19th century turned out to be the age of nationalism, progressive democratic movements and print media industry. Surfing on the carrier wave of modernisation — the expansion of higher education, bureaucratisation, urbanisation, early industrialisation, monetary economy and increasing professionalization — the fast-developing bourgeois intelligentsia increasingly took over as the overseers of the society. As the self-proclaimed champions and enlighteners of the masses, they also felt self-evidently entitled to the popular mandate for modern political power. To gain more room at the top level of the society, they actively strove to remove the nobility from positions of political and cultural power[2].

For the Finnish nobility, the establishment of the Grand Duchy had several interrelated consequences. The beginning of the autonomy period brought with it a shift of allegiance, replacing the former loyalty to the Swedish kings with a new loyalty to the Russian emperors, whom they originally viewed with a certain suspicion, largely due to the many wars fought between the countries. The military calling as a pillar of noble identity gave way to more peaceful professions within the state and local government, marking a general shift from military towards civilian mode of livelihood, and a lifestyle that went with it[3].

[1] See e. g. *Snellman A.* Suomen aateli: yhteiskunnan huipulta uusiin rooleihin 1809–1939. Helsinki, 2014.

[2] *Vuorinen M.* Kuviteltu aatelismies: aateluus viholliskuvana ja itseymmärryksenä 1800-luvun Suomessa. Helsinki: SKS, 2011.

[3] *Peltonen M.* «A bouregeois bureaucracy? The new mentality of the Finnish aristocracy at the beginning of the period of autonomy» // Peltonen, Matti (ed.), State, Culture & the Buregeoisie: Aspects of the Peculiarity of the Finnish. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopiston nykykulttuurin tutkimusyksikkö, 1989.

With the onset of nationalism as the prime motive force in the society, even the allegedly cosmopolitan nobility had to find ways to relate mentally to the nation. It meant a shift away from a tangible loyalty to a personal ruler, towards an abstract loyalty to an imagined collective. The older abstract concept of patriotism served as the model for the new loyalty[4]. By the time of the first assembly of the Finnish Diet in 1863, the nation as a cultural entity had already been established, well on its way to developing into a modern political unit, a nation-state.

Operating in an increasingly liberal-progressive political atmosphere, more and more dominated by a commoner stratum that embraced the new ideals of nationalism and democracy, nobility clearly worked against both the time and the political tide. Meanwhile, the bourgeois progressives, who considered themselves as the sole rightful representatives of the nation, looked on nobility as a triply alien element.

As descendants and/or 'henchmen' of ethnically Swedish conquerors, speaking a tongue that was alien to the Finnish-speaking majority and a reminder of the old oppressor, they were alien to the ethnic Finns. As elitist creations of the Swedish Crown, they were alien to local progressive and democratic strivings. As members of a transnational aristocratic sphere, with multinational origins and an international culture, they were alien to home-grown cultural strivings and nationalistic endeavour.

The Swedish heritage, apart from blood ties and cultural legacy, was present also in the form of political tradition, integral in the reorganisation of the Finnish noble estate into a legal and political unit — and, later on, in the modelling of the Finnish four-estate parliament in the early 1860s. The Finnish House of Nobility[5] was founded in 1818. Its organisation was based on the Swedish *Riddarhus* institution established by the original *Riddarhusordning* given by King Gustav II Adolf in 1626. This in turn had important corollaries for the noble estate within the Finnish Four-estate Diet, including the division, abolished in 1869, into three classes of unequal size that voted separately, with a majority of two against one defining the vote of the whole estate.

Interestingly, by the time the Diet assembled for the first time in 1863, the nobility's right to political power was contested not only by the liberal media establishment, but also from among its own ranks. Several members of the noble estate sought to introduce a bill for the dissolution of the whole estate[6], while others suggested that representation by family should be replaced by a smaller number of elected representatives[7]. However, the four-estate system, with nobility as the first estate, remained in effect until 1906, when it was replaced by a unicameral parliament.

By the latter half of the 19th century, nobility had a hard time surviving in a growing competition for positions and status with the academically educated commoner

[4] For further discussion, see *Katajisto K.* Isänmaamme Keisari: eliitin kansallisen identiteetin murros ja suomalaisen isänmaan rakentuminen autonomian. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2008.

[5] *Finlands Riddarhus*, literally 'house of knights'.

[6] Protocols of the Noble estate (later Nobility). 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 421–451, 607; Vol. IV. P. 53–63, 396–411, 567–572.

[7] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 635–642; Nobility. 1867. Vol. III. P. 391–392.

intelligentsia increasingly recruited from the Finnish-speaking population. After the 1906 parliamentary reform, the time of nobility as a political estate was officially over. The development was accepted even by the members of the estate themselves, and the majority of them eventually voted for the abolition of the four-estate system[8].

The 1863–1864 trilemma of loyalty

Mistrust based on alleged cosmopolitanism, and a consequential disloyalty to the nation, was becoming an established element of the criticism aimed at nobility by the bourgeois progressives. The representatives of the noble estate no doubt wanted to discuss and settle the matter once and for all. An opportunity for this opened with the preparation of the *Parliament Act* and the *House of Nobility Act*. Both were presented to the first, 1863–1864 Diet, accepted by the 1867 Diet, and become effective in 1869. The latter was discussed in full[9] only by the noble estate whom it directly concerned.

The less explosive issues in the Act were easily settled, including who was entitled to represent a noble family in case its head was incapacitated (8 §)[10], what ordinary circumstances and dishonourable deeds prevented one from representing (9 §)[11], and through what kind of procedure the estate could expel a representative who had been caught trying to purchase votes (35 §)[12].

The debate about the alleged cosmopolitanism and/or loyalty to a foreign crown focused on the question of whether or not a Finnish nobleman who served in Russia had a right to represent his family and estate on the Finnish Diet. The debate was partly motivated by a mistrust towards the tsarist Russian political culture. It was eventually settled by practical reasoning and *Realpolitik*.

The debate about who is a Finnish nobleman and who is not focused on the more general criteria for exclusion. According to the bill,

> From the right to seat, speech and vote in the House of Nobles is excluded <...>
> 4: o A nobleman, who by swearing loyalty and allegiange has committed his obligation to a foreign power, or who in some other respect obeys other than the Finnish law.
> 5: o A nobleman, who has moved his home and residence out of Finland and who, for reasons other than service for the Finnish state, for over six years has been away from the country, until he has moved back to Finland and who over three previous years, before he has applied for a seat and vote in the House of Nobles, has been attested to be a Finnish citizen, with a residence, and taxable, in the country.

[8] For details about the shift, see *Snellman A.* Op. cit. 2014. P. 198–202.

[9] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 518–535, 667–679, 687–711, 759–777.

[10] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 518–520.

[11] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 518–519, 759–762.

[12] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 526; Nobility. 1867. Vol. III. P. 269–270.

The constitutional right of the people to decide about how they were to be taxed meant that one who was not resident, and taxable, in the land could not take part in the decision-making. Those who served in Russia were automatically excluded, even though those who served the fatherland abroad usually had the right. Three members of the select comittee expressed provisions against this interpretation. As they saw it, service in the mother-country was not a legal obstacle, particularly if the person still had taxable property in Finland. Baron Munck justified his provision by a mixture of *Realpolitik*, loyalty to the ruler, patriotism and obligation. According to him, the sons of Finland who served on Russian soil were at heart fully as patriotic as the ones who served at home, and should not be excluded from the national decision-making process[13]. The importance of the issue is evident in the twists of the debate process. After a long discussion the documents were shelved for a week, after which the debate continued[14].

The two opposing mentalities might, for want of better words, be named reasonability and legality principles. The proponents of the first did not consider it reasonable that a nobleman of the traditional military calling, who by serving in the Russian army also contributed to the protection of his native Finland, would as a recompense lose his right of representation. K. A. von Born, quoting the noble privileges of 1723, reminded the estate of the good old days, when noblemen were actually prompted to seek positions abroad, to learn from foreign practices in order to better serve their own country later on. Besides, the Emperor, as the Grand-Duke of Finland, was not exactly a 'foreign power'. J. F.S. Gripenberg stressed the importance of separating temporary service from permanent emigration, while Baron von Kothen pointed out, that military service in Russia was not optional, but related to geopolitical circumstance, and definitely not an expression of an antipatriotic sentiment[15].

The early proponents of the legality principle carefully wrapped their attitude into the sacredness of the constitution, but their basic motivation was a fear of bad influences flowing in from Russia. J. U.S. Gripenberg said that occasional circumstances such as a linkage of states should be ignored, and the formulation based on the axiom only: a person should participate in the decision-making process only of such laws, as he would personally have to obey. Von Willebrand, referring to a Moscow newspaper that apparently had accused the Finns of dire separatism, told the estate to remain stern. Without wanting to cast doubt upon the Finnish militaries serving in Russia (as he said), he thought these 'eager Viking warriors' were not interested in serving any state, but in making a more glorious military career for themselves than was possible to achieve in Finland[16].

[13] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 518–519, 530–532, 535–539.

[14] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 662–664.

[15] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 644–656, 658–660.

[16] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 646–647, 656–658, 660–662.

During the second phase, the suspicion against Russia was vented more freely[17]. Count Creutz finished his otherwise formality-based argument with a flourish, expressing his trust in the self-sacrificing, patriotic Finnish noblemen in Russia. They would gladly forgo their right of representation, in order to protect the Finnish legal process from a nameless threat, blessing the courage of their countrymen who denied them participation. C. W. Spåre wanted to forge ahead and ban the influx of bad influences for all posterity. The geopolitical situations could change, and in the future, a Finnish nobleman might seek livelihood in England or the United States, picking up all kinds of harmful foreign habits![18]

The opposing view was defended with even more eloquence. Mixing humour with rhetoric, J. A. von Born and Schatelovitz demonstrated, that the Finns already obeyed a foreign law, as the Grand-Duke of Finland was set on his throne in accordance with to the Russian Law of Succession[19]. W. Spåre cunningly recycled the rhetoric the previous speakers had used to decorate their anti-Russian sentiments. To him, representing one's family and estate in the Diet appeared as a duty rather than a right, binding every nobleman regardless of his whereabouts. Not all possessed lands or riches, yet love and obligation towards fatherland did not grow from riches, but was based on far more sacred ties. Compared to the fatherland, individual concerns were small, and one must be ready to sacrifice oneself for one's country as a matter of course. Nevertheless, he would not expect any sinister attempts from 'our boys'. Quite the contrary: patriotism and interest in the affairs back home were often strongest among those who resided in the mother country and were used to promoting the interests of their homeland there. Nor was their knowledge about it any less, compared to those who lived in Finland. He was opposed to the idea that paying land property taxes would buy one a ticket to the Diet. Homeland was dear and sacred even to those who, like himself, lived abroad — the land of their childhood and of their forefathers' graves. They had left their homes and families behind only because of orders received from the ruler, whom a noble officer had to obey without questioning[20].

The noble estate eventually settled on the broader formulation, denying the right of representation only from those who did not obey Finnish law, nor owned property in the country. Those serving in Russia were allowed to participate[21]. In the final, 1867 version the 9 § had been completely reformulated, strengthening the position of both Finnish noblemen serving in Russia and Russian-born noblemen. The tax criterion was lifted from Finns who served the Emperor in Russia[22].

[17] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 713–759.

[18] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 713–721, 725–727. Both Creutz and C. W. Spåre apparently spoke in earnest, even though their choice of words may seem ironic to us.

[19] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 743–744.

[20] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 747–752.

[21] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 752–758.

[22] Nobility. 1867. Vol. III. P. 250–275, 391–393.

Another point of the debate concerning the inclusion/exclusion of nobility with Russian connections focused on religion. It was originally suggested that the traditional ban for other than Lutheran Christians should be reinstated, as a means to prevent 'aliens' from entering. In the final version, presented and accepted in 1867, the passage was completely remodelled. The access of other than Christians was explicitly denied, which was in itself an empty decree, implicitly allowing the participation of Catholic and particularly Orthodox Christians[23].

Russian donation owners as 'bad alien masters'

The second debate focusing on the image of disloyal, anti-nationalistic nobility continued, on and off, for decades. It concerned the 18th-century donations, to Russian masters, of landed property situated in the Vyborg and Mikkeli provinces, in the so-called 'Old Finland', a part of Russia from the peace treaties of 1721 and 1743 onwards, until annexed back into 'New Finland' in 1812. The plan was to redeem the lands to the state and then sell them to the tillers for a token price.

Debating the situation of the donation peasants, the members of the three commoner estates often referred to a historical case of noble oppression, the feudal period, and to the plight of the Estonian peasants, described by the Finnish press in scandalous tones[24]. The debate was dominated by the assumption that donation-owners — as it was assumed, in line with nobility in general — were selfish and greedy and, therefore, treated their tenants badly, exacting higher and higher payments, whereas the local judges were accused of favouring the landowners[25]. While debating the right of a master to punish a servant, the donation owners were in passing accused of cruelly beating the peasants. Representative Kumpulainen piled on an impressive array of key words — slavery, human dignity, whipping, cane — stating that particularly the latter was freely in use on the Vyborg province donations[26].

The allegedly miserable condition of the donation peasants were debated, on and off, until after the turn of the century. According to the members of the Landed Peasants estate, the Russian masters were not only greedy but also grossly incapable, wasting resources by mismanagement and leaving the state receivables unpaid. The tenants' payments were high and rudely collected, and no justice was available for them[27].

[23] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 642–643; Nobility. 1867. Vol. III. P. 254–255.

[24] See *Vuorinen M.* Op. cit. P. 244–248.

[25] Protocols of the Landed Peasants estate (later — Peasants). 1863–1864. Vol. I, N 71. P. 227–228; Vol. II. P. 735–744.

[26] Peasants. 1863–1864. Vol. II. P. 525.

[27] Peasants. 1877–1878. P. 373–380, 775–776, 868–869, 2019–2021; 1882. P. 209–211; 1885. P. 628, 1107–1120; 1888. P. 1065; 1891. P. 602; 1897. P. 287–290, 1222, 1287–1289; 1900. P. 661; 1904–1905. P. 995.

Everyone who is familiar with the situation in the Vyborg province knows how badly the tenants have suffered from the donation masters' oppression. As slaves they have been beaten, occasionally even murdered, and the perpetrators have received no punishment. The times are better now, but they still lack the final compensation; <...> it is a great injustice for the tenants if their work only benefits their lords and masters[28].

In the economy-oriented Bourgeoisie the attitude was less black-and-white. The donation peasants were considered to suffer unjustly and the masters' rights to the lands were questioned, but not directly contested. The typical suggestion was to find out about the actual conditions and then proceed to make justice to both parties. The representatives were also in possession of related economic facts, i. e. that the actual yield of the estates was not always that big[29].

Even in the Bourgeois estate the suffering of the peasants in the hands of cruel Russian noble masters was occasionally put to use as a sentimental argument, while debating the donations[30]. Particularly in the 1890s the Peasant-estate-style rhetoric found its way there, when redeeming the lands was argued to «save the mistreated population from the yoke that resembles slavery and has lasted for centuries». On the other hand, giving the lands to the peasants for a token price was criticised as 'socialism'. The suffering-based master narrative was refuted by a description of the tenants of the Anjala estate, owned by the Finnish Wrede family, who had good living and working conditions and paid low taxes, but preferred to become independent anyway[31].

In the Clergy, the overall discourse on donations was tinted with a sermon-style sentiment and a rather shallow human-interest. The 'ancient' peasant landownership had been overruled and taxation blown out of all proportion, begetting poverty and misery. The tenants did not trust the masters. Their spiritual and material development was arrested; their legal protection non-existent and their respect for the justice system equally low. Nevertheless, most speakers wanted to respect the property rights of the owners, and worried about the real cost of the redemption plan[32].

Several speakers departed from the general consensus towards a more extreme interpretation. Reverend Borenius revived the narrative of an absentee feudal landlord and his cruel bailiffs. According to him, donation ownership was an institutional form of absenteeism, at odds with the nationalistic ethos as it reduced the national income. A vast amount of Finnish soil had, through historical circumstance, ended

[28] Peasants. 1904–1905. P. 1015.

[29] Protocols of the Bourgeois estate (later — Bourgeoisie). 1863–1864. Vol. I. P. 75–78; Vol. IV. P. 255–269, 443–450; 1867. P. 255–270; 1877–1878. P. 780–781; 1882. P. 863–864; 1888. P. 796–802; 1885. P. 360–361, 1052–1070.

[30] Bourgeoisie. 1872. P. 172.

[31] Bourgeoisie. 1897. P. 257–259, 1173–1177 and Motion. Nr 70 (quotation).

[32] Protocols of the Clergy. 1863–1864. Vol. I. P. 43, 257–259, 304, 431–432, 629–651: Clergy. 1867. P. 238–266, 273–296: 1877–1878. P. 299–300.

up in alien hands, a few tens of Russian landowners, many of them living elsewhere. Their land agents were often of Russian origin, with little knowledge about the local people, their language and customs. After the original owners passed away, their inheritors, with even less ties to the property, insisted on even bigger yields. The agents also liked to get rich on the peasants' expense. To protect the interests of the people, in the name of civilisation, fatherland and humanity, one should not tolerate the ownership of such predators[33].

Reverend Hackzell, worried about the disintegrating morals of the kowtowing, embittered peasants and the cruel landowners alike, appealed to the pastoral calling and national feeling of the clergy to stop the development. He quoted several letters he had received from the peasants, movingly asking for help. The proverbial evil bailiff was mentioned time and again also during the 1867 debate[34].

The second, 1880s wave of the debate closely followed the Russian discussion on the situation of the liberated serfs, reported extensively in the Finnish press. Following the liberation, the peasants might land in an even worse economic situation, repaying a never-ending debt to the Crown, compared to which the donation owners suddenly appeared as benevolent masters. Then again, they were also feared to make money in the process — another retelling of the greed narrative. Professor Forsman revived the image of a nobleman predator, pointing out that while the state exacts only lawful payments, a landowner may rise the sums at will. The horse-whip, allegedly used on the donations to suppress the peasants, was referred to in passing by reverend Lyra[35].

In the early 1890s, all was quiet on the donation front, but the debate re-enflamed later as the overall political situation grew tenser. The social conscience argument gave way to sheer nationalism, boosted by a hatred towards Russians. Reverend Lyra, who at this point of time held a high office in the church administration, still pitied the peasants who suffered under the absentee landlords, bled dry by their heartless bailiffs, etc., while reverend Blomberg described the donations system as follows:

> 16 big tenant farms and families were subordinated, perhaps, to a single boasting courtier master [hovinherra] to pester at will, and about 60 other families had been expelled <...> from their land. [If this continues,] the whole area may easily fall prey to a both politically and ethnically foreign boyar, greatly harming our land.

Later Blomberg, quoting press reports about the Estonian situation, compared the fancy lifestyle of the landowners to the miserable conditions of the peasants living in the surrounding countryside. The pitilessly wielded whip surfaced again towards the turn of the century, as did the cruel bailiffs[36].

[33] Clergy. 1863–1864. Vol. III. P. 633–634.

[34] Clergy. 1863–1864. Vol. III. P. 635; 1867. P. 239, 294.

[35] Clergy. 1882. P. 768–782 (Forsman: 775); 1885. P. 895–900, 942–964 (Lyra: 942), 996–999.

[36] Clergy. 1888. P. 493–494, 941–946; 1894. P. 686–687 (Lyra); 1897. P. 1398–1405, 1471–1479 (Blomberg: 1472 and 1476); 1900. P. 87–90, 1242–1256 (whip and bailiffs: 1242–1243).

The more moderate speakers typically referred to factual details, arguing against the oppression-focused mainstream discourse. During the first Diet, reverend Bergh, who had lived in the Eastern Finland for 14 years, reminded the Clergy that the donation system had not been aimed to create oppression. Many masters treated their tenants justly and with kindness, even though some did not, and the owners' lawful interests should be protected. In 1867, vice-pastor Putkonen described a situation he had personally witnessed. Some tenants, possibly due to warnings from the local clergy (!), had refused to sign an in itself quite profitable 25-year contract, for fearing that it would bind them to serfdom. When the previous contract had expired, they then would have to be expelled, due to the lack of any legal contract[37].

In the Peasant estate, the Kurkijoki donations, particularly the school for agriculture founded on the premises, were mentioned 1882 as positive examples. In 1885 the donation peasants were critically labelled the favoured children of the state, claiming an official victim status, apparently entitled to renewed compensations. In the beginning of the 20th century, the owners were said to have actually managed their estates quite well. In the Bourgeoisie a speaker reminded the estate, that some of the donations had been owned by noble families in the first place, and thus could not have been robbed from the peasants[38].

The most critical speakers in all three commoner estates seem not to have based their arguments on actual knowledge about the life of the donation peasants. Instead, they made use of traditional themes and imageries, emotionally charged expressions and token objects, often borrowed from much older semiotic contexts. The peasants were spoken of from high above, in an openly sentimental fashion. The more moderate speakers, on the other hand, typically referred to factual details and strongly argued against the oppression-focussed discourse.

Meanwhile, the noble estate sought to produce an impartial, balanced view on the subject, often based on personal and/or family experience on landownership. The Donations debate related to the discussion about the noble privileges concerning landed property and was therefore close to the hearts of the members of the noble estate. The discussion followed the same lines as in the three other estates, with the obvious exception that noble Russian donation owners were never described quite as viciously as in the other estates. The peasants were thought to have the moral upper hand, but the owners also had legitimate rights.

The speakers justified their opinions with technical and legal information, reflecting detailed knowledge about landownership during several centuries. They also discussed the particular problems caused by the fact that the donations were situated on the borderline of two, for historical reasons quite different administrational cultures, thus elegantly pointing out the differences between Finnish and Russian estate owners[39].

[37] Clergy. 1867. P. 630; 1867. P. 243.

[38] Peasants. 1882. P. 240–245; 1885. P. 1116; 1904–1905. P. 207; Bourgeoisie. 1904–1905. P. 305–310.

[39] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. V. P. 491–555.

Several speakers spoke for the redeeming of the lands in the name of compassion and justice. K. F. von Born stated that there was evidence about bad treatment of the peasants and as the masters were not familiar with the local customs, they would not necessarily follow the local law[40]. J.A. von Born explained the original legal process: how the emperor had donated the lands in accordance to the Russian law, but could not revoke the donations now, when the lands were situated in the Finnish Grand Duchy. He also stressed another important legal point: the lands that had never belonged to peasant families should not be redeemed among the rest, nor those who had already passed into peasant hands[41].

J.U.S. Gripenberg, who had rented a donation for 16 years, believed that the owners would soon give up their lands as the Russian serf-owners had done — provided that they were approached diplomatically. Schatelovitz criticised the state for accusing the donation owners of despotism without actually investigating the case. To him, the complaints list — rising taxes, illegal expulsions, and oppression — or the owners' incompetence, negligence and lack of local knowledge as the standard explanation simply did not ring true. The wish of the peasants to gain possession of the lands was quite understandable, but it had also been enhanced by the local clergy. To end his argument, he asked his fellow nobleman, whether they were prepared to see the same phenomenon in the central and southern Finland around their own homesteads next[42].

In 1867, several speakers still spoke in moderate tones, but despotism, absenteeism, malpractice and suffering peasants were mentioned more often. Some thought, that the peasants were also to blame, others, that they had been corrupted by the situation. A pro-peasant progressive-nationalist fraction, suspecting the Russian landowners on an ethnic basis, was clearly on the rise. Meanwhile, the more traditionally cosmopolitan noblemen sided with the big landowners and fellow nobles[43]. Later on, the conflict gradually mellowed, even though the economic situation of the donation peasants still gave cause for concern[44].

Conclusion

When debating the 9 § of the House of Nobility Act, the noble estate explicitly debated a technicality concerning an individual's right of representation. Implicitly, the debate concerned the obligations owed by the Finnish nobility to the developing nation, vis-a-vis to the new mother-country and its ruler. To serve or not to serve?

[40] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. V. P. 506–509, 517–524.

[41] Nobility. 1863–1864. Vol. V. P. 509–516.

[42] Nobility. 1863–1864. P. 496–501, 516–517.

[43] Nobility. 1867. Vol. I. P. 282–303.

[44] Nobility. 1885. Vol. I. P. 280–283, 393–397, 458–460; Vol. III. P, 1002–1023, 1303, 1306; 1888. Vol. I. P. 515–516; Vol. II. P. 873–878.

Could the old loyalty towards a Swedish king be translated into a loyalty towards the Russian emperor, or was the former actually an obstacle to the latter? More to the point, could those who served the emperor be included into the Finnish political nation? In the end of the day, were those who served the emperor still loyal to their countrymen — could they be trusted?

During the debate, the proponents of both the reasonability and the legality principles time and again referred to patriotic ethos when justifying their angle of the argument. The existence of patriotic feelings throughout the allegedly cosmopolitan and/or alien first estate was thus definitely made clear. Simultaneously, the age-old Swedish traditions were remembered and appropriately honoured — and the nobility's willingness to loyally serve the Russian Emperors likewise attested. Eventually all three loyalties seemed merged into a single system, and everybody was happy.

The decades-long Donations debate clearly illustrated the ongoing inclusion of the home-grown nobles into the nation. The role of 'evil alien noblemen', originally cast to the Finnish nobility, was increasingly shifted to their Russian counterparts. In the eyes of their co-parliamentarians, at least, the Finnish nobility apparently had proved loyal, no longer deserving suspicious remarks from the commoner estates in this respect[45]. Yet the change, in itself benign, could only be accomplished by creating a new set of 'alien baddies'.

Particularly among the Peasant estate and the Clergy, the attitudes were from the beginning heavily laced with sentiment, while the Bourgeoisie first discussed the matter from a rational point of view, engaging in the heated nationalistic debate only after the general political situation between the countries got tense. The debate was firstly about the image of the evil nobleman, secondly about the alien Russian landowner — two separate, politically motivated oppressor images — and only thirdly about the real problems of actual people. Their economic difficulties were used to give form to a religiously enhanced nationalist conflict, seemingly situated between Finnish tenants and Russian landowners, retelling also the saga about the democracy-related conflict between the nobility and the people, and about a nationalist conflict between two nations.

At the same time, the more benevolent attitude towards the donation owners within the Noble estate seems to imply, that the Finnish nobility found in their hearts loyalty also towards their Russian counterparts.

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[45] In other contexts there were plenty, see *Vuorinen M.* Op. cit. P. 258–309.

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