

Changing men and masculinities in gender equal societies, Roskilde 28-30.1.2009
Workshop K : *Historical perspectives on men and masculinities in the welfare state*

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Competing versions of the citizen-soldier in the new Finnish national state: 1918-1932

Those Finnish men who came of age around 1920 experienced a dramatic shift in the relationship between manhood and being a soldier. There was a generation of Finnish men whose vast majority underwent intensive military training and participated in either the wars of 1918-1920 or those of 1939-1944. Yet until 1918, there had been no Finnish military and no military service for almost twenty years. Cultural and institutional military traditions in Finnish society had faded away, although they were far from forgotten.

As Finland declared independence in 1917 and fought a bloody civil war in 1918, a political struggle began over what the manly duty to fight for your country would actually mean in the new Finnish national state. The main argument of this paper is that the militarised masculinities of interwar Finland were no matter of course, but the result of a political and ideological process and initially subject of intense controversies. The manly duty to fight for your nation soon became accepted by a vast majority, but a heated debate over what specifically this duty should entail in peacetime society continued for years.

Two different models of the citizen-soldier were competing with each other in the political arena and within nationalist imagery: the militiaman and the cadre army soldier. In the militia system, there would be universal conscription but no standing peacetime army. All those liable for military service would at regular intervals gather for a few days or weeks of military training, and only a small number of officers would be full-time military professionals. In the cadre army system, used e.g. in the German, Russian and Austrian empires before the world war, the conscripts lived full-time in a military setting for a few

years and were given intensive military training by a relatively large cadre of military professionals.¹ The arguments for and against these two military models reveal different underlying notions of Finnish masculinities and their relationship to soldiering.

The agrarian critique

The conscript army that had emerged from the swirls of the civil war, created by executive government orders and the activities of nationalist activists and officers, was regularized through conscription laws passed in 1919 and 1922. Yet it did not go unchallenged. First the Agrarian Party and then the social democrats, the two mass parties of the political centre and left, presented their own visions of national defence and Finnish soldierhood, based on different configurations of democratic, republican and socialist idealism and highly critical of the conscription practice at hand.

When the Finnish parliament resumed its work after the civil war, its members had been reduced almost by half. All but one of the social democratic MPs were absent. Some were dead; others had fled to the Soviet Union or were imprisoned facing charges for participation in the red rebellion. As the government in November 1918 presented this rump parliament with a bill for a new conscription law, the agrarians found themselves in opposition to the other non-socialists parties as they demanded that the cadre army born out of the civil war should be replaced by a people's militia as soon as possible.

Historian Juhani Mylly has analysed the background of the people's militia idea within the Agrarian Party in its main ideologue Santeri Alkio's political thinking at the time of the party's founding in 1906. "In the style of an idealistic leader of a youth association, Alkio at that time argued for the superiority of the militia system in relation to the cadre system, by referring, among other things, to those moral dangers he thought the youngsters would be exposed to far from their homes", Mylly writes. He also points out that the Finnish agrarians had their distrust of cadre armies and their interest in the alternative people's militia model in common with agrarian parties in many countries, especially in Eastern Europe. The people's militia model was well suited to the democratic and republican ideology of the

¹ For the contemporary understandings of the militia system vs the cadre army system, see the parliamentary committee report on conscription in 1920; Asevelvollisuuslakikomitean mietintö, Komiteamietintö N:o 23, 1920, p. 48–50, 77.

Finnish Agrarian Party, where it was seen as a kind of people's army that brought the issue of national defence concretely into the everyday life of ordinary citizens. To this peasant's party, always economical with the taxpayer's money, the relative inexpensiveness of the militia system was also of great importance. They admired and supported the protective guards (*Suojeluskunnat*, *Skyddskårerna*) and regarded them as a model and inspiration for how the national defence system should be organised. The cadre army, on the other hand, was associated with the upper class life-style of its aristocratic officers, pointless drilling, ostentatious display and parading, as well as moral corruption of conscripts especially through drinking. According to Mylly, the agrarians thought the cadre army was an anti-democratic tool for the unsound ambitions of warlike monarchs.²

This notion must have been strengthened by the fact that the conservative government proposing a conscription bill in November 1918 based on the cadre army system had for months been busy trying to make Finland a monarchy closely aligned to the German empire. Having just experienced the rebelliousness and "political immaturity" of the working classes, the right-wing parties were anxious to shape a new form of government that would ensure political stability and guarantee the educated elites a certain measure of control. The plans for a monarchy were wrecked in November-December by the German defeat in the Great War. Nevertheless, solidly establishing the cadre army system can be seen as one part of this larger political project. The origins of the Prussian cadre army system, which served as a model for the build-up of the Finnish army, can actually be found in a very similar need to control the explosive force of arming the lower classes. German military historian Stig Förster has described how universal conscription and intensive military training since the age of the Napoleonic wars was a way for military and political leaders in both France and Prussia to control and harness the enormous power potential of the "people's armies" of the revolutionary era.³ In the same way, the cadre army system in Finland should ensure that the conscripts were disciplined into a military force controllable by the government. Although the militia model resembled the organisational principles of the cherished

² Juhani Mylly: *Maalaisliitto ja turvallisuuspolitiikka. Suomen ulkopoliittikka ja turvallisuuskysymykset agraari puolueiden politiikassa maan itsenäistymisestä talvisotaan*. Vol. I Turun Yliopisto, Turku 1978, p. 138f.

³ Stig Förster: 'Militär und Staatsbürgerliche Partizipation. Die allgemeine Wehrpflicht im Deutschen Kaiserreich 1871-1914' i Roland G. Foerster (Hg.): *Die Wehrpflicht. Entstehung, Erscheinungsformen und politisch-militärische Wirkung* (München 1994), p. 55-57

protective guards, it might also have born a resemblance to the red guards too stark for bourgeois sensibilities traumatized by the civil war.⁴

Since the agrarians could not find support for their militia model in the 1918 rump parliament, they concentrated on arguing that the two-year proposed military service for 20-year-olds was far too long. Agrarian MPs Santeri Alkio and Antti Juutilainen both depicted the cadre army system as a relict of yesterday's world and the military experts propagating it as "adepts of the old Russian school who cannot grasp that armies in today's world can be trained and put together more rapidly than before". Alkio argued that interrupting young men's working lives and plans for several years would only provoke discontent and weaken the army. He held up the people's militia model as the future goal to strive for. "Finland's experience during [1918] shows that on this basis, as the people rises to defend its fatherland and its freedom and to create new conditions, a shorter training will suffice. All that is needed is patriotic enthusiasm".⁵ In another flush of nationalist self-congratulation, agrarian MP Mikko Luopajarvi claimed that due to the Finns' fighting spirit, the arrival of small and rapidly trained Finnish voluntary troops on the battle scene had been a turning point in the Estonian war of independence. Asserting that the Finns accomplished more with merely a brief military training than the Estonians who had served for four or five years in the czar's army, Luopajarvi tried to prove how it was more important to ascertain that Finnish soldiers had the right motivation to fight than to give them a very thorough military education.⁶ His party fellow Juho Niukkanen agreed and further stated that an overly heavy military service was irreconcilable with national character itself:

It has also been said of the Finns, that whereas they are good soldiers, they are also stubborn and persistent, that they cannot just like that and especially without good reason be hassled and against their will commanded to tasks that are obviously repulsive to them, and neither to pointless military expeditions. (...) To my understanding, a Finnish soldier properly fulfils his assignment only if he feels the purpose he has to fight for, to shed his

⁴ Cf. V.-P. Somerkari: *Kansanmiliisi Suomen itsenäisyyden ajan alkuvuosien poliittis-sotilaallisena ongelmana*. Unpublished master's thesis in political history. Helsinki University 1953, p. 29.

⁵ Valtiopäivät 1918 pöytäkirjat 14.1.1919.

⁶ Valtiopäivät 1918, pöytäkirjat 14.1.1911.

blood for, to be worth fighting for. For this reason, the Finnish soldier should not without good cause be vexed with a too long duration of military service (...).⁷

Between the lines in Niukkanen's depiction of 'the Finn', here obviously male Finns, one can read an acid critique of the military establishment, with its "foreign" traditions for military training, and the rumoured plans for a military expedition against St Petersburg to topple the Bolshevik revolution. An image of straightforward valiant soldiers of the people, excellent fighters, but only for a just and necessary cause, is juxtaposed with an implied image of irresponsible upper-class officers and politicians who do not understand these men. Rhetorically, Niukkanen was skillfully harnessing a certain image of Finnish masculinity to his political objective of gaining support for a military service of just 12 months' duration.

Outcomes of the 1918-1919 debate

As it turned out, there was cross-party support in parliament 1918-1919 for cutting the length of military training. The parliamentary committee for military matters proposed reducing the military service from two years to 18 months, stating that "our people during almost two decades has lacked a military establishment, wherefore the conscripts would think it exceedingly burdensome being compelled to leave their proper activities for two years. A duty that feels overly heavy, could again give reason for discontent with the national defence and the whole legal form of government." The committee found it was "more important that the army is completely trustworthy than that it excels in technical skills".⁸ Concerns were expressed by several MP:s that since this law placed "exceptional burdens" on the individual and demanded "the greatest personal sacrifices" of the citizens, passing the law in a parliament where the workers had almost no representation risked to undermine the legitimacy of both the conscription law and the conscript army. Nobody specified the gender of these "citizens", leaving open for interpretation whether the "greatest personal sacrifices" were demanded only of young male citizens or whether these included the sacrifices that women, children and old people had to make as they sent off their youngsters to military service or war. The rump parliament's problem of legitimacy was solved by passing the bill as a "temporary" conscription law, but the debate shows that

⁷ Juho Niukkanen, Valtiopäivät 1918, pöytäkirjat 8.1.1919.

⁸ Utskottets för militära angelägenheter betänkande n:o 1 med anledning av Regeringens proposition till Lantdagen angående ny värnplikslag. 1918 års Lantdag – Utskottsbetänkanden – Prop. Nr 6.

many members of parliament were anxious about the possibility that conscription might not produce docile patriotic citizens but the opposite – rebellious sentiments in young men.⁹

The social democrats enter stage

Parliament went on debating the conscription system actively throughout 1919–1922. The social democrats returned to parliament in Spring 1919 in almost their pre-war strength (38% of the popular vote and 80 seats in parliament) and immediately started to push for military reform and a transition from the cadre army system to a militia model. The social democrats claimed, in rhetoric reminiscent of the agrarians', that Finland through the events in 1918 had ended up with an "old, imperial-style army" that not even the burghers were happy with.¹⁰ They described this cadre system as a heavy economic burden for the citizens, incompatible with practical life and a danger to democracy. Since the cadre system was built on training the soldiers into unconditional obedience, there were no guarantees that these soldiers could not be used for reactionary purposes domestically and abroad – in other words, to put down strikes by Finnish workers or to attack Bolshevik Russia. Referring to the Russian and Prussian origins of the Finnish cadre system, they warned for the "undemocratic spirit" in the officer corps, where prominent officers thought themselves to be above the rest of society and entitled to special privileges.¹¹ A militia system was necessary for the preservation of the republic, claimed social democrat MP Jaakko Keto in 1922 and pointed to the protective guards as another armed organization threatening the republican form of government.¹²

Again and again, the social democrats repeated the old argument of both socialists and agrarians that the long months of incarceration in the barracks resulted in the moral corruption of the conscripts. "Innocent boys are led astray into immorality, drinking, pilfering, theft and forgery". Abuses of power and bullying of soldiers are well-known from cadre armies around the world, claimed MP Oskari Reinikainen, and they can never be

⁹ Valtioapäivät 1918 pöytäkirjat 13.11.1918; Utskottets för militära angelägenheter betänkande n:o 1 med anledning av Regeringens proposition till Lantdagen angående ny värnpliktslag. 1918 års Lantdag – Utskottsbetänkanden – Prop. Nr. 6.

¹⁰ Valtioapäivät 1920, pöytäkirjat 29.5.1920, p. 698. [MP Mikko Ampuja]

¹¹ XXX Valtioapäivät 1920, pöytäkirjat 29.5.1920, p. 698 [MP Ampuja].

¹² Valtioapäivät 1921 pöytäkirjat 27.1.1922.

checked because they are inherent to the system.¹³ Yet somewhat inconsistently the social democrats also urged “the bourgeois” not to fool themselves to think that the modern youth could be indoctrinated through military training into unconditional loyalty to the government. Due to the close contacts between the soldiers and the general public in modern society, even a very long military service could no longer uproot the soldiers’ principles and produce the ideal soldier of bourgeois fantasy.¹⁴ It is noteworthy how the social democrats still saw conscripts as impressionable youths susceptible to militarist indoctrination – those close contacts to the civilian world were needed in order for them to stay true to their principles and – presumably – their social class.

The social democrats wanted a people’s militia like in Switzerland, which they asserted would be more affordable, more democratic and would not threaten any neighbouring countries the way a standing army like the cadre army always did. Since most of the officers would be civilians, “for example folk school teachers”, there would be no breeding ground for a dangerous caste spirit among them.¹⁵ The suggestions of different social democratic MP:s varied, from a basic military training of four months to the militia exercising every Sunday and one or two weeks each summer. Based on self discipline, they explained, the militia system would be more motivating and meaningful for the conscripts and better at arousing their patriotism than the cadre army system, which was based on external compulsion.

In spite of the many similarities in how the agrarians and social democrats argued for a militia system, their versions of the militiaman differed in some important respects. The militiaman image in its Agrarian Party version can be interpreted as expressing a firm belief in an essential warlikeness in Finnish men. This actually seems to apply to much of their subsequent arguments for shortening the military training period as well. The Agrarian’s vision of a militia system implied a view on warfare and military matters where the mechanical discipline and absolute obedience associated with the cadre army system was

¹³ Valtioapäivät 1921, pöytäkirjat 22.2.1922.

¹⁴ Valtioapäivät 1919, pöytäkirjat 17.4.1919; Valtioapäivät 1919 Liitteet I-XI p. 955–960; Valtioapäivät 1920, pöytäkirjat 29.5.1920, p. 699; Valtioapäivät 1921, Asiakirjat I, Sotilasasiainvaliokunnan mietintö No 2; Valtioapäivät 1921, pöytäkirjat 27.1.1922; 31.1.1922; 22.2.1922; Valtioapäivät 1922, Sotilasasiainvaliokunnan mietintö No 1; Valtioapäivät 1922 pöytäkirjat 17.10.1922.

¹⁵ Valtioapäivät 1920, Sotilasvaliokunnan mietintö N:o 2, Vastalause, Asiakirjat V:2; Valtioapäivät 1920, pöytäkirjat 29.5.1920, p. 698. [MP Mikko Ampuja]; Valtioapäivät 1921, pöytäkirja 27.1.1922, p. 1755–1760 [MP Keto].

considered positively detrimental to military efficiency, since it ate into the conscripts' motivation and patriotic enthusiasm. Dismissing extensive military training as unaffordable, morally corruptive and unnecessary in view of "the experiences of 1918", their support for a militia system seems to have entailed a view of Finnish men as "natural warriors" who by sheer force of will, patriotism or protective instinct would fight ferociously enough to stop any aggressor. Whether this was seen as an inborn aptitude or something brought about by growing to manhood in Finnish culture is not evident. This notion of soldiering could nevertheless be seen as congruent with the masculine standing of a freeholder, master of his own house, used to handling hunting weapons, disciplining his own household and joining with other men in the village to manage internal disturbances or fend off external threats.

The social democratic version of the militiaman did not so much imply a warlikeness of Finnish men. Rather, it revealed a concern over how easily young men could be manipulated and impressed upon; a fear that military training could make class traitors out of young working men. If we are to judge by the Social Democrats' rhetoric in parliament, they preferred the militia because it rendered inducing the soldiers with a false consciousness and making them act against their own class interests more difficult. The militiaman was bound up in civil society and thus adhered to its democratic values, but if the young conscript was incarcerated in the garrisons of a cadre army and isolated from civilian influences, he could soon be turned against his own class. As they repeatedly pointed out how the taxpayers' money spent on defence was always money taken away from other important purposes, the first neglected area they listed was nearly always "culture" – that is, one can assume, the education and uplifting of the working classes to a higher level of civilization, self-consciousness and social influence. Thus, even the financing of the cadre army system dragged not only young men's but the whole working class' civic development in the wrong direction.

Closing ranks: towards political convergence

In the 1920 report of a parliamentary committee drafting a permanent conscription law, the militia model was criticised at length. Its allure among the voters and the staunch support it had from the country's biggest party, the social democrats, were obviously still considered real challenges. Yet it was already losing its support among the agrarians and thus its

potential parliamentary majority. Possible reasons can be found in that same committee report, based on the views of its members, including both parliamentarians and professional officers, and hearings with a number of military experts. Its main argument was that the militia system left the country unprotected in case of a sudden attack. In a sparsely populated country like Finland, with a thin railroad network, it would be impossible to mobilise a militia army and transport it to the border fast enough to stop an aggressor. Another serious blow to remaining support for the militia system was the claim that it was not necessarily less expensive than a cadre army. Before the world war, it was pointed out, Switzerland's military expenditure had been the third highest among the countries of Europe. The militia system was further criticised for its inefficiency as a training organisation. Within it, the military training of conscripts was allegedly superficial and fragmented; it was impossible to foster the "firm discipline and feeling of togetherness that is necessary for military success"; and the short and disconnected training periods impeded on "the personal relation and trust between the men and the officers that also is necessary for the effectiveness of the army in a war".¹⁶

The preamble of the resulting 1921 government bill echoed the committee's dismissal of the militia system. The main reason given for choosing the cadre system was that it secured a sufficient number of soldiers in the standing army to hold back an aggressor until the reserve could be mobilised. The Minister of War Bruno Jalander described the bill as the best possible compromise between military and fiscal considerations. One year of military training was an absolute minimum. However, no attempts were made in the preamble to justify the cadre army system by referring to positive side effects of the cadre army system in terms of civic education, the strengthening of national manliness, national re-integration or such. The matter was simply presented as a question of iron military necessity.¹⁷

In the elections of 1919, the agrarians had risen to the biggest non-socialist party with 20% of the popular vote. However, by the time the 1921 conscription bill was presented, they

¹⁶ Asevelvollisuuslakikomitean mietintö, Komiteamietintö N:o 23, 1920, p. 48–50.

¹⁷ 1921 års riksdag, Handlingar I, Proposition n:o 1, Lag om allmän värnplikt. Valtiopäivät 1921. pöytäkirjat 27.1.1922, 22. 2.1922.

had already abandoned the militia model.¹⁸ Historians have offered different explanations for this sudden change of heart on part of the agrarians. Firstly, it has been suggested that the agrarians had simply been convinced by military experts that the militia system was an unsuitable and expensive option for Finland.¹⁹ Secondly, that since the agrarians starting in the spring of 1919 shouldered the responsibilities of partaking in a series of government coalitions, they had to take a more realistic and pragmatic approach to security policy.²⁰ Thirdly, that the once more tense situation on the Finnish-Russian borders – due to voluntary Finnish military expeditions into Eastern Karelia and the continued Russian civil war – made thoughts of a complete overhaul of the national defence system in the foreseeable future untenable.²¹ These explanations all seem based on the somewhat afterwise view that the cadre army in fact made out the only realistic and militarily efficient alternative. During the parliamentary debate on the conscription bill of 1921, Santeri Alkio himself stated another reason, and only one reason, for why he had become convinced of the impossibility of the militia model in Finland. This was the unreliability of the social democrats. According to Alkio, they had abandoned peaceful methods in 1917 and could still not control all those socialists who collaborated with the Bolsheviks terrorising Russia, “militarists of the worst kind”.²² In other words, he did not any longer trust the mass of Finnish conscripts enough to arm them without the institutional control apparatus of the cadre army.

After the agrarians had given up on the people’s militia, the MPs from the non-socialist parties did not really bother to respond to the social democrats’ critique of the cadre system. When the conscription bill of 1921 was debated, they mainly argued among each other over the costs and length of military service. At first, the agrarians wanted it shortened to nine months, with the main argument that this was the only way to cut the grinding military expenses. The conservatives and liberals who supported a military service of 12 months depicted the duration of military service as an issue of brute military *necessity*,

¹⁸ Programme of the Agrarian Party, approved in the party conference in Helsinki 14. 4. 1921. POHTIVA Database of political programmes, Finnish Social Science Data Archive, University of Tampere.<<http://www.fsd.uta.fi/pohtiva/ohjelma?tunniste=maalohjelma1921>>, retrieved September 4th, 2008.

¹⁹ Somerkari 1953, p. 62–63.

²⁰ Vilho Tervasmäki: *Eduskuntaryhmät ja maanpuolustus valtiopäivillä 1917–1939*. Poliitiikan tutkimuksia 4. Valtiotieteellinen yhdistys, Helsinki 1964, p. 264.

²¹ Mylly 1978, p. 141.

²² Valtiopäivät 1922 pöytäkirjat 7.3.1922. p. 2105f.

not what would be pleasant for the conscripts or taxpayers. It was a question of how big the standing army must be to fend off a surprise attack by Russia and how many months were needed to give conscripts an adequate military training – and thus an issue that military amateurs could not fully grasp but where parliament had to listen to the professional expertise.²³ Only a few conservative MPs went beyond purely military considerations in arguing for the value of a full year of military training, claiming that the military service promoted “national self-consciousness”, “the education of the nation to a sense of duty and discipline” as well as solidarity among conscripts from different layers of society.²⁴

One central argument for the cadre army system in general and for a minimum training of 12 months was that a prolonged and continuous training time was necessary to make the conscripts skilled fighters who would stand a chance of survival in a modern war. In contrast to the agrarian rhetoric of 1918–1919, this implied an image of a citizen soldier who had to be extensively trained within a cadre army to become a fit soldier. It seems expressive of a more sceptical notion of young men’s natural aptitude for waging war. This cadre army soldier image could be read as containing a bourgeois concern about young men’s path towards a masculinity adapted to the demands of modern life, where the outcome was by no means given by nature.²⁵ The youngsters had to be extensively guided, hardened and trained if they were to become not only capable soldiers but also obedient cogs in the big wheel of a modern army, submitting to the superior will and farsightedness of their commanding officer and the higher military command. In this image of the Finnish citizen-soldier, a training in discipline and submission was crucial.

In general, however, there was less talk in the 1921–22 debate about the positive moral effects on young men of military training and conscription than there had been in a similar debate in 1917. This can be taken as one indicator of how universal conscription and the cadre army system were already becoming accepted – although not necessarily well-liked – institutions whose existence did not need to be defended and argued for in front of the voters. The fact that the non-socialist parties more or less ignored the social democrat’s continued critique of the cadre system seems to point in the same direction. MP Simson

²³ Valtiopäivät 1921, pöytäkirjat 22.2.1922.

²⁴ Valtiopäivät 1921 pöytäkirjat 22.2.1922.

²⁵ Cf David Tjeder: *The power of character. Middle-class masculinities, 1800-1900*, Stockholms Universitet, Stockholm 2003.

Pilkka of the Agrarian Party, one of the few who responded to this critique, made a brief but remarkable statement in parliament in March 1922, indicating how the mainstream had shifted. It was true, he admitted frankly, that barracks life debauched youths from the countryside. But, he continued, “right now we cannot live here as an independent state if we do not have such barracks life”.²⁶

The normalization of conscription

The permanent conscription law cementing the cadre system and fixing military service to 12 months was finally passed in 1922. Even the social democrats then gradually turned their attention in the defence sector away from the militia model to other matters, such as demanding cuts in the military budget and the length of military service. A process of “normalization” and increasing national consensus came to characterize the politics of conscription. The cadre army slowly became something ever more normal to Finnish society and the demands it made on men gained strength, not only as an institutional but as a political and civic norm. Still, as this paper has attempted to show, this particular militarisation of Finnish masculinities was not a self-explanatory function of national independence, but the outcome of a historical process where alternative constructions of masculinity contested in a political struggle entangled with struggles over other arrangements of political power in the new Finnish state.²⁷

A good deal of the members of parliament sought to put a check on the sudden militarization of the Finnish state and Finnish young men’s lives, by trying to put limits to military expenditure and cutting the length of active military service. However, the most drastic attempt by parliamentary politicians to take the initiative away from the military professionals and change the ideological basis of the military system failed; the cadre army system remained and the militia system gradually lost support as it came to be associated with wishful idealism and military inadequacy. In spite of the Social Democrats’ trying to brand the cadre army as an outdated organizational form, at the end of the day the image

²⁶ Valtiopäivät 1921, pöytäkirjat 7.3.1922.

²⁷ Cf. Stefan Dudink & Karen Hagemann: ‘Masculinity in politics and war in the age of democratic revolutions, 1750-1850’ in Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann & John Tosh (eds.): *Masculinities in Politics and in War. Rewritings of Modern History* (Manchester & New York 2004) p. 6.

had been reverted, and the cadre army stood out as the only training and fighting organization adapted to the horrible realities of modern warfare.

However, this military system was seldom glorified or celebrated in parliament like the feats of the white army in 1918. On the contrary, the parliamentary protocols abound with expressions of concern about the negative effects of this system on the nation's economy, on young men's career path and on the morals of conscripted men, as well as scepticism about the political loyalties of the officer corps. These concerns and doubts were mainly expressed by the popular mass parties of the political left and centre. Still, even the conservative and liberal MPs exercised a certain political correctness in mostly describing the regular army and the conscription system as a regrettable necessity rather than picking up discourses on soldiering as a flowering of Finnish manliness or an epitome of national re-integration.

The views expressed in parliament are indicative of a wide-spread scepticism and lack of enthusiasm among large segments of the population; a scepticism about conscription in general and especially about the Russian- and/or Prussian-style cadre army, its officer corps and its impact on young males. However, as the parliamentary debates also indicate, this scepticism was neither monolithic nor static, but shifted over time and was relative to perceptions of alternative security solutions, threats to ordinary citizen's lives, and prospects of success in fighting these threats. It is nevertheless noteworthy that fundamental doubts as to the *moral* justification of the state expropriating one or two years of young men's lives were only voiced by a few MPs the debates of 1917 and 1919 and not at all thereafter. Mainly fiscal and military arguments for a shorter duration of military service were used as agrarians and socialists described the existing military service as an unbearable economic burden for the population, its tediousness killing off the conscripts' fighting motivation and thus weakening the army's military effectiveness. That young men were to be compelled to take upon themselves the burden and sacrifice of fighting and dying for the nation's defence was not contested.

Does an analysis of the images of masculinity implied in the different military system models shed any light on the turnaround in the politics of conscription of the Agrarians and the Social Democrats? If it is correct that a notion of a stiff-necked autonomous "natural

warrior” inherent in Finnish agrarian masculinity was intrinsic to the agrarians’ vision of a people’s militia, it does make sense that they would hesitate to distribute arms among militiamen of all political colours. As quoted above, Santeri Alkio expressed a fear that socialist militiamen would know only too well how to use them for their own purposes, not necessarily guided and commanded by the government or their officers. His statements convey a view of Finnish men as essential fighters who needed to be checked and disciplined since one could be certain they would fight for the right cause. Although their martial spirit would only be stifled by prolonged military training, that was seen as necessary for the preservation of internal order.

The agrarians essentially supported social status quo. The mere fact that the cadre army military training system turned out to work at least decently for the purposes of securing domestic order and safeguarding the eastern border must therefore have made it ever more palatable to them as time passed. Their fears that 18 months of incarceration in garrisons would produce mutinous sentiments among the youngsters did not come true as it the cadre army in fact educated rather well disciplined and motivated soldiers who were proud of having been “where boys become men”. For the social democrats again, the matter looked different. The better the cadre army managed to support and stabilise the status quo power arrangements, the worse for their vision of social reforms. Their concern was not that men were killing machines who had to be controlled if given weapons, but on the contrary that the cadre army made them killing machines guided by a politically suspicious upper-class officer corps. That is, at least until the social democrats themselves entered government in 1926 and became ever more convinced that social progress was indeed taking place within the existing political and military system and that the Finnish national state in its existing form was something the working classes also had a reason to defend.