

# The Businessmen of Sveaborg: Civil–Military Interaction in an Atypical Eighteenth Century Nordic Military Town

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As the saying goes, ‘trade follows the flag’. Indeed, one of the main forms of interaction between civil society and military society has been business, with civilian merchants, pedlars, and craftsmen catering to the needs of armies. Several studies have been published about the maintenance of fighting armies and the role of civilians in this process.<sup>1</sup> However, the same phenomenon has also existed in peacetime, as civil settlements were vital to the maintenance of castles, fortresses, and other permanent military bases. Local burghers worked as subcontractors to the military, providing food and supplies to the soldiers as well as construction materials for the fortifying work. Furthermore, the soldiers and other army personnel constituted an important clientele for the burghers by visiting their shops, taverns, and workshops and by using their commercial services.<sup>2</sup>

Since John Brewer’s groundbreaking book *The Sinews of Power* (1989), the formation of the early modern state and the military’s role in the process has been a keen interest of historians. Due to the breakthrough of the New Military History, military historians have shifted their attention from battles to the social, economic, and political role the army acquired in early modern society. A key question has been how military society and civil society interacted with each other and, at the same time, shaped each other both consciously and unconsciously. This includes both the official relations between the army and local forms of civil government, as well as the day-to-day interaction between the soldiers and the civilians.<sup>3</sup> In Nordic countries, historians like Christer Kuvaja and Martin Hårdstedt have written about the relationship between the army and civil society during times of war, whereas the Garnisonsstäder i Norden project, active in the 1980s and 1990s, has done pioneering work in examining the peacetime relationship between soldiers and civilians.<sup>4</sup>

When analysing the interaction between civil society and military society in early-modern Nordic countries, the best example to take is the military town.

According to the popular definition by Gunnar Artéus, leader of the aforementioned Garnisonsstäder project, a military town is a town where ‘the economy, the physical and political environment, as well as the sociocultural ways of life, are shaped by the permanent presence of the military’.<sup>5</sup> In peacetime, the enlisted regiments were positioned in towns and thus had daily and long-lasting interaction with the civilian world, on both the institutional and the grass root levels. The longer the peacetime lasted, the deeper the interaction and co-dependence became. Of the Nordic countries, Denmark provides the most extreme example of this phenomenon: during the eighteenth century between the Great Northern War and the Napoleonic wars, the country saw nearly a century of uninterrupted peacetime (1721–1807), which has given Danish military historians rich source material to exploit.<sup>6</sup> During the same period, in comparison, Sweden was involved in three wars. However, Swedish military towns provide no less fruitful examples of civil–military interaction, even though the periods of peacetime were shorter.

In civil–military interaction, the burgher society of the military towns formed the main counterparty for the army and its soldiers. According to the principles of the estate system and the mercantilist economic policy, all trade and commerce in the Swedish Realm were the exclusive right of the Estate of Burghers. The estate composed of craftsmen, merchants, and other businessmen who had gained burgher rights, or in other words, the right to live and do business in one of the realm’s towns. The burghers had considerable economic and political autonomy inside the borders of their town, including the rights to elect the Mayor and the Town Council, tax the citizens of the town, and send representatives to the Swedish Parliament. Judicially, the system was founded on a set of multiple official privileges: the Estate of Burghers had its national privileges, towns had their own privileges, the burgher guilds and societies had their privileges, and the individual burghers had their individual privileges in the form of their burgher rights certificates.<sup>7</sup>

The permanent presence of the army in a town was both an opportunity and a threat to the burgher community. As stated above, the army and its soldiers proved to be lucrative business opportunities to the burghers, but at the same time, the military presence hindered their political and economic autonomy. Part of the permanent townspeople – the soldiers and other military personnel – were under army jurisdiction and military justice, and therefore outside of the authority of the Town Council. Furthermore, the soldiers engaged themselves in all sorts of legal and illegal business, which the burghers saw as a threat to their livelihood. The most important civil–military conflicts in the early modern Swedish military towns rose from this dichotomy. These included the soldiers’ criminality and oth-

er forms of civic unrest between the soldiers and the civilians; the soldier quartering system, within which the army obligated the burghers to quarter soldiers in their homes in exchange for a monetary compensation; and the soldier handicraft question, or the enlisted soldiers' efforts to manufacture and sell handicraft products and their conflicts with the master craftsmen.<sup>8</sup>

This article discusses the civil–military interaction in one early modern Swedish military town: the late eighteenth century Helsinki, the hometown of the sea fortress Sveaborg.<sup>9</sup> The choice of the subject rises from two facts. Firstly, despite its central role in the history of Sweden and Finland, many aspects of the history of the Fortress Sveaborg are relatively unknown, including the relations between the army and the local burgher community. Secondly, the military town of Helsinki had peculiar geographical circumstances, which, along with the preconditions of the northern climate, gave the local civil–military relations a unique form.

### *The Neglected Sveaborg*

The fortress Sveaborg, founded in 1747 on the islands outside the town of Helsinki, was designed as Sweden's military stronghold against Russia, to whom Sweden had during the previous half a century lost two wars – the Great Northern War (1700–1721) and the Russo-Swedish War of 1741–1743. Functioning as *place d'armes* or a central fortress, Sveaborg was a garrison with a large number of infantry and artillery troops and a naval base housing the Finnish Squadron of the Swedish Army Navy. Originally, the sea fortress was only a part of a larger plan, which would have included rebuilding Helsinki into a full-scale fortress town and erecting a chain of smaller fortifications around it, but for monetary reasons, these schemes were quickly dropped. Despite this, Sveaborg was one of the biggest and most expensive construction projects in the history of the Nordic countries up to that date.

The fortress's reputation as the unconquerable 'Gibraltar of the North'<sup>10</sup> spread throughout Europe, and its siege and capitulation in the Finnish War (1808–1809) sealed the breakdown of the old Swedish Realm and the incorporation of the eastern parts of the realm into the Russian empire, and as a consequence led to birth of the Grand Duchy of Finland, a semi-autonomous part of empire. Moreover, the city of Helsinki owes its present position as the capital of Finland to Sveaborg. During the years of the fortress's construction, Helsinki grew from an economically marginal small town with couple of thousands inhab-

itants into a wealthy and lively fortress town with – combining the populations of the town and fortress – nearly 9,000 inhabitants. For its size, blooming economy, and military safety, it was considered after the Finnish War the best choice for the capital of the Grand Duchy.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the major part it played in the history of the Baltic region, the sea fortress Sveaborg has been strangely neglected by researchers. Hitherto, Sveaborg has mainly attracted the attention of the advocates of the history of art and political culture, who have treated it as an architectural and/or political monument,<sup>12</sup> and of traditional military historians, who have written detailed volumes on its military units, their organization, recruitments, discipline, insignia, and other such themes.<sup>13</sup> Although the New Military History has gained a strong momentum in Sweden and Finland, its practitioners have thus far not been interested in Sveaborg.<sup>14</sup> Our knowledge of the administration and maintenance of the fortress, the demographics and microhistory of its large military-civilian population, and the interaction between the military society and the civil society in the fortress town of Helsinki-Sveaborg – all central topics of the New Military History – has therefore been sparse.

Helsinki is, in many ways, a fine representative of an early-modern Nordic military town. All of the three themes mentioned above – the soldiers' criminality, the soldier quartering system, and the soldiers' handicraft – were present and seem to follow the general tendencies.<sup>15</sup> In one way, however, Helsinki can be considered unique amongst its Nordic counterparts. It had exceptional geographical circumstances, which were strongly reflected in the local civil–military relations. As will be demonstrated, these affected particularly the economic relations between the fortress and the civilian settlement.

### *Overcoming Geography and Climate*

As stated above, in the early modern period permanent military base needed a civilian settlement beside it for the sake of maintenance. In the Swedish realm, most of the fortresses were built in pre-existing towns; those that were not attracted unofficial settlements around their walls. To stress the point, we may look at the three major fortresses built along the Finnish coast during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: the Svensksund Fortress in Kotka, the Gustavssvärn Fortress in the Hangö Peninsula, and the Bomarsund Fortress in Åland.<sup>16</sup> None of these were adjacent to official, chartered towns. However, unofficial settlements inhabited by merchants, craftsmen, pedlars, innkeepers, and other civilians, grew



The town of Helsinki (Helsingfors) and its surroundings in 1808, part of N. G. Werming’s map *Belägenheten af Helsingfors och Sveaborg*. The fortress islands of Sveaborg, which had more buildings and inhabitants than the town itself, were drawn empty in civilian maps. The island of Båkholmen is on the right side of the fortress, the area of Gammelstaden is at the top right corner of the map. Photo: Helsinki City Museum.

next to each of them. Some of these settlements could be considered as towns in all but name and official privileges.<sup>17</sup>

A strong centralized state such as early modern Sweden could also use radical administrative measures if it wanted to assure the maintenance of an important military base. It could found a new town beside it or, in an extreme case, relocate a pre-existing town. The best known example of this is the birth of the naval town Karlskrona in southern Sweden. When the Karlskrona naval base was founded in 1680 in the middle of a sparsely populated coastline, the crown abolished the nearby town of Ronneby by cancelling its municipal privileges and ordered its burghers to move to Karlskrona. The move was successful, and Karlskrona grew to be one of the biggest towns in the realm.<sup>18</sup>

The sea fortress Sveaborg was built in close proximity to a pre-existing town. However, the geographical circumstances made the local civil–military symbiosis atypical. Sveaborg was built on seven islands, a quarter-mile from the shore and from Helsinki. The location itself was not unique, since other important Swedish military bases, such as Karlskrona or the fortress of Vaxholm guarding the main sea route to Stockholm, were also situated on islands. However, at both Karlskrona and Vaxholm, the military base and the town were situated side by side on the same island or group of islands, which allowed uninterrupted commercial interaction between the soldiers and the burghers. Furthermore, Karlskrona, the larger of the two and thus a better parallel to Sveaborg, was connected to mainland with permanent bridges, enabling commerce between the military town and the mainland during all seasons.<sup>19</sup> In Helsinki, the geography prevented such arrangements.

In an era when the waterways were an important means of transport, Sveaborg gained a notable logistic advance from its position when the sea was open, since the fortress was easy to access by boat from both Helsinki and overseas. When the sea was frozen, the overseas connections were cut off, but the connections to Helsinki were even better than in summer since an ice road was maintained between the fortress and the town. This is demonstrated by Edward Daniel Clarke's first-hand description of the Helsinki-Sveaborg ice road from the winter of 1800. For the travelling British gentleman, the road proved an exotic sight worthy to be described in detail in his diary:

Nothing can be more gay and pleasing than the scene, exhibited on the ice, from Helsingfors [Helsinki] to the fortress of Sveaborg, which is situated on an island, distant two English miles. The road is marked on the snow by trees, or large branches of the pine, planted on the ice. Sledges of all sizes and descriptions, open and covered, of business, burthen, or pleasure, plain or decorated, with beautiful little prancing Finland horses, are seen moving with the utmost rapidity, backwards and forwards, the whole way, from morning to night. Officers with their servants, ladies, soldiers, peasants, artificers, engineers, form a crowded promenade, more interesting and amusing than that of Hyde Park in London, or the Corso at Rome.<sup>20</sup>

The problem was, however, the time of *rasputitsa*<sup>21</sup> in the spring and fall, when the sea was too frozen for boats but not frozen enough for the ice road. During those seasons, Sveaborg was isolated from the outside world for months. Despite the fact that large part of the soldiers lived in the town of Helsinki in soldier quartering, the islands of Sveaborg had almost five thousand regular inhabitants at their highest occupancy: not only soldiers, officers, and other army personnel, but also

their family members, servants, and other civilians.<sup>22</sup> During the *rasputitsa*, these thousands of people were isolated from the outside world and dependent on the services available on their islands.

The problem was not unanticipated. When Major General Axel Löwen first proposed fortifying the Sveaborg islands in the 1720s, his critics pointed out that the islands did not even have natural water sources, and thus the yearly periods of isolation would cause serious trouble for the inhabitants.<sup>23</sup> Later, after the fortification work had begun, the same criticism was repeated. After inspecting the construction site in 1752, King Adolph Frederick stated that the nearby island of Båkholmen,<sup>24</sup> which had both a better strategic position and natural fresh water, would have been a more suitable place for the fortress. Colonel Augustin Ehrensvärd, head of the construction, answered that Sveaborg had enough fresh water sources for the purpose of the fortress community.<sup>25</sup> The facts, however, imply otherwise. The water supply was a source of constant trouble, and the crown brewery operating in the fortress in the 1750s had to import all its water from the mainland, using specially built vessels for the purpose.<sup>26</sup>

### *The Wild Years of Newtown*

The construction work on the fortress Sveaborg began in the summer of 1748 and continued uninterrupted until the outbreak of the Seven Years' War in 1756. During this so-called first construction period, around six thousand enlisted and tenure soldiers, hired craftsmen, and other construction workers worked in and around the seven fortress islands. The tenure soldiers and the majority of the craftsmen went home during the winter months, but a group of some thousands worked in the fortress even in the wintertime. In charge of this enormous scheme was Colonel Augustin Ehrensvärd, who had been appointed the head of the Finnish defence works with exceptionally large prerogatives. He planned and led the construction in an autocrat manner, holding all the strings, improvising to cope with the constant difficulties, and involving himself with the smallest of details.<sup>27</sup>

A soldier or construction worker living in Sveaborg had limited means of accessing the shops and taverns of Helsinki since the fortress was isolated from the outside world for half of the year in spring and autumn, and during the summer a boat ride was required to visit the town. The midwinter months when the ice road was open were the only times when the inhabitants of the fortress could visit the town without difficulties or special logistic arrangements. Sveaborg had a

handful of army peddlars that sold food and drink, but not nearly enough for the large fortress community.<sup>28</sup> Thus, the situation was a detriment to everyone: the burghers lost lucrative business opportunities; the soldiers the lost opportunity to buy food, drink, and necessities with their allowance to compensate for the shortcomings of army maintenance; and the army lost a way to utilize the civil society as a part of its maintenance.

To overcome the problem, the burghers crossed the quarter mile of sea and infiltrated the military area. A large number of them settled to the islands of Sveaborg in the late 1740s and early 1750s to sell their goods and services to the fortress community. A shanty town full of groceries, haberdasheries, restaurants, taverns, and coffee houses rose on Stora Öster Svartö, the largest of the seven islands of Sveaborg.<sup>29</sup> It was referred to as *Nystad*, or 'Newtown', even in official documents.<sup>30</sup> During the first construction period, the focus of the fortification work was on the other islands, and thus, Stora Öster Svartö had plenty of empty space for the burghers to utilize.

Examining the history of Newtown is a challenging task. As an unofficial and borderline unlawful settlement, it was not officially supervised by anyone. On the maps of Sveaborg, the island of Stora Öster Svartö is empty *sans* a few fortifications and barracks because the maps were drawn by the army and showed only the official military buildings and constructions.<sup>31</sup> The most important source material is the series of complaints Augustin Ehrensward sent to the Helsinki Town Council and other officials dealing with the burghers' misdemeanours in Newtown. Most of these complaints revolve around alcohol. During the years of the first construction period, the combined number of taverns paying license to the Town Council was almost eighty. The tavern license catalogues do not classify which ones were in the town and which ones in the fortress islands, but it is safe to assume that a major part of them were in Newtown.<sup>32</sup> The actual figure, however, was much higher since smuggling and illegal alcohol trade of all sorts bloomed in Newtown, practiced by soldiers, local peasants, and even burghers from the nearby towns.<sup>33</sup>

Augustin Ehrensward's response to the burghers' transgressions was mixed. For the sake of maintenance, he had no option but to tolerate Newtown's existence.<sup>34</sup> However, he was not willing to let the burghers do business freely inside the military area and, in the midst of his other numerous duties, he made occasional attempts to control and limit their actions and to bring them under army control. The burghers answered this was active and passive resistance. In the summer of 1753, Ehrensward announced that all serving of alcohol beverages in the fortress would be concentrated to eighteen official military taverns, the keepers of



which would be chosen amongst the burghers of Helsinki. A year later, he wrote to the Governor that over a hundred burghers had applied to these eighteen posts, and the Town Council had refused to co-operate with him in the matter. This effectively watered down the whole reform.<sup>35</sup>

The case of the restaurateur Mathias Malm represents another example of the troubled dynamics between the military and burgher society. Ehrensvärd, who considered the Newtown eateries unsuitable for noble officers, invited the restaurateur Malm from Stockholm to settle in Sveaborg. After Malm had served the officers for two years, the burghers of Helsinki targeted him, and the Town Council ordered him to pay a hundred silver Dalers per year for the right to keep a restaurant. Malm resigned, and Ehrensvärd angrily demanded that the burghers find a new restaurateur for the fortress since they had frightened the old one away.<sup>36</sup> It was not an easy task to find a volunteer – most of the burghers apparently considered running a fine restaurant too expensive and risky a business – but eventually Anders Byström, a bankrupt merchant, accepted the task. Despite the burghers' scepticism, the restaurant proved to be a lucrative affair. Byström got back on his feet financially and even purchased a billiard table – possibly the first one in Finland – to lure the officers in.<sup>37</sup>

The conflict around Newtown was fuelled by the fact that, in absence of direct precedents, no one knew precisely who had the highest authority in Sveaborg where business matters were concerned. Ehrensvärd held to the view that, inside the fortress, the army had the highest authority in all matters; the burghers maintained that, although the army had annexed the islands of Sveaborg, they still had the right to do business there since the islands were inside the town's borders.<sup>38</sup> Although both parties made appeals and complaints to clear the situation, they were of little help. On the contrary, higher authorities often blurred the situation even more by giving contradictory rulings. The fate of the short-lived crown brewery in Sveaborg (1753–1756) serves as an excellent example of this.

The brewery was operated by two officers, Lieutenant Colonel Baltzar Philip von Wolfradt and Captain Carl Tersmeden, who leased it from the army. The burghers, to whom beer manufacturing was an important source of income, complained to the Governor, who ruled that the brewery was illegal since manufacturing alcohol in towns was the sole right of the burghers. The brewery operators complained to the King, who overruled the Governor's decision, stating that the right to brew beer in Sveaborg belonged to the army and not to the burghers. The burghers, in turn, appealed to the Parliament, which gave them a beer manufacturing monopoly in Helsinki, thus indirectly overruling the royal decision. This game of judicial ping-pong lasted the whole time the brewery was in business.<sup>39</sup>

### *The Time of Stabilization*

In 1757, Sweden joined the Seven Years' War as part of the anti-Prussian alliance, and the first construction period of Sveaborg ended. When the troops were commandeered to the frontier in Pomerania, the number of construction workers in Sveaborg dropped from six thousand to only a couple of hundred. After the end of the war, the construction continued in the summers 1763 and 1764 before political turmoil in the Swedish Parliament halted them again. When the Cap Party, a staunch opponent of military armament, rose to power in 1765, Ehrensvärd was dismissed from his position, and the construction of Sveaborg was halted for several years.<sup>40</sup>

The summers of 1763 and 1764 had, however, a long-lasting impact on the local civil–military relations. In April 1763, a meeting was held in the Helsinki Town Hall, attended by the burghers of Helsinki, the high officers of Sveaborg, and the Governor of the Nyland-Tavastland province, Baron Hans Henrik Boije. In this meeting, the army and the burghers reached a mutual agreement on the business conditions in Sveaborg. The burghers promised to make sure that there would be a 'sufficient number' of butchers, grocers, restaurateurs, and innkeepers in Sveaborg. In return, the officers promised to oversee that the soldiers would not harm the burghers' business by alcohol smuggling and other illegal business activities. They also made a number of smaller promises, some of which illustrate the everyday problems that the civil–military interaction caused. Major Blomcreutz, for example, promised to emphasize to the soldiers that if they order food in a restaurant, they must also pay for it – regardless of whether they eat it or not.<sup>41</sup>

With this agreement, the anarchy in Newtown ended, and mutually accepted rules were laid down for doing business in Sveaborg. Over the following years, the contract wobbled on its feet many times, and both parties complained time and again that the counterparty was not following the rules. The army could not stop the soldiers' illegal business activity – to promise to do so had, from the beginning, been unrealistic – and the burghers broke their promises as well. As late as in 1786, the burghers of Helsinki complained to the Parliament that the commandants of Sveaborg were imposing illegal regulations on the restaurants in the fortress – the complaint was delivered by Member of Parliament Anders Byström, the restaurateur and billiard table owner from Sveaborg who had become the Mayor of Helsinki.<sup>42</sup>

Nevertheless, the contract was the cornerstone of the relations between the army and the burghers up until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Sveaborg

was no longer a commercial no man's land for all the burghers of Helsinki to exploit. From then on, the Helsinki Town Council gave, with the army's blessing, the right to do business in Sveaborg to designated burghers. First of these was the bookkeeper Mathias Enning, who gained burgher rights as merchant a month after the contract was concluded. The Council wrote on his burgher certification that he had the right to 'trade domestic goods and keep an open shop in Sveaborg'.<sup>43</sup>

The pact between the burghers and the army protected the burghers against third parties. When customs inspector Henrik Johan Erhardt in 1770 accused three merchants from Helsinki of illegal trading in Sveaborg – one of them was the aforementioned Mathias Enning – the Town Council answered by referring to the pact of 1763. The Council wrote that since the high officers of the fortress had asked the burghers to settle there, all their actions were legal. From the burghers' point of view, the army was no longer their antagonist, but instead their protector.<sup>44</sup>

### *Entry of the Sveaborg Businessmen*

After the political turmoil had calmed down, Ehrensvärd returned to his position as the chief of the Sveaborg construction in 1769. However, he died soon thereafter, and a string of short-termed Commandants took up the task to finish the fortification work. The construction continued up until to the outbreak of the Finnish War in 1808, although it never returned to the scope and vivacity of the 1750s.

As a result of the pact of 1763, a small group of burghers had settled permanently in Sveaborg. Despite their place of residence, these men did not form a separate class *per se* but were an integral part of the town's burgher society. They were former bookkeepers and assistants of the local merchants and were in all situations considered thoroughbred burghers of Helsinki. However, in the beginning of the Gustavian era, in the 1770s, a new kind of business circle was born in the fortress – a circle that shattered the official borders between the burgher society and the army, the civil government and the military government, and indeed, between the civil society and the military society. This group appeared prominently the first time in 1787 when distilling rights were auctioned off in Helsinki.

After the national distilling monopoly King Gustav III had established had proved to be ineffective, the local alcohol distilling rights were leased to private proprietors for a ten-year period. The right to distil alcohol in Helsinki – Svea-

borg included – was auctioned off in the Town Hall in November 1787 and won by a company formed by the lesser burghers who dominated the local retail business. They sub-leased the right to distil alcohol in Sveaborg to another company, which was formed by ten employees of the fortress. Out of these ten people, four were craftsmen of the Fortification Department and the other six sea captains and non-commissioned officers of the Army Navy. The company built a distillery on the nearby island of Båkholmen – which, as mentioned in the King’s statement in 1752, had natural fresh water sources unlike the Sveaborg islands – concluding a rental contract with the local pilots who lived on the island. The merchants of Helsinki were strongly against this contract, which gave the ‘craftsmen and officers of Sveaborg’ a regional alcohol monopoly. The Town Council, however, did not take the protest into consideration.<sup>45</sup>

The distilling rights were auctioned off again in 1797 – this time following a new method where the lease sum was bound to the population of the town. The stakeholders of the Båkholmen distillery proposed that the distilling rights in Helsinki and Sveaborg should be leased separately. They showed the Town Council a calculation of the population of Sveaborg, done by the commandant of the fortress, Major General Carl Nathaniel af Klercker. Had the Town Council accepted this proposition, it would have made Sveaborg an independent region in all questions considering alcohol. From the burghers’ point of view, the proposition was a threat to their economic autonomy, and their response was unanimously negative. The Council ruled that Sveaborg was a part of the town in all economic matters and, therefore, that the proposed solution was illegal. The leasing was carried out with the same procedure from ten years earlier: the lesser burghers had the highest bid, and Sveaborg was sub-leased to the stakeholders of the Båkholmen distillery.<sup>46</sup>

After the Båkholmen distillery had been established, several of its stakeholders gained burgher rights in Helsinki in order to expand their business. The first of these was Carl Teckenberg, sergeant of the Army Navy, who petitioned for the right to keep a grocery shop in Sveaborg in the spring of 1790. The Grocer Society of Helsinki stated that Teckenberg had no grounds whatsoever for his petition: he had neither the work experience required for a grocer, nor was he a nobleman, which would have given him special privileges to engage in trade and commerce.<sup>47</sup> Despite this negative statement the Town Council decided to approve Teckenberg. The argumentation went as follows:

Since Teckenberg does not want the right to trade groceries in the town, but only in the Sveaborg fortress, and since the Commandants of Sveaborg have constantly complained

that the burghers do not provide the fortress with enough food, drink, and other necessities, that the soldiers and the officials of His Royal Majesty situated there, as well as the other inhabitants of the fortress shall daily require, the Council sees its necessary to approve Sergeant Carl Teckenberg's plea and give him the right to keep an open shop in Sveaborg.<sup>48</sup>

Two years later, master baker Johan Österberg wrote to the Helsinki Town Council and asked for burgher rights as a merchant. The case followed similar lines as Teckenberg's: the Merchant Society protested against the plea, but the Town Council overruled the corporation and accepted it. Österberg's argument was as follows:

The Honoured Town Council must be aware of the fact that the residents of the fortress Sveaborg are forced to order their necessary goods from Stockholm and from the Swedish side since they cannot get them here, and thus the local trade is losing significant sums of money. And, furthermore, of the troubles the residents have to overcome, especially during the spring and autumn months, to purchase goods from the town. Most of the merchants the honoured Council had appointed to Sveaborg have given up their enterprise, so that only merchants Skugge and Lithen are left, and they do not sell all the products that the residents desire. Therefore, it is my humble wish to gain rights to trade and keep a shop in Sveaborg.<sup>49</sup>

I have cited these two texts at some length because they aptly illustrate the situation. Österberg's letter demonstrates that the problems *rasputitsa* caused to the maintenance of Sveaborg were still as acute in the 1790s as they had been half a century earlier. Furthermore, in both documents it is clearly stated that there were not enough burghers in Sveaborg and that the Commandants of the fortress had been complaining about the fact. This may seem surprising considering the eagerness the burghers had earlier shown to live and run business in the fortress. However, the explanation is rather obvious when observing the development of Helsinki.

The construction years of Sveaborg had reshaped Helsinki radically. Its population had doubled during the latter half of the eighteenth century, and together with Sveaborg, it formed one of the largest towns in the Swedish realm. The local merchants had gained wealth by dealing with the fortress and invested their money in other enterprises: shipping, industry, and country estates. The craftsmen and the lesser burghers had gained new clientele as the town had grown. Thus, the burgher community was not as dependent on Sveaborg as it had been half a century earlier, and the license to keep a shop or tavern in the fortress was not as

sought after as it had been. This paved way to Carl Teckenberg, Johan Österberg and their kind – the army employees who had an eye for business and the will to serve their own fortress community – and explains why the Town Council of Helsinki was so willing to accept their pleads.

Although also other Sveaborg businessmen gained burgher rights, Teckenberg and Österberg were the leading figures of the circle. Teckenberg rented a large part of the Båkholmen Island and cultivated vegetables and other products for his shop there. Despite his efforts, he filed for bankruptcy at the turn of the century. Österberg, who had better luck financially, dominated the business life of Sveaborg up until his death in 1803. He continued to run his old bakery and sold fresh bread and pastries in the fortress. He also imported powder with his merchant ship *Johannes in Dupplo* and sold it to the army, becoming an official and privileged military purveyor. After his death his widow Juliana Österberg continued to run the enterprise up until the Finnish War.<sup>50</sup>

### Conclusions

The early modern army relied heavily on civil society in its maintenance, both at war and during peacetime. In late eighteenth-century Helsinki, similarly to other fortress towns of the era, the civilian townspeople played an important role in supplying the fortress and its soldiers with food, drink, and necessities. In Helsinki, however, the geographical conditions gave the civil–military relations a unique form. The interaction between the fortress and the town was either difficult or impossible during most of the year, which prevented the soldiers and other fortress inhabitants from freely using the commercial services of the local burghers.

In most Nordic military towns, the soldiers could visit the shops and taverns of the town in their free time and use the commercial services of the burghers without any obstacles. Therefore, the burghers had no motivation to operate in areas categorized as military zones – inside fortresses, in barrack quarters, and so on – or to question the army’s total governance in those areas. The situation can be summarized as a small paradox: in cases in which the boundaries between soldiers and civilians were weak in practice, the official boundaries between civil and military society were actually *strengthened*. When a soldier wanting to explore the town had only to walk through the fortress gate to do so, the civil–military borderline was at the same time easily crossable and juristically unambiguous. In Helsinki, where there was a quarter mile of water in place of said gate, the

civil–military borderline was physically more difficult to cross but, for the very same reason, judicially unclear.

The construction period of the fortress Sveaborg, from 1748 to 1808, can be divided into three phases of local civil–military relations. The first phase, from 1748 to the early 1760s, was a period of conflicted interests. The burghers of Helsinki brought their services to Sveaborg, building the ragged Newtown on the fortress islands. Augustin Ehrensvärd, the local figurehead of military authority, reluctantly tolerated Newtown’s existence for the sake of maintenance but, at the same time, worked to bring the burghers under military control. This brought him into conflict with the Helsinki Town Council, which saw Sveaborg as part of the town and, therefore, defended every burgher’s inviolable right to do business there.

As seen above, almost every castle, fortress, or other permanent military settlement had either an official chartered town or an unofficial civil settlement at its side. The fortress Sveaborg, uniquely, had both of them in the 1750s, with Newtown functioning as an intermediary between the fortress and the town proper. A similar conflict of equal proportions is hard to find in other Nordic military towns.<sup>51</sup>

Although the conflict was a local skirmish, it had roots in contemporary politics. In the Swedish Age of Liberty (1721–1772), during which the King had been reduced to filling a mainly ceremonial role, the highest power was in the hands of the Parliament of Estates. This strengthened the economic and political standing of the Estate of Burghers but, at the same time, made its commercial privileges a subject of discussion and even criticism. The Age of Liberty was full of parliamentary debates about the national and regional privileges of the Estate of Burghers, as well as fights between individual burghers over the lucrative economic privileges and monopolies. The most liberal-minded parliamentarians, influenced by the rising Enlightenment, criticized the principles of the Mercantilist economy and even the foundations of the estate system.<sup>52</sup> Although this political colloquium did not lead to radical reforms, it kept the question of the bourgeoisie privileges on the agenda and gave the burghers of Helsinki even more reasons to guard their local rights.

The second phase, from 1763 to the 1780s, can be called a period of compromise. The unclear administrative boundaries, chaotic conditions, and constant quarrelling of the first construction period had caused trouble to both the burghers and the army and, thus, a compromise was required. The right to do business in Sveaborg was limited to a small group of burghers who gained their authorization from both the Town Council of Helsinki and the Commandant of Sveaborg.

Third phase, from 1780s onwards, could be called the period of adjustment. After the interests of the burghers moved elsewhere and it became difficult to convince enough of them to settle in Sveaborg, a wholly new kind of business group was born to take care of the needs of the fortress community. This group, consisting of various army employees, existed in between the burgher community and the army.

In other words, the process described above consisted of a problem and two different solutions. The problem was how to arrange business conditions in Sveaborg and overcome the geographical difficulties in a way that would satisfy both the commercial needs of the burghers and the maintenance needs of the Army, as well as keep the prerogative relations between the two in balance. The first solution was to actively create, for this purpose, a separate group of burghers with both civil and military authorization. The second solution was to passively approve the actions of a group that had come into being spontaneously and was willing to take care of the commercial services of Sveaborg.

The civil–military relations in early-modern military towns were always troubled, as two power sources – the army and the burgher community – with their own mandates, judicial systems, and sets of values, had to coexist inside the town’s borders. In late eighteenth-century Helsinki, the geographical conditions gave this struggle its own unique flavor. However, the problems themselves rose from the characteristics of the time – the privilege-based estate society, in which both the army and the burghers fiercely wanted to protect their standing.

## Notes

1. The Creveld-Lynn debate about the role of the civil society in the early modern army maintenance is internationally best known example of the case; see Martin van Creveld’s *Supplying War: Logistics from Wallenstein to Patton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) and John A. Lynn’s *Feeding Mars: Logistics in Western Warfare from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1993).
2. See e.g. Voitto Ahonen, ‘Garnisonernas uppkomst och deras betydelse i Finland 1721–1740, in *Historiallinen Arkisto* 98, ed. Rauno Endén (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1991), pp. 51–54; Ulla-Riitta Kauppi, ‘Kymenlaakson linnoitustyöt taloudellisen vaikuttajana 1700–1800-lukujen taitteessa’, in *Kasarmin aidan kahden puolen: Kaksisataa vuotta suomalaista varuskuntayhteisöä*, ed. Jussi T. Lappalainen (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1993), pp. 49–70. In Sofia Gustafsson’s oncoming doctoral thesis, the role of burghers as military subcontractors in the late eighteenth-century Helsinki will be dis-



cussed in detail. See Sofia Gustafsson, *Leverantörer och profitörer: Olika geografiska områdens och sociala grupperns handel med fästningsbygget Sveaborg under den första byggnadsperioden 1748–1756* (2015).

3. The civil/military thematic has been discussed recently in several international conferences. These include the 11th international conference of European Association for Urban History (Prague, 29 August–1 September 2012), where several sessions were dedicated to the theme, and the conference ‘Militarizing the Civil Society – Civilizing the Military Society’ (Helsinki, 3–4 October 2013), hosted by the Academy of Finland research project ‘Connections, associations and innovations: The case of sea fortress Sveaborg, its foundation, socio-economic impact and innovative role ca 1730–1809’.

4. See Christer Kuvaja, *Försörjning av en ockupationsarmé: Den ryska arméns underhållssystem i Finland 1713–1721* (Åbo: Åbo akademi, 1999); Martin Hårdstedt, *Om krigets förutsättningar: Den militära underhållningsproblematiken och det civila sambället i norra Sverige och Finland under finska kriget* (Umeå: Umeå universitet, 2002); Gunnar Artéus (ed.), *Nordens garnisonsstäder: Slutrapport från ett forskningsprojekt* (Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan, 1997).

5. Gunnar Artéus, ‘En vetenskaplig obelyst lokalsamhällestyp: Den svenska garnisonsstaden 1620–1985’, in *Den nordiska garnisonsstaden*, eds. G. Artéus & K. Selén (Helsinki: Suomen Historiallinen Seura, 1988), p. 23.

6. See e.g. Hans Christian Johansen, Jorgen Mikkelsen & Jens Ole Christensen, ‘Den danske garnisonsby’, in *Nordens garnisonsstäder: Slutrapport från ett forskningsprojekt*, ed. Gunnar Artéus (Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan, 1997).

7. See e.g. Oscar Nikula, ‘Stadsväsendet i Finland 1721–1875’, in *Stadsväsendets historia i Finland*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Helsingfors: Finlands Stadsförbund, 1987), pp. 115–262.

8. The publications of the *Garnisonsstäder i Norden* project provide copiously Danish, Norwegian and Swedish examples of these phenomena. See e.g. Artéus 1988, pp. 33–39; Johansen et al. 1997, pp. 41–49; Mads Ramstad, ‘Den norske garnisonsbyen: Fra befeste byer till militære administrasjons- og utdanningssetra’, in *Nordens garnisonsstäder: Slutrapport från ett forskningsprojekt*, ed. Gunnar Artéus (Stockholm: Försvarshögskolan, 1997), pp. 127–140.

9. In the eighteenth century, Helsinki was a Swedish-speaking town, and thus all the local place-names were Swedish. However, nowadays the places are better known by their Finnish names. To avoid anachronisms, I systematically use the Swedish names. Only exception is the name of the town itself: since the name of the Finnish capital is internationally known in its Finnish form, I call it here *Helsinki* instead of the Swedish *Helsingfors*.

10. First known user of the moniker ‘Gibraltar of the North’ was British clergyman William Coxe in his travel diary *Travels into Poland, Russia, Sweden and Denmark* (Dublin, 1784).

11. Matti Klinge, *Huvudstaden: Helsingfors och Finska staten 1808–1863* (Helsingfors: Otava, 2012), pp. 35–64.

12. Olof af Hällström, a long-time intendant of Sveaborg, dedicated his life to the architectural history of the fortress. His magnum opus on the subject is *Sveaborg, Viapori*,

*Suomenlinna: The Island Fortress off Helsinki* (Rungsted: Anders Nyborg, 1986). Of the latest research discussing the political culture, see e.g. Sophie Holm, 'Ett värdigt minne: Augustin Ehrensvärds politiska och sociala nätverk speglade i Sveaborgs namnskick' and Henrika Tandefelt, 'Utblick från Gustavssvärd: Gustav III och Sveaborg – politik och minneskultur', both in *Sveaborg – fästningen och omvärlden*, eds. Sophie Holm & Magdalena af Hällström (Helsingfors: Samfundet Ehrensvärd, 2012), pp. 280–331.

13. All standing troops of the fortress have got their own detailed histories. See Ernst Ericsson, *Kungl. fortifikationens historia IV:3* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1939) for the Fortification Department; Oscar Nikula, *Svenska skärgårdsflottan 1756–1791* (Helsingfors: Samfundet Ehrensvärd, 1933) and Hans Norman, *Skärgårdsflottan: Uppbyggnad, militär användning och förankring i det svenska samhället 1700–1824* (Lund: Historiska Media, 2000) for the Army Navy; Jonas Hedberg, *Kungliga Finska artilleriregementet* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1964) for the Finnish Artillery Regiment; Hans Hirn, *Från Lantingshausen till Jägerborn: Ett värvat regemente i Finland* (Helsingfors: Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1970) for the Lantingshausen-Jägerhorn Infantry Regiment; and J. E. O. Screen, *The Queen Dowager's Life Regiment in Finland 1772–1808* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010) for the Queen Dowager's Life Regiment.

14. For example, the aforementioned Garnisonsstäder i Norden project paid only a little attention to Finland and almost no attention to Sveaborg. The main Finnish member of the project, Professor Jussi T. Lappalainen, edited an article collection about the history of the Finnish military towns. Sveaborg is, however, discussed in only a few sentences. Jussi T. Lappalainen, 'Suomalainen varuskuntayhteisö – taustaa ja ongelmia', in *Kasarmin aidan kabden puolen: Kaksisataa vuotta suomalaista varuskuntayhteisöä*, ed. Jussi T. Lappalainen (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1993), pp. 12.

15. The soldiers' criminality in Helsinki-Sveaborg is discussed by Petri Talvitie in the previous edition of this yearbook: see Petri Talvitie, 'Black Markets and Desertion: Soldiers' Criminality in Helsinki 1748–1757', in *Sjuttonbunderatal: Nordic Yearbook for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 2014, pp. 45–68. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7557/4.3083>. The soldier quartering system and soldier handicraft in Helsinki are hitherto unexamined topics, *sans* the sporadic remarks in the history series of the city of Helsinki; see Eirik Hornborg, *Helsingfors stads historia II* (Helsingfors, 1950), *passim*.

16. Svensksund is known by the name of *Ruotsinsalmi* in Finnish. Gustavssvärn and Bomarsund have only Swedish names.

17. Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Kymenlaakson 1700-luku', in *Kymenlaakson historia I*, ed. Yrjö Kaukiainen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2012), pp. 393–395; Birger Boström, 'Kaupunki syntyvaiheissaan', in *Kymmenen lukua Hangosta*, ed. Hans E. Österlund (Hanko: Hangon kaupunki, 1973), p. 9; Christer Kuvaja, Martin Hårdstedt & Pertti Hakala, *Det åländska folkets historia IV* (Mariehamn: Ålands kulturstiftelse, 2008), pp. 185–192.

18. Janrik Bromé, *Karlskrona stads historia I* (Karlskrona, 1930), pp. 69–88.

19. Mauritz C:son Ljungberg, 'Vaxholm, skärgårdens pärla', in *Vaxholm och fästningen: Några historiska [sic] bilder från en liten stad*, ed. Eric Jarnberg (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1991), pp. 11–16.
20. Edward Daniel Clarke, *Travels in Various Countries of Europa Asia and Africa, Vol XI: Scandinavia, Part the Three* (London: T. Cadell, 1824), p. 366.
21. The words *menföre* (Swedish) and *kelirikko* (Finnish), meaning the time in spring and autumn when the roads are untrafficable due to frost heave and mud and the waterways unnavigable due to ice conditions, have no direct equivalent in English. The Russian word *rasputitsa* (распу́тица), which has roughly the same meaning, has been used to describe the phenomenon in the north-eastern Europe.
22. Sampsa Hatakka, 'Viaporin väestö kustavilaisella ajalla 1772–1807', in *Viapori: Linnoitus, läbiseutu ja maailma*, eds. Sophie Holm & Magdalena af Hällström (Helsinki: Ehrens-värd-seura, 2012), pp. 103–120.
23. Ericsson 1939, pp. 26.
24. The island is nowadays known as Skanslandet (in Swedish) or Vallisaari (in Finnish).
25. Oscar Nikula, *Augustin Ehrens-värd 1710–1772* (Helsinki: Ehrens-värd-seura, 2011), pp. 151–161.
26. Juha-Matti Granqvist, 'Viaporin panimon nousu ja tuho', in *Sveaborg – fästningen och omvärlden*, eds. Sophie Holm & Magdalena af Hällström (Helsingfors: Samfundet Ehrens-värd, 2012), pp. 65–68.
27. Nikula 2011, pp. 115–236.
28. Nikula 2011, pp. 137, 147.
29. See Helsinki Town Council to Swedish National Board of Trade, 21 July 1755, Town Council Archive Cb:36, Helsinki City Archive. In the letter, the Town Council gives a short description of the Newtown and the business practiced there.
30. See e.g. Nyland-Tavastehus Provincial Office to Helsinki Town Council, 26 June 1755, Town Council Archive Ea:35, Helsinki City Archive. In the letter the Office complains that the houses of the 'so-called Newtown' are in the way of the construction works in the island of Stora Öster Svartö.
31. See the series of the yearly report maps of Sveaborg from 1748 to 1756, available as originals in the Swedish Military Archives and as microfilm copies in the Finnish National Archive (series U).
32. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 28 September 1748, Town Council Archive Ca:52, Helsinki City Archive.
33. Ilkka Mäntylä, *Suomalaisen juoppouden juuret: Viinanpolto vapaudenaikana* (Helsinki: SKS, 1985), pp. 88–89, 93.
34. Nikula 2011, pp. 136–137.
35. Colonel Augustin Ehrens-värd to Governor G. S. Gyllenborg, 15 August 1754, Archive of Nyland-Tavastehus Provincial Office Ea:62, Provincial Archives of Hämeenlinna.

36. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 4 and 11 September 1754, Town Council Archive Ca:60, Helsinki City Archive.
37. Sylvi Möller, 'Anders Byström, täysverinen kustavilainen ja aikansa edustaja', in *Narinkka* 1981, eds. Leena Arkio & Marja-Liisa Lampinen (Helsinki: Helsinki City Museum, 1981), pp. 22–23.
38. For the army's point of view, see e.g. Augustin Ehrensward to Governor of Nyland-Tavastehus Province, 11 July 1754, Town Council Archive Cb:36, Helsinki City Archive. In the letter, Ehrensward states that he has, by virtue of his royal mandate, right to regulate all business matters in the fortress Sveaborg. For the burgher's point of view, see e.g. Helsinki Town Council to Swedish National Board of Trade, 21 July 1755, Town Council Archive Cb:36, Helsinki City Archive. In the letter, the Town Council states that, by virtue of the founding charter and municipal privileges of Helsinki, all questions considering economy and trade are under the Council's authority inside the town's borders, including the islands of the fortress Sveaborg.
39. Granqvist 2012, pp. 65–68.
40. Nikula 2011, pp. 187–206.
41. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 8 April 1763, Town Council Archive Ca:69, Helsinki City Archive.
42. Yrjö Soini, *Vieraanvaraisuus ammattina I* (Helsinki: Otava, 1963), pp. 243–245.
43. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 16 May 1763, Town Council Archive Ca:69, Helsinki City Archive.
44. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 24 November 1770, Town Council Archive Ca:74, Helsinki City Archive.
45. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 27 February 1788, Town Council Archive Ca:94, Helsinki City Archive.
46. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 19 July 1797, Town Council Archive Ca:103, Helsinki City Archive.
47. Statement of the Grocer Society of Helsinki, 6 October 1790. Town Council Archive Cb:104, Helsinki City Archive.
48. 'Dock som Teckenberg icke sökt att få här i Staden, utan på Fästningen Sweaborg, idka Hökeri Handtering såsom Victualie Handlande: Och klagomål, tid efter annan af wederbörande Befallningshafvare å Sweaborg blifwit theröf:r anförde, at Borgerskapet här i Staden urachtlåtitt hålla på fästningen til försälgning, färsknings och mat-wahror, samt flera förnödenheter, som Kongl. Mai:ts thärwarande Ämbetsmän och Garnizons Milice samt fästningens öfriga Innewånare dageligen betorfwa; Altså finna Borgmästare och Råd wid såsatte omständigheter skiälit, at samtycka til Sergeanten Carl Tecenbergs ansökning, och tillåta honom, at endast å Sweaborg hålla uti Öppen Bod til afsalu, Victualie och Hökerij wahror...' Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 12 April 1790, Town Council Archive Ca:96, Helsinki City Archive.

49. 'Hög Ädle Magistraten är nogsammt bekandt, at Sweaborgs fästnings Innewånare, som hafva egen Hushåll, måste sielfwe, tå nödwändigshets wahror icke finnas i Orten til Köps, förskrifwa, alt hwad til theras behofwer fordras från Stockholm och Swenska sidan, hwarigenom anseenlige Penninge Summor, gå från Handel och rörelserne härifrån Orten; Hwad äfwentyr och swårigheter, särdeler Höst och Wåhr tiderne Fästningens Innewånare måste widkännas, at från Staden erhålla alla sine behofwer; Har Hög Ädle Magistraten nogsammt insedt och funnit, som therföre tilsatt Köpmän å Sweaborg, af hwilcka the fläste redan utgåt så at ej flera, än endast Handelsm. Skugge och Lithen nu mera äro thäröfrige, hwilcka ej äro så föreedde och sorterade med wahror, som erfordrades; Hwarföre jag wid så fatta omständigheter, giör mig det saken hopp och ödmiukast anhåller, at äfwen få drifwa Handel och Köpenskap å Sweaborg.' Johan Österberg's plea to burgher rights, [undated] 1792, Town Council Archive Cb:107, Helsinki City Archive.

50. Protocols of Helsinki Town Council, 27 August 1798, Town Council Archive Ca:104, Helsinki City Archive. Birger Åkerman, *Boupppteckningar i Helsingfors stad 1679–1808* (Helsingfors: Genealogiska Samfundet i Finland, 1937), no. 1062/Österberg, Johan; Sampsa Hatakka, *Sotilaita ja siviileijä: Viaporin väestö vuonna 1806*, unpublished master's thesis (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2011), pp. 81–86.

51. A parallel of sorts can be found 150 kilometres east from Helsinki, in Hamina (in Swedish *Fredrikshamn*). This former Swedish town was ceded to Russia in 1743, after which it was heavily fortified. The interests of the Russian merchants and pedlars, who had followed the army to the new fortress town, collided with those of the old Swedish burgher community of Hamina. As a result of this conflict, a 'twin town' of sorts was born: the Swedish burghers lived inside the town fortress, whereas the Russian merchants and pedlars occupied a large shanty town outside its walls. See Kauppi 1993, pp. 53–55.

52. See e.g. Jouko Nurminen, *Edistys ja yhteinen hyvä vapaudenajan ruotsalaisessa poliittisessa kielessä* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2009), pp. 194–208. Nurminen has discussed the same subject in Swedish in his article 'Gemensamma privilegier för ett odalstånd: Alexander Keplerus som borgmästare och samhällstänkare', in *Riksdag, kaffebus och predikstol: Frihetsidens politiska kultur*, eds. Marie-Christine Skuncke & Henrika Tandefelt (Stockholm/Helsingfors: Atlantis/Svenska Litteratursällskapet i Finland, 2003), pp. 171–190.

### Summary:

#### *The Businessmen of Sveaborg: Civil–Military Interaction in an Atypical Eighteenth Century Nordic Military Town*

Late eighteenth-century Helsinki was, due to the sea fortress Sveaborg, one of the most prominent Nordic military towns. At the same time, Helsinki differed

from other Nordic military towns of the era because of its geography. The fortress Sveaborg, with its large military and civilian population, was built on islands unconnected to the mainland and thus was isolated from the outside world every spring and autumn due to the Nordic climate. The burghers of Helsinki, who had shops and taverns on the islands, were vital to the maintenance of the fortress. At the same time, their presence caused tension between the civil society and the military society, as the Army tried to control the burghers' business and the burghers saw this as a violation of their economic rights. During the sixty-year period of the fortress's construction (1748–1808), the situation evolved from an open conflict to a mutual agreement and, finally, led to the birth of a new kind of business circle that shook the borders between civil society and the military.

*Keywords:* business; commerce; conflict; economic activity; military society; Sveaborg fortress.