
Russia and the Origins of the Finnish Civil War of 1918

Author(s): C. Jay Smith, Jr.

Source: *The American Slavic and East European Review*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (Dec., 1955), pp. 481-502

Published by: Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies; Cambridge University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3001208>

Accessed: 17-04-2020 08:02 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies, Cambridge University Press are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Slavic and East European Review*

RUSSIA AND THE ORIGINS OF THE FINNISH CIVIL WAR OF 1918

C. JAY SMITH, JR.

UPON THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR I in August, 1914, the Russian Imperial Government rightly suspected that for reasons both of geography and of political climate, the Grand Duchy of Finland posed a great danger on its northern flank. This was hardly surprising. Since 1899, that Government had done all it could to destroy the effective autonomy which Finland had enjoyed within the Russian Empire during the nineteenth century.

"Russification" of Finland took place in two stages. General Nikolai A. Bobrikov, Governor-General from 1898 to 1904, reduced the Finnish Diet to a consultative assembly, suppressed newspapers, and introduced the Russian language into the Finnish Senate¹ and civil service.² In 1901, he dissolved the Finnish army, which had existed since 1877, and sought unsuccessfully to conscript Finns into the Russian army.³ To be sure, after Bobrikov's assassination and the Russian revolution of 1905, Tsar Nicholas II agreed to exempt Finns from Russian army service, and, in 1906, permitted the modernization of the Diet and the introduction of universal suffrage.⁴ However, the reformed, unicameral Diet of 200 members was not permitted to play any important role in the Government of the country from 1907 to 1917,⁵ and "Russification" was reintroduced during the time of Stolypin. The Governors-General between 1908 and 1917, Vladimir

¹ The Finnish Senate, created in 1810, was an appointive body, partly executive, partly legislative, and partly judicial, insofar as its functions were concerned. In the nineteenth century, nearly all its members were Swecoman Finns, and through it and the Governor-General, Finland was governed from 1810 to 1863, on the advice of the Finnish State-Secretary in St. Petersburg (likewise a Swecoman Finn, in most cases). After 1863, the Diet became the principal law-making body, but the Senate had to confirm legislation passed by the Diet. Moreover, before 1907, the Diet was elected by a very restricted suffrage, had four houses, and represented the same group interests as did the Senate.

² Magnus Gottfried Schybergson, *Politische Geschichte Finnlands, 1809-1919* (Gotha-Stuttgart, 1925), pp. 261-348, *passim*; John Henry Wuorinen, *Nationalism in Modern Finland* (New York, 1931), pp. 190-93, 195-96; J. Hampden Jackson, *Finland* (New York, 1940), pp. 66-68; Erkki Rääkkönen, *Svinhufud, the Builder of Finland: an Adventure in Statecraft* (London, 1938), p. 2; Herman Gregorius Gummerus, *P. E. Svinhufud, 1861-1935* (Helsinki, 1936), p. 6.

³ Schybergson, *ibid.*; Wuorinen, pp. 196-97; Jackson, p. 69; Rääkkönen, p. 3; Gummerus, p. 7; Lt. Col. Joose Olavi Hannula, *Finland's War of Independence* (London, 1939), p. 20.

⁴ Schybergson, pp. 341-43, 345-46, 348, 349, 355, 356, 361-64; Gummerus, pp. 8-10; Hannula, pp. 21-22; Jackson, pp. 73-75; Wuorinen, pp. 200-01, 204; Rääkkönen, p. 4; Henning Söderhjelm, *The Red Insurrection in Finland in 1918; A Study Based on Documentary Evidence* (London, 1919), pp. 5-8.

⁵ Wuorinen, pp. 205, 206, 211, 213; Jackson, pp. 75-77.

Boeckman and François von Seyn, were worse than Bobrikov. In 1910, "general state matters" relating to Finland were placed in the hands of the Russian Duma. In 1912, Russian citizens were given the same rights in Finland as Finnish citizens. In addition, between 1908 and 1914, there were arbitrary financial levies, as well as new programs to "Russify" the civil service and the schools.⁶

Despite "Russification," there were important internal political developments in Finland between 1898 and 1914. The parties of the nineteenth century had divided chiefly on the question of the proper role of the Swedish and Finnish languages in the country's life.⁷ After 1900, these older parties were challenged by the new Social Democratic Party, which, under the leadership of Kullervo Manner and Oskari Tokoi, pushed a mild program of political, social and economic reform, and attracted not only industrial workers (15 percent of the population in 1914), but also peasants and some bourgeoisie into its ranks. In 1907, the socialists won 80 seats in the first reformed Diet; nine years later, they had a majority of 106 seats in the "Red" Diet of 1916. However, despite their growing strength, they failed to push much reform legislation through the Diets of 1907-16, owing to the opposition of the nationalist conservatives. The latter were ably led by Pehr Evind Svinhufud, President of the Diet from 1907 to 1913, and widely known for his vigorous denunciation of "Russification."⁸

After August 1, 1914, the Russian Government took stern measures to keep Finland in line. Svinhufud and some fifty other known nationalist leaders were arrested and sent to Siberia. The Diet was not convoked until mid-1916, and then for only a short session; thus, even this slight check on Governor-General von Seyn was removed. There were new restrictions on freedom of the press and of assembly, violations of private property, a special war tax, and an effort to "Russify" the higher schools. Russian law courts and gendarmes were introduced, and Finnish citizenship was abolished. A Committee on Finnish Affairs was formed by the Russian Council of Ministers to plan further integration.⁹

⁶ Schybergson, pp. 369, 370; Räikkönen, p. 5; Gummerus, p. 12; Wuorinen, pp. 214-15; Jackson, pp. 77-81; Ernest Georgievich von Wahl, *Vojna belykh i krasnykh v Finlandii v 1918 g.* (Tallinn, 1936), p. 26.

⁷ Schybergson, *passim*; Wuorinen, *passim*.

⁸ Schybergson, pp. 281, 282, 286-88; Wuorinen, pp. 177-81; Jackson, pp. 72-73; Räikkönen, p. 6; Gummerus, p. 13; Leo Harmaja, *Effects of the War on Economic and Social Life in Finland* (New Haven, 1933), pp. 6, 7, 18-19, 28, 106-17.

⁹ Räikkönen, p. 6; Gummerus, p. 16; Wuorinen, pp. 214-15; M. S. Svechnikov, *Revoljucija i grazhdanskaja vojna v Finlandii, 1917-1918 gody (Vospominaniya i materialy)*, (Moskva-Leningrad, 1923), p. 5.

In addition, there was a military occupation by Russian troops. Helsinki was already the principal advance base of the Baltic Fleet, and most of its surface units were stationed there to guard the approaches to Petrograd. Headquarters of the 42nd Army Corps were established in Viipuri, and the headquarters of the 106th Infantry Division, in Tampere. Along the coast of the Gulf of Bothnia were stationed two infantry regiments and a division of cavalry. At the southwestern tip of Finland, in the Turku-Rauma area was stationed an infantry regiment. Reserve forces included an infantry regiment in Tampere, an infantry regiment and an artillery brigade in the Riihimiakhi area, and an infantry regiment in Viipuri. In addition, the garrisons of the Sveaborg Fortress in Helsinki and of Fort Apraksin in Viipuri were reinforced, and a Satakunta River Flotilla, with headquarters in Tampere, established. All told, some 30-35,000 Russian troops were present. In addition, some thousands of Russian laborers were brought in to work on imposing fortifications erected along the coast.¹⁰

To be sure, the Finns were not called on to fight in the armies of the Russian oppressor, and many of them grew rich filling the inexhaustible demands of Russia for the products of Finnish industry. Nevertheless, the war brought much dislocation of the economy, owing to the complete stoppage of overseas trade, and there were many factory shutdowns. Despite the fact that the Russians employed many Finns in building the new fortifications, there were some 20,000 jobless on the eve of the revolution of 1917. The modest gains made by workers since 1907 were wiped out by a tremendous rise in prices. Von Seyn's government failed to take any measures to assure a constant supply of food, and by 1917, it would be too late to avoid the near-famine conditions of 1918-19. Moreover, the presence of Russian troops created a housing shortage in some places.¹¹

It can hardly be a matter of surprise, in view of such conditions, that many Finns were emboldened to turn to Sweden and to Imperial Germany for relief. To be sure, there was considerable sentiment in favor of Britain and France, but it was all too obvious that the latter neither could nor would restrain their ally. However, the principal hope lay at first in the intervention of democratic Sweden, rather than of Germany. In October, 1915, an "Active Committee," consisting of one representative of each party in the Diet, was formed. It went to Stockholm secretly to try to conclude an agreement with the Swedish General Staff. For the liberation of Finland, the cession of

¹⁰ Harmaja, pp. 74-78; Söderhjelm, pp. 13-14; Svechnikov, pp. 6, 14, 15.

¹¹ Harmaja, *ibid.*; Jackson, pp. 81-83.

the Aland Islands was offered, and another cession, that of Old Pohjanmaa (Osterbøtten), between the Kemi and Tornio Rivers, was held in reserve. Though the committee did not desire annexation of the whole country to Sweden, it was monarchist and willing to elect a Swedish prince Regent of Finland. It was rebuffed by the Swedish General Staff, and also by Foreign Minister Kurt Wallenberg. One of its members, Rafael W. Erich, then proceeded on to Berlin.¹²

Only Germany was left, and already, since the beginning of the war, ties were being established by ex-officers of the dispersed Finnish Army. These had organized a Military Committee, and in December, 1914, had requested the German military attaché in Stockholm to permit the military training of 200 Finnish youths in Germany. The request was granted, and on January 25, 1915, the first volunteers from Finland appeared in Berlin. They were joined by other Finns then living in Scandinavia and Germany, and by the end of February, 1915, a *Feldmeister* course was being given to 183 Finns at their Lockstedt camp in Holstein. The trainees were mainly university students; their average age was twenty-four, and they were camouflaged as German scouts. Protests against their presence were made by pro-Russian elements in Germany, but to no avail. On August 16, 1915, it was decided to enlarge the detachment to a battalion of 2,000 men.¹³

By mid-1916, the Lockstedt battalion had reached the above quota, and some of its members were receiving officer and NCO training. It had four infantry companies, a scout company, a machine gun company, and half a battery of artillery. As the *Königliches Preussisches Jägerbataillon 27*, it was sent to the front around Riga in the summer of 1916. Six months later, on December 18, 1916, its leaders held a meeting in Berlin with representatives of the German Foreign, War, and Navy Ministries. The Germans promised to give the *Jägers* continued support, and to employ them at the front only when their services were compatible with Finnish interests.¹⁴

¹² Malbone W. Graham, *The Diplomatic Recognition of the Border States. Part I: Finland* (Berkeley, 1936), pp. 90-92. In February, 1916, the Young Finn Party, which distrusted the Germans, sent Dr. Rudolf Holsti, foreign editor of the *Helsingin Sanomat*, to Petrograd in an effort to enlist the support of Russian liberals and the Allied ambassadors for Finland. He saw Kerensky, Miljukov, British Ambassador Sir George Buchanan, and American Ambassador David Francis, but received no encouragement from any of them.

¹³ Hannula, pp. 24-28. After the initial shipment, the Military Committee organized the transit of other volunteers to Lockstedt. To aid in the recruiting, it began, in the fall of 1915, to bring back some of the original volunteers. However, the Russian authorities arrested so many of these that in the spring of 1916, recruiting had to be suspended temporarily. It was resumed in the fall of 1916.

¹⁴ Hannula, pp. 29, 30, 31.

For the purpose of understanding events in Finland, the revolutionary year 1917 must be divided into three main periods. In the first, which extended from the fall of the Tsar on March 15 to the dissolution of the "Red" Diet on August 1, all Finns, both socialists and nonsocialists, were united in the effort to obtain the maximum possible amount of freedom from Russia. A second phase began around August 1 and extended through the general strike of November 13-20. During this period, the national struggle became secondary to the social struggle between the Social Democrats and the middle-class and peasant parties. Finally, there was a third period, between November 20, 1917 and January 27, 1918, during which the Finnish Red Guard, aided and encouraged by Soviet Russia, came to blows with the nationalist Protective Corps. As a consequence, civil war broke out between the north of Finland, whither the legal Government had fled, and the south, where a Socialist Workers Republic was established in Helsinki.

With the fall of the Tsar, the entire machinery of Russian control collapsed. Von Seyn was arrested and sent off to Petrograd; the Senate of Russians, the Russian civil servants, and the Russian gendarmes disappeared. Control over the Russian military units passed into the hands of army committees, and many officers, especially naval officers in Helsinki, were murdered, while their men went on a wild rampage of looting and shooting.¹⁵ Soviets were organized among the Russians present in the country, of which the most important were the Helsinki Soviet and the TSENTROBALT, the latter being the supreme organization of the Baltic fleet sailors. The work of the soviets, the army committees and the TSENTROBALT was coordinated by the Northern Oblast Congress of Soviets. During the early months of the revolution, there was already a flourishing Bolshevik Party organization in Finland, but until September, most of the soldiers had a Socialist Revolutionary or Menshevik orientation, while the sailors were too anarchist to follow any definite program.¹⁶

The Provisional Government acted with great promptness in the matter of Finland. On the advice of a committee of the Diet which hastened to Petrograd, it issued an *ukaz* on March 20 nullifying all imperial ordinances and decrees relative to Finland since 1890. All Finnish political prisoners (of whom there were over 200 in Petrograd alone) were amnestied, and the right of Finland to self-government was guaranteed. The Senate was turned, in effect, into a responsible ministry, since henceforth its members must come entirely from members of the Diet. A Kadet, Mikhail Stakhovickij, was named

¹⁵ Söderhjelm, pp. 16-17; Wuorinen, pp. 218-20.

¹⁶ Svechnikov, pp. 12-17.

Governor-General, and a Finn, Karl Enckell, Finnish State-Secretary. Svinhufud, who was returned in triumph from Siberia, became Procurator of the Senate. Stakhovickij appointed a Senate composed of six socialists and six nonsocialists; Oskari Tokoi, one of the top socialists, was made President of the Senate, and hence, Premier. When the Diet met on April 4, Kullervo Manner, the other leading socialist, was elected its president. Meanwhile, special commissioners of the Provisional Government had arrived in Helsinki to negotiate a permanent regulation of Russo-Finnish relations.¹⁷

As in Russia, so in Finland, there was, in these early months of 1917, an effort to make up all at once for the long years of impotence. The wiser heads among the socialists might have preferred to move slowly and carefully, but they were swept along by the popular clamor and a worsening economic situation. Membership in the Social Democratic Party shot up from 70,000 to 125,000. Strikes developed in both the cities and the countryside. In 1914, there had been 37 work stoppages involving 6,200 workers; in 1917, there were 483, affecting 139,812 workers. Both workers and landless peasants demanded the eight-hour day, and most industries were forced to accede to the former's demands. Government food stocks were frequently plundered by the strikers.¹⁸

In the countryside, where in June unions began to be formed by tenants and landless laborers, one observer recalls that,

the strikes often assumed a violent character. The strikers prevented the people on the farms from milking or feeding the cows. The farmers were locked up and threatened with death, if they did not agree to the demands of the "people," the dairies were closed by force, and there were conflicts, with stone throwing, stabbing, and shooting with revolvers.¹⁹

Clearly, passions were aroused, and they produced all the trivia of social revolt. For example, at Tornio, a workers' meeting resolved that the upper classes must give up wearing starched collars and cuffs, "so that they could get to look like other people."²⁰

To still the popular discontent, the Diet passed, before the middle of June, a rent control law. It also created a Food Department and Central Provisions Committee, both headed by an official with the rank of senator. These bodies requisitioned grain and set up a ra-

¹⁷ Gummerus, pp. 18-20; Wuorinen, pp. 218-20.

¹⁸ Harmaja, pp. 68-73, 108-17; Söderhjelm, pp. 19, 23-24; S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)," *Krasnyj arkhiv*, XCIX (1940), 15-51.

¹⁹ Söderhjelm, p. 19. Only about 25 percent of the Finnish peasants owned the land they cultivated in 1917. The others were either sharecroppers or laborers on the farms of others.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

tioning system, despite bitter protests from the freeholder peasants, who would later be the backbone of the opposition to the Socialist Workers Republic. Finally, during July, a bill requiring the eight-hour day in industry was pushed through the Diet, though its promulgation was delayed by the Senate.²¹

In the meantime, the future connection with Russia was still a vital problem, and the commissioners of the Provisional Government were stubbornly insisting on the necessity of waiting for the convocation of the Russian Constituent Assembly before any final arrangements were made. As a consequence, the Finns began to organize a more or less secret military force, the Civic Guard or Protective Corps (*Skyddskår*), under the guise of forming fire brigades. This organization was led by the same Military Committee which had sent the *Jägers* to Germany, and its greatest problem was not in obtaining recruits, but in obtaining arms. There is convincing evidence that prior to the mid-summer of 1917, its recruits included some workmen, and it is certain that before September, the socialist leaders were not actively opposed to it. They did, however, prefer the organization of an overt citizens' militia, and in June, one was created to act as a police force. The *Jägers* were praised openly by Oskari Tokoi as late as June, though it is doubtful that he sympathized with the efforts of the Military Committee in April to persuade the Germans to land on the Finnish coast. In any event, the Germans would agree only to supply arms and ammunition to the Protective Corps and to return the *Jäger* Battalion. Neither of these promises was kept, except in a very modest fashion, prior to February, 1918.²²

Relations with the Provisional Government reached the crisis stage in June, when the Social Democratic Party Congress demanded Finland's emancipation from "a state of dependency and tutelage."²³ On July 3, a representative of the party told the Petrograd Soviet that, hitherto we have been obliged to fight on two fronts—against our own bourgeoisie and against the Russian Government. If our class war is to be successful, if we are to be able to gather all our strength on one front, against our own bourgeoisie, we need independence, for which Finland is already ripe.²⁴

²¹ Harmaja, pp. 68-73.

²² Söderhjelm, pp. 20, 24-25; Gummerus, p. 20; Hannula, p. 33; Wentzel Hagelstam, *Les nations ressuscitées: la Finlande* (Paris, 1918), p. 15. One reason for the socialists' early support of the Protective Corps was their fear of a counterrevolution in Russia. Moreover, they were opposed to the introduction of conscription, even for a purely Finnish army.

²³ Söderhjelm, p. 22.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

On July 17, just before new disorders in Petrograd, provoked by the failure of Kerensky's offensive, the Finnish Diet passed the Law of the Supreme Power, despite the efforts of a delegation of Russian Mensheviks, led by Nikolai S. Chkeidze, to persuade the socialists to be calm. It stipulated that henceforth all prerogatives formerly exercised by the Tsar-Grand Duke were vested in the Diet, except those relating to military and foreign affairs. Kerensky became the Russian Premier shortly after and accepted the challenge. Distrustful of the occupation troops then in Finland, he despatched the 5th Caucasus (Kuban) Division and the 43rd Don Cossack Regiment to Helsinki. Along with them arrived a new Governor-General, N. V. Nekrasov, and an order that the "Red" Diet be dissolved. But would the Senate, headed by Oskari Tokoi, promulgate the dissolution order? Its non-socialists, angry over the hasty social legislation of the preceding months, decided to side with Kerensky and gave their consent. That produced a tie vote in the Senate, and in accordance with the normal practice, it was broken by the affirmative vote of the Governor-General, and the dissolution order promulgated. The socialists angrily resigned from the Senate, and tried to keep the "Red" Diet in session, only to find the doors to its hall barred by the recently arrived Russian troops. Eventually, they decided to participate in new elections, but would not return to the Senate. A more conservative government, led by E. N. Setälä, was formed.²⁵

There is no evidence that the Setälä Government began to plan deliberately to crush the Finnish socialists in blood, as the latter claimed. On the other hand, it unquestionably wanted to gain complete independence for Finland, if only to rid the country of the 35,000 revolutionary-minded Russian soldiers and sailors, and to restore law and order. It brought one of the members of the Military Committee into the Senate and gave the whole Committee official status by naming its members to draw up a conscription law. The Committee itself remained in touch with the Germans, and in October, eight *Jägers*, equipped with rifles, a machine gun, ammunition, and two radio stations, were landed on the coast of Pohjanmaa. Later, around the beginning of November, the Protective Corps managed to import from Germany an arms shipment which included 6,500 rifles, 25 machine guns, 2,500,000 cartridges, 800 pistols, and 5,000 hand grenades. This shipment was landed at Vaasa, and there was no time to distribute the arms before the general strike in November. A Protective Corps cavalry school established near Porvoo in September, had almost no arms at all. Not until around January 1 was the

²⁵ Graham, pp. 99-100; Räikkönen, p. 10; Svechnikov, pp. 33-34; Jackson, pp. 84-86.

Corps in any position to engage in combat with its potential enemies.²⁶

Meanwhile, since early September, the Bolshevik Party had won control of the Northern Oblast Congress of Soviets, the Helsinki Soviet, and the army committees in Tampere, Turku, and Riihimiäki. The trio which would later control for a time the People's Commissariat of Military and Naval Affairs, Dybenko, Antonov-Ovseenko, and Krylenko directed this operation. Wherever the Bolsheviks won control, an effort was made to form a Finnish Red Guard detachment among the local workers, and to supply it with arms and nocturnal training. Tampere appears to have been the place where the first Red Guards were formed.²⁷ Thus, at the time of the political break between socialists and nonsocialists in the Finnish Government, both sides could rely upon military support. The members of the Protective Corps, led by former officers of the Finnish Army, had more military experience, but the Red Guard had a better potential supply of arms and the possibility of Russian support.

The Red Guard appears to have been from the first under a leadership which, while socialist, did not include the socialist leaders in the Diet. Nevertheless, in August and September, the latter were happy to support the formation of the Red Guard, on the ground that the Protective Corps had become a class weapon of the bourgeoisie.²⁸

Despite demagogic anti-Protective Corps appeals by *Tuomies*, the socialist newspaper, the elections for a new Diet, held on October 1-2, were lost by the socialists. Their total vote had increased by nearly 70,000 over the 1916 elections, but a greater turnout of the anti-socialist vote left them with only 92 seats, as compared with 103 the year before.²⁹ With just over 50 percent of the seats, the non-socialists had hardly won a sweeping victory, but they had won, by the canons of democratic procedure. Henceforth, to win complete power, the socialists would have to desert the tenets of parliamentary legalism and take the path of insurrection.

Meanwhile, the Setälä Government had continued negotiations with Kerensky regarding the future status of Finland. On September 12, the Russian Premier proposed that the Senate henceforth be the supreme power in Finland, with Russia reserving the right to convoke and to dissolve the Diet, to call new elections to the Diet, to appoint

²⁶ Hannula, pp. 33-34, 36; Svechnikov, pp. 33-34; Jackson, pp. 86-87; S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)."

²⁷ Söderhjelm, p. 28; Hannula, pp. 33-34; Svechnikov, pp. 12-17; S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)."

²⁸ Söderhjelm, pp. 25-27.

²⁹ Wuorinen, pp. 218-20; Svechnikov, p. 10.

the Governor-General, the Finnish State-Secretary, and other high officers, and to render final decisions regarding Russian citizens in Finland and Russo-Finnish relations. This proposal was promptly rejected by the Setälä Government.³⁰

The Social Democrats were deeply chagrined by their defeat at the polls, and at first considered not taking their seats in the new Diet. The idea was to insist that the July dissolution had been illegal; hence, the new Diet was illegal. Later, they changed tactics and decided to threaten their opponents with the Red Guard.³¹ At Turku, on October 16, Tokoi said ominously that the defeat at the polls need not be important, since the workers had other means of power besides the ballot.³² On October 20, the leaders of the collective trade unions and of the Social Democratic Party called for the formation of Red Guards all over the country.³³ When the Senate sought to introduce a new police force in place of the ineffectual militia, the Red Guard and Russian soldiers in Turku arrested the local magistrates and the *Polizeimeister* (October 24) and held them captive for two months.³⁴

The new Diet met on November 1, with Kerensky still refusing to recede an inch on Finnish autonomy. On November 6, Governor-General Nekrasov went to Petrograd to present a new proposal to his chief. On the next day, November 7, he went into hiding, though he managed to wire Setälä to act on his own responsibility. The Bolshevik Revolution had come.³⁵

Over the next three weeks, it seemed that it would promptly spread to Helsinki. To be sure, the Finnish Red Guard as yet numbered no more than 10,000 men,³⁶ but it had the overwhelming majority of the Russian troops at its back, since most of them went over to the new regime in Petrograd before December 1. Only one thing saved Finland at this point—the tradition of parliamentary democracy which made the leaders of her social democracy reluctant to take the road of insurrection.³⁷

After November 7, the Senate wanted to transfer power to a Regency Commission composed of Svinhufud and two other conservatives. However, a majority of the Diet could not be won over, since the

³⁰ Söderhjelm, p. 32; Wuorinen, pp. 218-20.

³¹ Söderhjelm, p. 29.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Svechnikov, p. 25.

³⁵ Räikkönen, pp. 15-16.

³⁶ Svechnikov, pp. 27-30, 36.

³⁷ Svechnikov, pp. 27-30. On the point that it was the moderation of the Finnish socialists which saved Finland in November, 1917, see the following interesting example of Bolshevik "self-criticism": Otto Wilhelm Kuusinen, *Die Revolution in Finnland* (Hamburg, 1921).

Agrarians wanted to transfer supreme power to the Diet, in accordance with the law of July 18. The Social Democrats wanted the convocation of a constituent assembly,³⁸ and on November 9, their leaders agreed to establish a joint organ with the leaders of the Red Guard—the Revolutionary Central Council of Workers. The latter set up a news service by telegraph for provincial, district, and parish revolutionary committees which also came into existence at this time.³⁹

On November 8, the Soviet authorities in Helsinki proclaimed Finland in a state of siege, and warned that they would suppress any “interference in the operational or other activities of the Russian revolutionary troops.”⁴⁰ On November 10, a worker, Jaako Rahja, appeared before the Senate as the representative of the Red Guard. He announced that the Bolshevik Government of Russia had named him Vice-Governor, and a Russian sailor, Pavel Shishko, Governor-General. Setälä replied that he could not recognize them, since the connection with Russia had been severed by Nekrasov’s telegram of November 7. However, he might recognize them as ambassadors. Svinhufud was present and confirmed the decision. Rahja threatened that if the Finnish workers started a battle with the bourgeoisie, the Russian workers would not stand idly by. He boasted that the Red Guard was already being supplied with arms from Petrograd.⁴¹ However, the new *Sovnarkom* in Petrograd decided not to push the appointments, and eventually named the heads of the Northern Oblast Congress of Soviets its representatives in Finland.⁴²

Two members of the Revolutionary Central Council and leaders of the Red Guard, Yrjö Sirola and Evert Huttinen, visited Lenin at the Smolnyj on November 11, and found him willing to discuss only how the Finnish Social Democrats could help the revolution in Petrograd. He feared that many of the Russian troop units in Finland were still anti-Bolshevik, and suggested a general strike in that country, to prevent their marching on the Russian capital.⁴³ When Sirola and Huttinen returned to Helsinki on November 13, they learned that the Council had, on the previous day, voted down a proposal to stage an immediate insurrection, 18 to 8. However, when the Diet voted, on November 13, to establish the proposed Regency Commission and refused to order the promulgation of the eight-hour-day law, the Revolutionary Central Council followed Lenin’s suggestion and called a general strike. Thus, though the strike was ostensibly called to force

³⁸ Rääkkönen, pp. 16-17; Gummerus, p. 21.

³⁹ Rääkkönen, pp. 19-21.

⁴⁰ S. Markov, “Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)”

⁴¹ Rääkkönen, pp. 17-18.

⁴² Rääkkönen, pp. 17-18; Gummerus, p. 25.

⁴³ Rääkkönen, pp. 19-20.

the Senate and Diet to introduce more social welfare legislation, it was actually called at the behest of the Chairman of the Russian *Sovnarkom*.⁴⁴

During the strike, which lasted from November 13 to 20, the life of the country came to a complete standstill. Factories were shut down; stores were closed; trains stopped running; only one newspaper, that of the strikers, appeared on the streets. Brushing aside the feeble militia, the Red Guard formed a "Committee of Public Order." While claiming to preserve order, it committed not a few acts of simple brigandage against its "class enemies," and murdered thirty-six people. In the south, where most of the industries were located, the Protective Corps was still powerless to resist the Red Guard, particularly since the latter could have obtained help, if needed, from the Russian troops. In all fairness, it must be added that there was no purposeful intervention by the latter, who were still floundering in chaos, but the Russian arsenals were freely opened for the Finnish Red Guardsmen.⁴⁵

The Setälä Senate collapsed between November 13 and 16; mass resignations were submitted after Setälä himself was threatened in his office by armed Red Guardsmen. On November 15, the Diet voted to end the three-day-old Regency and assumed the supreme power itself. This action, incidentally, may be regarded by the scrupulous as the formal severance of ties with Russia. By now thoroughly terrified, the Diet announced on the night of November 15-16 that the eight-hour law was in effect and passed a new social insurance law. However, this was still not enough for the socialists, who had begun on November 13 to demand approval of an all-socialist Senate with supreme power. This demand was resisted by the Diet majority, and during November 14 and 15, the Revolutionary Central Council, egged on by messages from Lenin, debated a violent seizure of power. The Red Guard leaders were in favor; the parliamentary socialists hesitated. On the night of November 15-16, the Council decided to arrest the resigned senators and to disarm completely the Protective Corps. On the next day, it changed its mind, and rescinded these decisions.⁴⁶

On November 17, Svinhufud was put forward by the Diet majority to form a new government, and he promptly suggested to Manner and Tokoi a second coalition Senate like that formed in the previous March. Negotiations were still in progress on November 20, when the

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

⁴⁵ Harmaja, pp. 108-17; Söderhjelm, pp. 40-41, 43, 45; Räikkönen, p. 11; Svechnikov, pp. 27-30.

⁴⁶ Söderhjelm, p. 46; Räikkönen, pp. 21-22; Svechnikov, pp. 27-30.

socialist leaders, now concerned over Red Guard outrages, decided to call off the general strike.⁴⁷ By this action, they allowed the initiative to slip from their hands. Svinhufud grasped it eagerly. While Manner and Tokoi were still talking glibly of an all-socialist government, Svinhufud quietly put together a new Senate which did not include a single socialist, and on November 24, the Diet, by a vote of 100 to 80, confirmed it and handed over to it the supreme power. It was the first Finnish Senate not named by the Russian authorities. Svinhufud himself became its President and took in addition the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, with Karl Enckell serving as his deputy in the latter post.⁴⁸

In Petrograd, the *Sovnarkom* was quick to recognize that from its viewpoint, the Finnish socialists had made an enormous mistake. Too late, it tried to retrieve the situation. Joseph V. Stalin, as Commissar of Nationalities, arrived in Helsinki on November 25 to urge the Finnish laggards to action. He found the parliamentary socialists and the Red Guard hopelessly split. The former even wanted the Russian troops to disperse the latter! A strong appeal by Stalin to a party conference on November 27 had no effect. At the end of the conference, it was decided that significant gains had been made in the revolution already. Murder, thievery, and anarchy were denounced, and the Red Guard was subjected to the party leaders. To the latter was left the decision as to when they might enter the Government—or order a seizure of power. Moreover, though the socialist leaders were called to Petrograd the next day to be berated by Trotsky, they refused to see the error of their ways.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, the new Svinhufud Senate was taking steps to create its own armed forces and to arrange with the *Sovnarkom* for the evacuation of the Russian troops. The Protective Corps School near Porvoo had been destroyed by the Red Guard, but it was reconstituted at Lappajärvi in Pohjanmaa, and another school established at Jalasjärvi. By the end of December, General Paul von Gerich, Chief of the Vaasa Protective Corps District, who had served in the Russian Army between 1914 and 1917, had set up an officers' school at Vimpeli, with a dozen of the returned *Jägers* installed as teachers.⁵⁰

A number of ex-officers in the Tsarist army, who were natives of Finland, were now returning home. Of these the most important was Baron General Karl Gustaf von Mannerheim, destined to become world-famous as a leader of his people. He had seen thirty years' serv-

⁴⁷ Räikkönen, pp. 22-31.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-31.

⁴⁹ Söderhjelm, p. 47; Räikkönen, pp. 31-34; Svechnikov, pp. 30-31; J. V. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow, 1953), IV, 1-5.

⁵⁰ Söderhjelm, p. 48; Hannula, p. 38.

ice in the Russian Imperial Army, and his assignments had included the Imperial Cavaliers of the Guard, field service in Manchuria, a special diplomatic mission to Chinese Turkestan and Mongolia, and command, first of a division, then of a corps of Russian cavalry in Poland, Galicia, and Rumania during World War I. Fifty years old, and at the peak of his powers, Mannerheim now entered a somewhat smaller stage, but one on which he would play the starring role.⁵¹

By slow degrees, he made his way northward from Odessa and the southwestern front in November and December. Judging from his memoirs, it was originally his intention to participate in any uprising his fellow officers in the Russian army might be planning. But, finding only timidity and resignation in Petrograd, he hastened on to Helsinki, arriving on December 16. He promptly became a member of the Military Committee, on which he clashed with more cautious colleagues, but won the confidence of Svinhufud.⁵²

Meanwhile, on December 1, Svinhufud had announced to the Diet his intention to demand of the commanders of Russian troops in Finland the immediate withdrawal of their forces. Finland, he said, was now independent and desired to remain neutral in the war. Moreover, the food crisis made it impossible to continue feeding the Russians. Despite noisy protests by the socialists, the Diet agreed.

Finding the Russian commanders without any authority, Svinhufud turned from them to the *Sovnarkom* with his request. After some delay, the latter agreed to evacuate if 100,000 marks were paid for "the expenses of evacuation." When these terms were accepted, the price was raised to 20,000,000 marks. Svinhufud accepted this second proposal on the condition that evacuation was completed by January 1, 1918. After another long wait, the *Sovnarkom* objected that Finland's international position was unclear, and that the road to Petrograd must be guarded. Thus matters stood when the civil war broke out.⁵³

However, the *Sovnarkom's* attitude gave weight to Svinhufud's words when he spoke in the Diet on December 18 of the need for a "national force" to maintain order. Later, on January 9, 1918, he formally requested the Diet to vote creation of any army, which meant, in effect, to give legal status to the Protective Corps. Angrily, the Social Democrats protested that the Senate was cutting its last ties with them, but the measure was passed by the Diet on January 13 by a vote of 97 to 87, and formally promulgated on January 25.⁵⁴ Thus the "Fin-

⁵¹ Hannula, p. 39; Karl Gustaf von Mannerheim, *The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim*, Count Eric Lowenhaupt, trans. (New York, 1954), pp. 3-75.

⁵² Rääkkönen, pp. 106-10; Mannerheim, pp. 110-34.

⁵³ Söderhjelm, p. 57; Svechnikov, pp. 23, 32.

⁵⁴ Söderhjelm, pp. 65-68; Rääkkönen, pp. 74-77; Gummerus, p. 23.

nish White Guard" of Communist mythology was actually the Finnish army, legally created by a democratic legislative body.

Svinhufud had an important conversation with Mannerheim on January 16 and offered him command of the now numerous Protective Corps units in Pohjanmaa. Both men agreed that the task to be accomplished "did not merely concern the restoration of order, but the liberation of the country," in other words, the forcible expulsion of the Russian troops. Mannerheim made it a condition of his acceptance that the armed intervention of neither Sweden nor Germany should be sought, though he wanted the return of the *Jägers* still in Germany and the importation of arms from both countries. Svinhufud agreed, with reluctance.⁵⁵ On January 18, Mannerheim's appointment as commander in Pohjanmaa was announced, and he left promptly for that province, after obtaining a credit of 15,000,000 marks from private bankers. On January 19, he was in Vaasa.⁵⁶

Meanwhile, the Senate had decided, on November 27, to issue a formal declaration of independence, in order to facilitate recognition by foreign powers. The declaration was issued in the form of a statement in the Diet by Svinhufud on December 4 and a reply by the Diet on December 6. The provisions of the Swedish constitution of 1772 and the action taken by the Diet on July 17 and again on November 15 were cited as the basis for the declaration. The Social Democrats were outraged by the fact that the *Sovnarkom* was not consulted. They remained in their seats during Svinhufud's statement, and eighty-eight of them voted against the declaration.⁵⁷

This was hardly a popular attitude, but it was shared by the Great Powers. While the general strike was still in progress, Svinhufud had sent Dr. Edvard Hjelt to Berlin to ask for German help in gaining independence. General von Ludendorff, the real ruler of Germany, received Hjelt at Kreuznach on November 26, and suggested that Finland claim the right of self-determination. He also promised to return all the *Jägers* and send arms. However, on December 3, negotiations opened between Germany and Soviet Russia at Brest-Litovsk; on December 15, an armistice was signed. Hjelt was told in Berlin on December 23 that Trotsky had promised Germany at Brest that Soviet Russia would recognize Finland if she was requested to do so. On December 27, Chancellor Hertling definitely advised that recognition be sought in Petrograd, intimating that German recognition would follow thereafter.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Rääkkönen, pp. 106-10; Mannerheim, pp. 134-35.

⁵⁶ Mannerheim, pp. 135-38.

⁵⁷ Rääkkönen, pp. 37-44; Svechnikov, p. 31; Gummerus, pp. 21-22.

⁵⁸ Rääkkönen, pp. 21, 35, 45-49, 54-65; Gummerus, p. 23.

As for the Allies, their ambassadors in Petrograd were approached by Dr. Rudolf Holsti. He was told that they could not yet take action toward recognizing Finland, and that the Finns should apply first to the Russian Constituent Assembly when it met in January. Sweden, Norway, and Denmark likewise chose at this time to wait for the meeting of that Assembly before recognizing Finland.⁵⁹

Meanwhile, the Finnish Social Democrats had reconciled themselves to the action of December 4-6, and had decided that complete independence was the only solution to their problems. They sent a delegation to Petrograd for a five-day visit (December 23-28) and importuned the *Sovnarkom*. Trotsky gave them the same assurances he had previously given the Germans.⁶⁰

Meanwhile, after learning of the advice given by Germany, Karl Enckell had decided to visit Petrograd himself. He arrived on December 28, and promptly saw Lenin at the Smolnyj. The Chairman of the *Sovnarkom* promised that a formal request for recognition would encounter no obstacles.⁶¹

Enckell hastened back to Helsinki, and on December 30, a large Finnish delegation, headed by Svinhufud, arrived in Petrograd with a formal request for recognition. It went to the Smolnyj and was received by Jakov Sverdlov, Chairman of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee, and by Bonch-Bruevich, Secretary of the *Sovnarkom*. After some delays caused by the wording of the request, the delegation was told to return the next day.⁶²

At 9:00 P.M. on December 31, Svinhufud and his companions returned to the seat of Soviet power, to spend a cheerless New Year's Eve shivering in the unheated corridors of the Smolnyj, with hats and overcoats left on. They waited outside a room in which part of the *Sovnarkom*, including Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, G. Petrovskij, I. Steinberg, V. Karelin, and A. Shlikhter debated Finland's fate. Just before the new year came, Bonch-Bruevich came out of the room with a formal recognition of independence. Much against his will, Lenin was persuaded by Bonch-Bruevich to come out later and shake hands with the "bourgeois" Svinhufud.⁶³ Stalin, as Commissar of Nationalities, obtained confirmation of the action from the All-Russian Central Executive Committee on January 4. He blamed the "cowardice" of the Finnish Social Democrats for the necessity of recognizing a "bour-

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Rääkkönen, pp. 54-65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

geois" government, but if there was cowardice, it was that of the *Sov-narkom*, faced as it was with German pressure.⁶⁴

From Svinhufud's viewpoint, the ignominy of dealing with Lenin was more than compensated by the results. Germany recognized Finland on January 4, and gave official status to her representatives in Berlin. However, she took no further steps to aid Svinhufud until the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was safely signed two months later. Despite the protests of the Provisional Government's ambassador in Paris, France also recognized Finland, on January 6. Shortly after, Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, as well as other states, followed suit. Only Britain and the United States, counting on the reappearance of a democratic government in Russia, still hesitated.⁶⁵

In the meantime, throughout the month of December, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the new republic rested on very shaky foundations indeed. Despite the decisions of the socialist party conference on November 28, the Finnish Red Guard remained as an independent political force, and the Soviet Government of Russia began to realize that it might yet bring about the social revolution in Finland which it so ardently wanted.

Early in December, 1917, the Red Guard was busy increasing its treasury and its arsenal of weapons. Full pay was demanded and received from industrialists for the period of the general strike. At the same time, the municipalities of southern Finland were forced to pay Red Guardsmen wages for "preserving order" during the strike. Turku paid 500,000 marks; Helsinki, 1,000,000 marks; and Tampere, 100,000 marks. Pleased with this activity, the Soviet authorities sent a new consignment of arms to Red Guard headquarters at Kuopio and Lahti on December 1.⁶⁶

On December 4, the Red Guard jailed the city council of Tampere until it agreed to decree a general increase of wages within its jurisdiction. The same procedure was followed at Viipuri, Kotka, and Pori. At Kotka, a ransom of 500,000 marks was demanded for the release of the city councillors. On December 5, a mob, incited by the Red Guard, seized control of Turku and looted shops. Order was not restored until Russian troops intervened, and the parliamentary socialists felt it necessary to dissociate themselves officially from this event.⁶⁷

The Red Guard had now emancipated itself completely from control by the socialist leaders. Between December 16 and 18, it held a

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; Gummerus, p. 23; Stalin, IV, 23-25.

⁶⁵ Graham, pp. 109-12, 117-18; Rääkkönen, pp. 66-68; Gummerus, p. 24; Hannula, p. 37.

⁶⁶ Söderhjelm, pp. 48, 49; Hannula, p. 40.

⁶⁷ Söderhjelm, p. 58; Hannula, p. 40.

congress of its own at Tampere. The country was divided into twelve military districts, and various other organizational matters were settled. Close ties were established with the Russian troops, and on December 21, the Northern Oblast Committee asked the commander of the 42nd Army Corps for a list of soldiers who could be "sent into a struggle with a possible counterrevolutionary offensive."⁶⁸ Another congress was held in Helsinki on January 6. Emissaries from Petrograd appeared and denounced the tameness of the Finnish workers. New statutes were adopted, putting the leadership of the revolution in the hands of the Red Guard. On the same day, the former palace of the Governor-General in Helsinki, which was being used by the Ministry of Labor, was seized as a headquarters. The militia failed to prevent the occupation, and when O. W. Louhivuori, as Minister of Labor, protested, various officials in the capital were seized and held for ransom.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, during the first ten days of January, several small towns were ravaged by the Russian soldiers and the Red Guards. In Turku and Oulu, all the magistrates were turned out of office. On January 13, the General Staff of the Red Guard openly revealed that it had been promised further arms by Lenin. Two days later, on January 15, workers were called upon to rally around the Red Guard, which at the same time demanded of the socialist leaders a prompt seizure of power.⁷⁰

The atmosphere all over Finland was now electric, and the storm began to burst on January 19, when a pitched battle took place between the Red Guard and the Protective Corps of Viipuri. Russian troops aided the Red Guardsmen as comrades-in-arms. The fight arose when the latter tried to reopen forcibly a shut-down factory, and by January 20, they had driven most of their opponents from the city into the islets of the now-frozen Gulf of Finland. Some sixty-eight Protective Corps men, captured by Russian troops, were taken to the latter's barracks and murdered. On January 21, trains containing Russian troops were en route from Petrograd to Pohjanmaa to destroy the Protective Corps units there, while Svinhufud was launching an energetic protest against the Viipuri outrages to the commander of the Russian troops in Helsinki.⁷¹

This protest was followed on January 23 by the sending of a special mission, headed by Karl Enckell, to Petrograd, with a categorical demand for the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops. On the same day, the socialist leaders, themselves threatened by the Red

⁶⁸ S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)."

⁶⁹ Söderhjelm, pp. 58-59; Räikkönen, pp. 68-71.

⁷⁰ Söderhjelm, pp. 63-64, 68-69; Hannula, pp. 45, 46.

⁷¹ Söderhjelm, pp. 72-74; Räikkönen, p. 79.

Guard, gave way to the latter's demands and agreed to establish with its leaders a special Executive Committee. The commander of the Red Guard, Eero Haapalainen, was named chairman. Simultaneously, fighting was breaking out between the Russian troops and the Protective Corps in the Vaasa region.⁷²

On January 24, the new Red Guard-Social Democratic Executive Committee issued a statement officially opposing the withdrawal of Russian troops from Finland, at a time when new Russian detachments were arriving in Viipuri. The latter enabled the Viipuri Red Guard to gain complete control of that city by January 27. During the night of January 24-25, Svinhufud made one last effort to save the peace by participating in a weird conference aboard the Russian naval vessel *Krechet*, ice-bound in Helsinki harbor. Representatives of the Russian soldiers and sailors, as well as of the Finnish Red Guard and Social Democrats, were present. The conference was quite abortive.⁷³

On January 25, the situation had become quite critical. The Red Guard seized control of the Helsinki railroad station, and the commander of the Russian troops in Viipuri demanded the immediate suppression of the Protective Corps, threatening to take action if it was not done within thirty-six hours. He also formed in that city a "General Staff of Revolutionary Finland." During the night, more armaments were issued to the Helsinki Red Guard.

However, the Whites were likewise very active on January 25. Renvall, the Minister of War, announced the appointment of Mannerheim as Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Army. While appealing to Petrograd directly against the interference of Russian troops in Finnish affairs, Svinhufud was warning the Russians in Helsinki that he intended to restore order, if necessary by disarming Russian troops. While he was speaking, the Protective Corps gave weight to his words by disarming and imprisoning the Russians in a number of Karelian towns near Lake Ladoga. In Vaasa, Mannerheim issued orders to prepare an attack on the Russians in southern Pohjanmaa. In Helsinki, four senators, led by Renvall, left secretly for Vaasa, in order to carry on the government in case of a *coup d'état* in Helsinki.⁷⁴

A final parting of ways came on January 26. Orders were issued for the mobilization of the Helsinki Red Guard at midnight, after Eero Haapalainen's Executive Committee voted a Red insurrection on the next day. The Senate met to issue a final appeal to the Finnish people, while Svinhufud protested to all foreign countries against Russian in-

⁷² Räikkönen, pp. 79, 80-83; Hannula, pp. 40-44.

⁷³ Söderhjelm, pp. 72-74, 80-81; Räikkönen, pp. 84-91.

⁷⁴ Söderhjelm, pp. 75-77; Räikkönen, pp. 92-96, 97-105; Hannula, pp. 40, 41, 45, 47, 48-51; Svechnikov, p. 35; Mannerheim, pp. 138-40.

terference in Finnish affairs. In Petrograd, Karl Enckell was denied an audience with Trotsky. He saw the head of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee, Podvoiskij, who not only refused a request for the immediate withdrawal of the Russian troops, but candidly admitted that they were to assist the Red revolution in Finland. Trotsky himself was wiring the Finnish socialists that the hour for action had come.⁷⁵

The Red Guard began to seize power in Helsinki on the night of January 27-28. Government offices, telegraph, telephone, and railway stations, banks, and other strategic points were occupied. Members of the Senate and nonsocialists in the Diet went into hiding. At the Senate's bidding, government employees, workers in transportation and communications, and school teachers went on strike. Factories and shops were closed down. Meanwhile, Haapalainen was proclaiming the Socialist Workers Republic.⁷⁶ At the last moment, the *Sovnarkom* in Petrograd, now under strong German pressure at Brest-Litovsk, ordered Russian troops not to intervene, and later claimed it could not control the Russians troops in Finland. However, on January 29, a delegation of the new Red masters of Helsinki was received enthusiastically by Lenin at the Smolnyj, while Russian military leaders in Helsinki were announcing their intention to aid the new Government.⁷⁷

On January 29, the new Council of People's Plenipotentiaries began to rule in Helsinki. Manner and Tokoi were mustered into service as its nominal heads, but real power in the new regime rested at first in the hands of the leaders of the Red Guard, Eero Haapalainen, who was Minister of the Interior, Minister of War, and Commander-in-Chief, and Yrjo Sirola, who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs. On the day of its formation, the new Government was greeted by representatives of the *Sovnarkom*, while a special committee of the Northern Oblast Congress of Soviets and the TSENTROBALT was formed to render military assistance.⁷⁸

Meanwhile, in the north, on the night of January 27-28, Mannerheim's forces began a remarkable four-day operation which resulted in the disarming and capture of 5,000 Russian troops in southern Pohjanmaa. Vaasa and the surrounding region came under firm

⁷⁵ S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.); Rääkkönen, pp. 97-105, pp. 130-132.

⁷⁶ Söderhjelm, pp. 90, 97-98; Rääkkönen, pp. 119-29; Svechnikov, p. 36.

⁷⁷ von Wahl, p. 8; Söderhjelm, p. 100; Rääkkönen, pp. 106-10, 130-32; S. Markov, "Grazhdanskaja vojna v Finljandii (1918 g.)."

⁷⁸ Söderhjelm, pp. 91-93, 94-95, 100; Hannula, p. 57; Svechnikov, p. 41; G. Kostomarov, "Belofinny na sluzhbe anglo-francuskikh interventov v 1919 g.," *Krasnyj arkhiv*, XCVIII (1940), 31-67.

White control, though not for another week were the Russians in northern Pohjanmaa, up to the Swedish border, overpowered. Having acquired large stocks of Russian weapons (2,000 rifles, twenty machine guns, and one light six-gun battery), Mannerheim promptly began operations which assured him control of the east-west railway which, running through Haapamiaki and St. Mikkelin, connected his base with that of the Karelian Whites on the shores of Lake Ladoga. In this way, he brought five-sixths of the Finnish territory and half of the population under his control. However, the Reds were left with half the population, most of the industrial area, and the cities of Pori, Turku, Tampere, Riihimäki, Helsinki, Kotka, and Viipuri. On January 30, Renvall and the three other senators who had left Helsinki established a White Government in Vaasa, and on February 1, issued a proclamation calling upon all Finns to join Mannerheim in his efforts to suppress the insurrection.⁷⁹ The civil war was now fairly started.

In conclusion, there seems every reason to regard the revolution of January 27-28 in Finland as a revolution imported from Russia, and one which, but for its ultimate failure, would have resulted in the imposition of satellite status. This is not to say that there were not genuine social and economic grievances, nor that the Social Democratic Party as a whole was not a genuine native product. However, just as its normal development was retarded by the policies of Tsarist Russia between 1898 and 1904, and again, between 1908 and 1917, so it was impelled by the policies of both the Russian Provisional Government and of Soviet Russia to cast loose, finally, from its democratic moorings. And even so, its resistance to Bolshevik pressure in November, 1917, and the fact that it was forced into insurrection by the Red Guard and the Russian troops, prove that at best the *coup d'état* of January, 1918, was a Russian wolf in Finnish sheep's clothing.

But were not the various Russian governments—Tsarist, Provisional, and Bolshevik—justified in taking measures to defend the approaches to Petrograd? To this question, the answer is that prior to 1898, there was no danger of the Finns welcoming a German or other invader, and that as late as 1908, there was still the chance for a complete reconciliation. Finland was driven against her will into Germany's arms. Kerensky had the chance to bring about a reconciliation which would have given Russia all the military guarantees she needed, and lost it. As for Lenin, there seems to be no doubt at all that he felt that only an all-socialist regime in Finland would provide

⁷⁹ Rääkkönen, pp. 111-18, 162-65; Hannula, pp. 42-44, 51-55; Svechnikov, p. 48; Mannerheim, pp. 140-42; Söderhjelm, pp. 75-77, 81-82.

an adequate guarantee of the safety of his own regime in Russia. And having established this fact, the question arises—does a great power have the right to demand of a small one on its frontiers a political, social, and economic regime which will presumably assure that it will follow a given foreign policy?

Apparently, even Soviet Russia is willing to concede that it does not, in all cases, have this right. For reasons which, as of now, can only be guessed, Stalin did not attempt to do to Finland between 1944 and 1947 what Lenin had tried to do in 1918. It is therefore possible to say that the Bolshevik intervention of 1918 did not spring from some inescapable strategic necessity, but rather, that it sprang from the same sort of urge to spread a new gospel which has affected all the secular religious movements, of which communism is but the most recent. It was simply inconceivable to Lenin, Trotsky, and Stalin that so favorable a situation as that in Finland should not be exploited for the greater glory of their creed. Only later, after the disillusionment of the White victory, would they begin to think in terms of mere military strategy.