III The October Revolution and the Finnish Declaration of Independence

1. Revolutionary Petrograd

In hiding in Finland from July 1917 onwards, Lenin came to the conclusion during the autumn that a successful armed coup d'état in Petrograd was within the reach of the Bolsheviks and his adoption of the demand 'All power to the Soviets' typified his drive to present a clear challenge to the authority of the Provisional Government. At Lenin's initiative, the Bolshevik Central Committee decided to begin preparations for an uprising timed to take place, after some changes to the original plan, on 25 October. The detailed preparations of the operation were handled by a special military committee in which Leo Trotsky, who had joined the party the same summer, played a leading part. The uprising was timed to coincide with the meeting in Petrograd of the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets, now with a Bolshevik majority. The plan for the uprising revolved around the capture by workers' militia of a number of strategically important sites in Petrograd, including the Winter Palace which had been used by the Provisional Government for its meetings.

The success of the storming of the Winter Palace led to the capture of a number of government ministers, with the exception of Kerensky, who managed to escape abroad.[1] The Provisional

1. Carr I 1950, pp. 98—108, v. Rauch 1968, p. 22; A Short History of the USSR 1965, pp. 35—45.

Government was replaced by the Congress of Soviets in the wake of the Bolshevik uprising with a new administrative organ, the Council of People's Commissars, under the leadership of Lenin, which was entrusted with governmental powers until such time as a national constituent assembly met to resolve the nature of the country's future constitution. One of the new government's first moves included an appeal to all those involved in the war in Europe to begin immediate negotiations to achieve what was described as a 'just and democratic peace without annexation or indemnities'. All Russia's treaties of alliance with the Western powers were effectively declared null and void and all responsibility for debts incurred by the Provisional Government and Tsarist authorities summarily disclaimed.[2] The authority of the Council of People's Commissars in the period immediately following the revolution, however, extended to only a few major cities in addition to Petrograd and, at least initially, it could only call on workers' militia numbering a few thousand men at most, together with a few Latvian revolutionary battalions. The situation was further complicated by the refusal of the majority of the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks at the Congress of Soviets to support the new government, and their subsequent joint walk-out at the assembly. The Council appealed directly to the working class throughout Europe and the world for support, describing itself as representing the first stage in a series of future national and international revolutions.[3]

2. Supreme power in the hands of a regency or the Diet?

As well as signalling a radical change of direction in Russia's own internal development, the October Revolution also inevitably had a major and immediate impact on Finnish-Russian relations. Initial Finnish reactions to the events of the October Revolution differed markedly from those inspired by the earlier March

2. Carr II 1952, pp. 138—9; Carr III 1953, pp. 9—30; A Short History of the USSR 1965, pp 38, 50—6.
3. Carr I 1950, pp. 162—77; A Short History of the USSR 1965, p. 46.

Revolution, with opinion sharply divided between Right and Left. The general consensus over the fact that Finland's own position would inevitably and perhaps significantly be affected by developments in Russia could not hide the wide disagreement which emerged over how this would make itself felt and to what extent the shift in power would be favourable for Finland. Argument was heated over whether Finland's position had in fact been improved by the fall of the Provisional Government and to what extent Russia's territorial integrity had been weakened, and how the new Council of People's Commissars would react to Finland's status within the Empire and Finnish moves towards independence. There was also wide concern about what the Bolshevik seizure of power would mean ideologically and socially, and whether it would give added impetus to social revolution outside Russia, and in Finland in particular. The Left was keen to know whether the events in Petrograd would inspire workers in Finland to follow the Russian example of revolutionary action. The Right too was concerned whether Finland's close proximity to Petrograd would see the country rapidly succumb to revolution. No one felt sure, on the other hand, whether the Bolsheviks represented a passing phenomenon or whether they were in power to stay. Political opinion in Finland during November 1917 was in virtual disarray.

Soon after the first news of the revolution in Petrograd reached Finland a number of non-socialist politicians proposed the establishment of a special regency to act as the supreme political and constitutional authority in Finland and to put an end to the state of constitutional limbo, with its constant shifting of authority from one set of provisional authorities in Russia to another, which had afflicted Finland ever since the fall of the autocracy. Article 38 of the Gustavian Act of Government of 1772 covering eventualities 'in the event of the king's death' was invoked as the constitutional basis for the setting-up of a special three-man regency committee, a somewhat belated recourse to the 1772 Act some eight months after the fall of the Tsar.[4] The move reflected an obvious desire by the established non-socialist parties to adopt a more active and independent style of policy in contrast to their

4. Paasivirta II 1949, pp. 134—5; Polvinen I 1967, p. 124; Lappalainen 1977, p. 73.

previous one of cooperation with the Provisional authorities in Petrograd. A temporary regency would allow, it was supposed, in line with traditional conservative political thinking, the established division of power within society to be maintained and restrict the pace of change to constitutionally manageable proportions.[5]

The labour movement, in contrast, responded to the developments in Petrograd by demanding the immediate approval of the 'Our Demands' programme by the Diet and with it the final ratification of the reform bill and the legislation on the restructuring of local government and the introduction of the eight-hour working day.[6] A clear demonstration of the increasingly radical nature of opinion among the working class was given by a week-long general strike which began on 18 November. Marked by a number of violent clashes, it only served to deepen the hostility of non-socialist opinion towards the labour movement and its intentions.

Taken together, these developments marked an unprecedented heightening of political and social tension within Finnish society, bringing the prospect of the transformation of radical social unrest into revolutionary action and the destruction of any semblance of national unity yet closer. Socialist opinion had by now become increasingly and openly revolutionary, the activities of the Red Guards increasingly uncontrolled and violent. The socialist leaders, lacking any coherent and comprehensive pattern of policies to counter this development, were in no real position to halt the tide of events.[7] The killing of some 25 non-socialist figures by the Red Guards during the General Strike had the effect of sending a shock wave through conservative opinion and contributed to further distorting the picture common on the Right of the Left as advocating and instigating untrammelled violent action, and gave added impetus to the expansion of the Civil Guard.[8]

Social unrest at home, together with the Bolshevik take-over in Petrograd, served to cause a strong swing towards a more

5. Paasivirta II 1949, pp. 129, 136.
6. Ibid., p. 128; Kirby 1979, pp. 47—8; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 120—1.
7. H. Soikkanen 1975, pp. 244—6; Upton I 1980, pp. 2811—7.
8. J. Paavolainen I 1966, p. 76; Upton I 1980, p. 340; Hersalo I 1966, pp. 155—6.

unambiguously pro-independence stance among the non-socialist parties. This change, which had begun earlier in the autumn among the ranks of the established conservative parties, soon embraced virtually the whole of non-socialist opinion. Constitutionalist politicians previously identified with a conciliatory and cautious approach to the Russian authorities and loyalty towards the Empire, faced with an increasingly critical domestic social situation, found themselves arguing for a break with Russia as the only practical solution. Finland had to be insulated at all costs from the 'anarchy' that was Russia. The fear of a revolution in Finland, triggered by the example of events in Petrograd, provoked the adoption by the traditional political élite in Finland of a radical policy aimed at securing national independence. Only independence seemed to offer the means to defend society against those intent on its destruction or radical transformation and preserve the established political power and social position of conservative political opinion.

This shift in non-socialist opinion effectively served to bridge the gulf which had developed through the spring and summer between the younger pro-independence generation and their more conservative elders. Pro-independence politicians, who for long had been in the minority, despite a slight increase in their numbers in August and September, found themselves in November with a significantly expanded level of political influence. From being a small, if vocal minority, the group now emerged as the new leadership of non-socialist opinion. The October Revolution and the General Strike in Finland also indirectly caused pro-German sentiment to spread to include a much wider spectrum of bourgeois opinion than previously, when it had been largely restricted to the volunteer movement. Germany was now seen as Finland's best ally against the Russian threat and that of internal social revolution.

Attitudes within the labour movement during November moved in completely the opposite direction to those current among their non-socialist opponents. The loss of a socialist majority in the Diet had had the effect of bringing the prospect of the movement losing all effective political influence that much closer. The movement's self-assurance, deriving from its strength among the working class, its past election success and the strong left-wing press, had suffered a blow which seemed to have every likelihood of

provoking open rebellion among its members. Increasing unemployment and inadequate food supplies, together with the onset of winter, only increased the level of discontent at the movement's grass roots level.

There was much admiration in the labour movement for the Russian masses and their instrumental role in achieving significant changes in the Russian political system, an admiration which became associated in the movement's own collective memory with the sense of power which had been felt during the 1905 General Strike in Finland. Less the result of ideological factors, this admiration largely represented a general enthusiasm for revolutionary action and what it could apparently achieve compared to the slow progress of constitutional reform. Mass action, however, tended all the same to be seen as simply a tool to pressure for radical social reform and as a means to seize power, rather than as the stuff of revolution or the key to changing the very basis of the social structure.[9]

The attitude of the labour movement towards Finland's position and possible future subsequent to the October Revolution differed significantly from its early position towards Finnish-Russian relations. The replacement of the disliked Provisional Government by a Bolshevik-dominated administration, one likely on the basis of past evidence to be appreciably more favourable towards granting Finland her independence than one controlled by the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, made the movement adopt a conciliatory approach to the new authorities. While the non-socialist parties had generally moved towards increased advocacy of a non-negotiated independence, the socialist leaders aligned themselves behind a negotiated settlement, believing that it offered a real possibility of a satisfactory settlement of the independence question. Some doubts continued to linger nevertheless among the socialists about the ability of the Bolsheviks to retain their grip on power in Russia.

The proposal by the non-socialists in the Diet on 8 November for the setting-up of a special regency committee provoked some sharp debate between the various parliamentary parties over the whole question of what would be involved in the transfer of supreme

9. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 59—61; Upton I 1980, pp. 300—1.

authority to Finland's own political institutions and the consequent redistribution of political and social power within the country. The main focus of argument centred around the possible maintenance of the established division of executive and governmental power and the possibility of a significant increase in the power of the Diet. The problems brought up by the discussion of the reform bill in the summer also raised their heads again. The regency proposal, aimed as it was at retaining the established powerbase, was quickly labelled by the socialists as an attempt to ensure the continuance of the country's traditional autocratic style of government. The socialists continued as a result to argue for adoption of their earlier reform bill, despite the fact that its proposed transfer of power on only domestic issues had been largely bypassed by recent developments.

The attitude of the Agrarian Party came to be decisive. In a proposal put before the Diet on 15 November, Santeri Alkio suggested that supreme power in its entirety be transferred to the Diet, thereby giving Finland control of her own affairs and at the same time rebalancing the power structure within government in an effort to calm the country's largely unchecked social unrest, symbolised by the General Strike, which had just then begun. Alkio's proposal was accepted the same day by a large Diet majority of 127-68, made up of Agrarian members, pro-independence non-socialists and the Social Democrats. In line with the aim of calming popular discontent, this move was followed by the rapid approval of the local government and shortened working day legislation which had been the subject of inter-party dispute since July.

The Diet's decision on 15 November to independently reorganise Finland's government structure, which excluded any reference to Russian involvement in foreign or military affairs, clearly signalled Finland's long-term commitment to shedding her political and constitutional ties with Russia.[10] The chaotic nature of the domestic situation, however, meant that despite the gravity of the decision, political and public attention remained very much firmly focused on the more immediate issue of the General Strike.

Developments in the political arena were paralleled and

10. Paasivirta II 1949, pp. 143—7.

influenced by the sharp downturn in Finland's economic involvement in the Russian market which had taken place by the autumn of 1917. The possibility of Finland's using her rouble surplus to purchase forest land and sawmills across the border in East Karelia had been argued as late as May, reflecting the general feeling of the time that the future would not bring any significant changes in Finland's status within the Empire.[11] By the summer, however, Finnish business opinion had begun to take a much more pessimistic view of the future continuity of Finnish-Russian economic relations and of the profit to be made from them.[12] This shift in views and the country's economic focus signalled the breaking of an important link tying the Finnish economy to Russia, and complemented and underwrote the political developments taking place pointing Finland's course towards independence. A large question mark nevertheless remained over the shape of Finland's future foreign trade links. Hopes were mainly centred on re-establishing a reasonable measure of trade with Sweden and the rest of Scandinavia, an official trade representative being sent to Stockholm in October to sound out the prospects for reopening trade ties.[13]

The ending of the General Strike in the wake of the reforms voted through by the Diet failed to bring any real reduction in the level of social tension. The strike had a powerful impact on political opinion and reinforced and deepened political hostilities, both within the political parties and in society as a whole. This growth of mutual suspicion served to undermine and weaken the chances of establishing any significant degree of national unity, and virtually ruled out the possibility of forming a coalition government drawing on representatives from all the political parties, similar to that set up after the March Revolution. The swing towards more traditional policies among the non-socialist parties which took place in direct response to the events of November was also reflected among pro-independence supporters, who, under Svinhufvud, adopted a strong anti-socialist position, and within the Agrarian Party. The strength of this shift in non-

11. *Kauppalehti* 16.5.1917; Hoving I 1947, p. 308.
12. *Kauppalehti* 9.8., 5.9.1917; *Mercator* 31.8.1917.
13. *Kauppalehti* 23.11., 28.11.1917; Paasivirta 1968, p. 38.

socialist opinion was decisive when the Diet came to vote on the choice of a new government programme and administration on 26 November, when Svinhufvud was chosen to head a non-socialist cabinet in favour of the socialist alternative proposal, which would have made Oskari Tokoi Prime Minister.[14]

3. Svinhufvud and the declaration of independence

Following the revolution in Petrograd, the socialists had initially hoped that the new Bolshevik government would issue a manifesto on its position towards Finland similar to that issued by the Provisional authorities earlier in the year in March, thereby providing a framework for future bilateral relations.[15] This, however, would have meant the Finnish authorities indirectly recognising the Bolshevik government, which the non-socialist parties were unwilling to do, and the socialists in any case had their own doubts about the Bolsheviks' chances of maintaining their hold on governmental authority. Political initiative on the independence question shifted from the socialists to their opponents, however, when the new government under Svinhufvud took office. Svinhufvud was particularly keen for the non-socialist parties to grasp the independence challenge, one which he saw as closely linked to Germany. Back at the beginning of September, although then admittedly in a purely private capacity as a supporter of the volunteer movement, he had argued for maintaining secret contacts with Germany. Both he and Hjelt regarded the German military presence in North-East Europe as of central importance to Finland's position and overall security and the general pattern of developments in the Baltic region.

Svinhufvud pressed for the issuing of an additional statement on Finnish sovereignty, this time directed to the wider international community, to complement the Diet vote taken on 15 November. Svinhufvud was undoubtedly only further convinced of the need

14. Paasivirta II 1949, pp. 161—3; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 160—1; Upton I 1980, pp. 339—41.
15. Paasivirta II 1949, p. 175.

to publicly isolate Finland from her earlier ties to Russia after hearing of the discussions which had been held under General Ludendorff at German Headquarters on 26 November through Hjelt, who had been present as a representative of the volunteer movement, regarding a possible armistice between Germany and the Soviet Russian government.[16] Svinhufvud's decision to call a meeting of the leaders of the non-socialist parties on 29 November marked a further step towards his aim of announcing a separate declaration of Finnish independence. Opinion within the non-socialist camp on the issue, however, was split, with Wrede, Kairamo, Ingman and Ståhlberg favouring a cautious approach and only Alkio siding with Svinhufvud, while at the same time calling for involving the socialists in any decision on the issue. Svinhufvud's success in converting the cautious majority to his bolder policy and his refusal to countenance discussions with the socialists reflected the weight of influence Svinhufvud carried in non-socialist opinion and also that of the pro-independence politicians allied with him, as well as the increasing influence of pro-German sentiment.[17]

Caution and a desire to avoid any unnecessary histrionics characterised official moves on the independence question. Svinhufvud was keen to keep control of developments solely in governmental hands. The government's proposal for a new constitution put before the Diet on 4 December made the government's view clear that de facto independence had already in fact been achieved. In his speech accompanying the bill's publication, Svinhufvud declared that the Diet's decision on 15 November making itself the country's supreme authority meant that, as he put it, 'The Finnish people have recognised their right and their duty and taken their fate into their own hands, in the awareness that the country cannot realise her national and cultural potential in any other condition than one of complete freedom. Our longing for freedom, which has gone unanswered for so long, must now be satisfied. The Finnish people must be allowed to stand beside the other peoples of the world as an independent nation ... We do not believe that the free people of Russia or the

16. Ibid., pp. 179—83; Lappalainen 1977, p. 88.
17. Alkio: Päiväkirja 29.11.1917; E. W. Juva II 1961, pp. 77—80; Lappalainen 1977, pp. 82—3.

Russian constituent assembly will want to stand in the way of Finland's wish to join the ranks of the free and independent nations of the world ...'

The government wanted the Diet in particular to agree to a public announcement of the fact of Finland's complete independence. Discussions were put in hand between the government and the various non-socialist parliamentary parties on the issue, but no attempt was made to include any socialist representatives. Angry at being excluded from these talks and being forced to take what amounted to a side seat on the whole issue, despite the Diet decision of 15 November giving the assembly supreme authority on constitutional issues, the socialists decided to propose an initiative of their own.[18] This contained, in line with the party's general argument for cooperation with the Bolshevik authorities which had been advocated since November, the proviso that the question of a final declaration of independence should be fully discussed with the Russian authorities and a special Diet committee be set up to coordinate negotiations with Petrograd.[19]

The Diet thus found itself eventually faced with two separate and competing proposals for a declaration of independence, one socialist and one non-socialist, sharing a similar general content, but worded and argued differently. The simple mathematics of the balance of power within the government necessarily meant that it was the latter of the two, presented by Svinhufvud two days earlier, which was finally approved on 6 December by a majority of 100—88 as the official declaration of Finnish independence.

4. The problem of foreign recognition of independence

Following the declaration of independence, the government was immediately faced with the problem of acquiring foreign recognition for its move. Every effort was made to avoid concentrating this diplomatic effort on any single country or group of countries. The requests for recognition of Finnish independence sent to the German, British, French and American governments were all essentially similar and almost word for word the same as those addressed to the Swedish authorities and those of the other neutral Scandinavian countries. All the requests, regardless of their destination, were forwarded through each country's consular representative in Helsinki or their legations in Petrograd. The government's caution was also reflected in its decision not to use the services of the activist leader Edvard Hjelt in its communications with Berlin and to request Sweden to pass on the Finnish note.[20] These initial notes were followed by the dispatch of separate delegations to each of the countries in question to present a more formal request for recognition.

This cautious diplomacy was dictated by the government's awareness of the tenseness of the international political situation. However much Svinhufvud and other members of his government felt especially sympathetic towards Germany, they were in no position to ignore the West's obvious potential influence on the issue. With Finland's trading relations with Russia deadlocked and the country suffering food and other shortages, the importance of reopening commercial links with the West, moreover, could similarly not be underrated. In sharp contrast to its attitude towards the European powers, however, the Svinhufvud government made no initial attempt to establish diplomatic contact with Russia. Following the departure of Carl Enckell, the Finnish administration's official representative, from Petrograd in the wake of the October Revolution and his return to Helsinki, Finland in fact had lacked any high-ranking representative in the Russian capital. The government wished to avoid any commitment to, or recognition of, the Bolshevik government until the situation in Petrograd showed some signs of becoming less confused.[21]

The government had high hopes of receiving a rapid response to its diplomatic initiative in the West. The government's emphasis on the country's future neutrality would, it was also hoped, act to trigger progress on the difficult question of the evacuation of the Russian forces remaining on Finnish territory. A neutral and

18. Paasivirta II 1949, p. 189; Lappalainen 1977, p. 86; H. Soikkanen 1975, p. 252; Upton I 1980, p. 347.
19. Paasivirta II 1949, pp. 190—1; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 166—7; Kirby 1979 p. 48.
20. Paasivirta 1957, p. 23.
21. Ibid., pp. 26—7; Lappalainen 1977, p. 87.

independent Finland was similarly also seen by the government as likely to be in German interests at a time when the German and Soviet governments had begun armistice negotiations. Fairly rapid Western recognition of Finnish independence would serve both to improve Finland's overall position and to persuade the Russian authorities to accept the fact of Finland's new status.

No rapid positive reaction from the West of the type imagined by the Finnish authorities, however, proved forthcoming or in prospect on the basis of the information the government received from various sources from mid-December onwards. This finally persuaded the government of the need to establish some contact with Russia. The Diet decided on 22 December to appeal directly to the All-Russian National Constituent Assembly, due to meet in the near future, and request recognition of Finland's declaration of independence.[22]

5. Events in Finland in 1917 as seen from abroad

The March Revolution and the formation of the Provisional Government in Petrograd had been greeted with some satisfaction, and in some cases modest enthusiasm, by the Western powers. Hopes that the change in government would bring an improvement in Russia's military capability were also mixed with a sense of relief that the autocratic régime had been replaced by a more acceptable and Western-style liberal Russia. British and French interest was virtually solely focused on the questions of the impact of Russia's upheavals on the progress of the war, to the exclusion of any real concern at the other possible implications of the change of government in Russia, including its potential effect on the status and future of non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Empire. The British and French governments, in fact, lacked any clear policy on this latter issue and, by implication, no real policy on their attitude towards Finland, beyond a very general hope that the Russian authorities would avoid unnecessarily pressuring

22. Paasivirta 1957, p. 29; Polvinen I 1967, p. 168.

minority groups. The limited nature of Western interest with regard to Finland was well reflected in Balfour's reply, in his capacity as British Foreign Secretary, to a parliamentary question put to the government in the House of Commons at the beginning of April concerning the Finnish position, in which he described Finnish opinion as being completely satisfied with the March Manifesto issued by the Provisional authorities.[23]

French press interest in the non-Russian nationality question was mainly restricted to Poland, as part of the legacy of French interest in Poland dating from the various Polish rebellions of the nineteenth century. A fair degree of editorial and news coverage during the spring of 1917 was devoted to the promises of freedom given to the Polish population by the Provisional Government and to the fate of the Posen and Silesian Poles under German occupation, who it was hoped would be removed from the German sphere of influence in the peace negotiations at the end of the war. French press comment on Finland subsequent to the March Manifesto, which was largely based on Russian sources, in line with France's close ties to Russia, was restricted to items on the issuing of the March Manifesto, the forming of the new government under Tokoi and the recall of the Diet.[24] Finland was generally described, in much the same terms as used by Balfour in his parliamentary answer, as a loyal part of the Russian Empire and as satisfied with her degree of autonomy. The Finnish proposal for a major transfer of governmental authority put forward in the summer, coinciding as it did with the major Russian offensive against the Germans in the central part of the Eastern Front, evoked some criticism from the major French papers, which described it as an ill-timed display of lack of loyalty towards the authorities in Petrograd.[25]

Finland was also the subject of some attention by the major British papers in the wake of the March Revolution and the interest

23. See Balfour's statement to the House of Commons on 2.4.1917 (Parliamentary Dabates. House of Commons 1917 Vol. 92, p. 884).
24. On the Polish question, see *Journal des Débats* 26.3., 1.4., 15.4.1917; *Le Figaro* 2.4.1917; *Le Temps* 20.3., 1.4.1917. For Finland, see *Journal des Débats* 22.3., 30.3.1917; *Le Figaro* 26.3.1917; *Le Temps* 21.3., 30.3.1917.
25. *Journal des Débats* 30.7., 4.8.1917; *Le Figaro* 5.8.1917; *Le Temps* 15.7., 23.7., 30.7.1917.

and enthusiasm generated by the emergence of the new liberal régime in Russia. This was in large part a mere continuation of the positive coverage of Finnish affairs which had been established since 1899, when the British press had first expressed its sympathy with the Finnish struggle against Russian attempts to restrict the country's autonomy.[26] No comparable interest in Poland or the Polish cause to that shown by the French press surfaced in its British counterpart. Despite the very restricted nature and amount of news about Finland published in Britain, the British press nevertheless devoted more space to Finnish issues than to those of any other non-Russian nationality along Russia's western border. As a naval power, British concerns embraced the Baltic area as a whole. The re-recognition of Finnish autonomy by the Provisional authorities in the spring of 1917 was therefore seen as a positive development in indirectly acting to reduce the influence of pro-German opinion in Sweden.[27] Although the British press wrote openly and positively about the country's autonomous status, Finnish political moves towards total independence, including the initially abortive reform bill, were significantly less favourably looked upon, largely as a result of a general desire to avoid endangering Russia's alliance with the West. Pro-independence moves tended, in fact, to be seen as linked to the growing expansion of the German sphere of influence in North-West Europe.[28]

Following the October Revolution and the setting-up of the Bolshevik administration, it soon became clear to observers in France that the new Soviet government had no intention of maintaining Russia's alliance with the West. The nascent sense of betrayal that this engendered was only intensified when the news that the Bolsheviks were planning to start armistice negotiations with Germany filtered through to Paris. This latter move was interpreted as only likely to strengthen the hand of France's main enemy. French reaction took the form of a statement on the future direction of French foreign policy by the newly-elected Prime Minister, Clémenceau, issued on 25 November, announcing

26. Paasivirta 1978, pp. 335—6.
27. *The Times* 20.3., 23.3., 26.3.1917; *Manchester Guardian* 19.3., 24.3., 28.3.1917.
28. *The Times* 16.7., 29.8., 17.10.1917; *Manchester Guardian* 26.5., 16.7., 18.7.1917.

France's intention to have no official links with the new Russian government.

While Clémenceau's government necessarily concentrated its main efforts on attempts to restore French morale and improve the national war-effort and thereby push back the German army on the Western Front, some moves were put in hand to evolve a new French policy for Eastern Europe, taking account of the loss of Russia as an ally, and sympathetic towards the separatist ambitions of the non-Russian nationalities within the Russian Empire. Rather than reflecting a sudden favourable shift in French sympathies towards these nationalities, this development pointed to an attempt to exploit these areas in line with France's overall policy of creating a defensive zone in Eeastern Europe against Germany. For its success, the French plan depended on involving Poland and the Ukraine. Contact was established with the Polish group led by Roman Dmovski, opposed to Josef Pilsudsky's Polish volunteer units operating in Austrian Galitsia. French intentions were made clear in the announcement made to the National Assembly by the French Foreign Minister, Pichon, on 27 December to the effect that France's long-term political aim was for 'an independent and undivided Polish state'.[29] France also worked towards encouraging the formation of a national army in the Ukraine to act as a buffer against Germany and at the same time protect France's important economic investments in the area.[30]

Finland also featured in the new Eastern European policy outlined by the French government. Although Clémenceau remained mainly interested in Central and Southern Europe, Pichon appears to have been keen to include Finland in the new anti-German defensive zone France planned for Eastern Europe. While aware of the pro-German sympathies of some sections of Finnish opinion, Pichon was convinced that anti-Bolshevik feelings were strong in Finland. French support for Finnish independence would in any case, Pichon assumed, weaken the influence of this pro-German opinion. Pichon's favourable attitude towards Finland was further reflected in a French Foreign

29. See Pichon's statement made on 27.11.1917 (Annales de la Chambre des Députés. Debats parlamentaires 1917 III, p. 3795).
30. Kosyk 1981, pp. 141—4.

Ministry memorandum of 8 December prepared immediately after the Finnish declaration of independence. Pichon also brought the Finnish question up for discussion at the high-level Allied talks held at Versailles on 23 December. Despite the agreement reached between the British and French leaders at this meeting on spheres of influence in southern Russia, the British proved unwilling to follow the French argument on the need for a positive attitude to Finnish independence. Despite British reluctance, however, the French government remained unswayed in its desire to recognise Finnish independence as and when circumstances allowed, and preferably before Germany did so.[31]

Britain's foreign policy-makers were mainly concerned with avoiding any sudden changes in British relations with Russia. Contact was maintained with those circles of Russian political opinion which had been favourably disposed towards Russia's alliance with the West. The Foreign Office considered the All-Russian National Constituent Assembly as all-important in shaping the future of Russia. While relatively little importance was attached to the Soviet government's long-term role in determining Russia's future, it was generally thought unwise in London to attempt to isolate discussion of the Finnish question from its wider Russian context. The British government, despite its obviously cooler approach to Finnish affairs compared to its French counterpart, was keen nevertheless to make some friendly gesture towards the Finnish administration and offered its help in organising food supplies from the West. The British authorities appear to have assumed that Germany would not make any rapid decision on the question of recognising Finland's declaration of independence and particularly not before the conclusion of the German-Russian negotiations at Brest-Litovsk. The Foreign Office also remained doubtful that the Soviet government would be willing to recognise Finnish independence.[32]

German foreign policy thinking on Eastern Europe in the period

31. K. Hovi 1975, pp. 71—82, 93—7. Also see General Niessel's report to the French War Ministry dated 7.12.1917 (SHAF 6 N 24). For press coverage, see *Le Temps* 11.11., 12.12.1917; *Le Matin* 10.12.1917.
32. Lyytinen 1980, p. 79, 81. See also Balfour's statement in the House of Commons made on 15.1.1918 (Parliamentary Debates. House of Commons 1918 Vol. 101, p. 137).

following the March Revolution was dominated by the question of negotiating a separate peace agreement with Russia which would allow Germany to concentrate her military effort on the struggle along the Western Front. The German leadership outlined an overall policy for the area at the end of April 1917, which included the setting-up of a Polish monarchy under German protection, as had been promised in the autumn of the previous year, and the creation of independent administrations in Lithuania and Courland. Bringing Livonia and Estonia within the German sphere of influence was also proposed.[33] Finland, however, continued to remain outside German plans at this stage.

The future of the Finnish volunteer battalion, which had served on the Eastern Front near Riga before being moved to Libau in March 1917, remained unclear and gave every appearance of becoming even less clear as the prospect of a separate peace between Germany and Russia, in which Finland would remain part of the Russian Empire, came closer. Such a development would effectively prevent the volunteers from returning to Finland. Various solutions to the problem were considered by the German authorities in 1917, including settling the volunteers on demobilisation on farms in East Prussia.[34]

Political developments in Finland in the wake of the March Revolution, and particularly the reinstatement of Finland's autonomy, received favourable coverage in the German press. Adequate and up to date information on Finnish affairs was difficult to come by for German journalists, however, because of the war, and what was available mainly came through Stockholm.[35] The German press' major focus of interest in its coverage of Russia's western border areas indisputably lay with Poland, whose loyalties had been the subject of sharp German-Russian competition since the outbreak of the war, with both countries vying with each other in their promises of future reforms and freedoms. Germany's general interest in Russia's minority nationalities, heightened by the imminent prospect of far-reaching changes in Eastern Europe, naturally extended to Finland. This

33. Ritter III 1964, pp. 482, 506—9.
34. Hubatsch 1956, pp. 100—5.
35. *Frankfurter Zeitung* 19.3., 21.3., 22.3.1917; *Berliner Tageblatt* 22.3.1917.

provided Finnish activists with the opportunity of occasionally getting articles published in the German press. From the late spring of 1917 onwards, these argued more or less directly for the gaining of Finnish independence.[36]

The scope of German coverage of Finnish politics grew considerably during the summer of 1917 at the time of the furore over the reform bill. While German commentators generally sympathised with Finland's desire to extend the limits of her autonomy following earlier Russian attempts to restrict Finnish political freedoms, they were nevertheless somewhat pessimistic about Finland's future against the background of Russia's clear intention of maintaining her strategic position in the northern Baltic. Finland, in fact, was often compared with the Ukraine as an example of 'separatist sentiment' within the Russian Empire.[37]

With the resurgence of German military activity along the Eastern Front in the autumn and the German capture of Riga, Finland gradually came to assume greater significance in the eyes of the German High Command, a fact reflected in the secret arms shipments sanctioned for dispatch to the Finnish volunteer movement. This also contributed to a re-evaluation of the value of the Finnish volunteer battalion and resulted in small groups being selected from within its ranks and sent secretly to Finland to carry out military intelligence-gathering and sabotage operations.[38]

Despite the German army's positive attitude, communicated to the Finnish government at the end of November, towards a possible declaration of independence, the overriding importance of the armistice negotiations begun a little later at Brest-Litovsk with the Soviet government was such that the German authorities proved unwilling to countenance endangering the progress of these talks by pressing the Bolsheviks over granting independence to Finland. When the two sides agreed to a month-long cease-fire on 15 December it was therefore no surprise that the agreement made no mention of Finnish independence or the evacuation of Russian troops from Finnish territory. The German authorities

36. See Samuli Sario's article 'Zur Lage in Finnland' in Deutsche Politik (29.7.1917) and Herman Gummerus' 'Finnlands Kampf für die Unabhängigkeit' in Europäische Staats- und Wirtschafts-Zeitung (30.6.1917).
37. *Frankfurter Zeitung* 21.7.1917; *Berliner Tageblatt* 21.7.1917.
38. Lauerma 1966, pp. 777—9.

tried instead to persuade the Finnish government to start direct negotiations of its own with the Soviet leaders, following the German example.[39]

The March Revolution was also extensively covered in the Swedish press. While the restoration of Finnish autonomy which took place in its wake was universally seen as an important development from Sweden's own point of view, opinions among the various political parties were widely divergent about Finland's political prospects and overall future. A general upswing in Swedish interest in Finnish affairs during the spring of 1917, however, was apparent across the whole political spectrum.

Dagens Nyheter and *Social-Demokraten*, despite or rather because of their political sympathies with the Entente powers, had always found Russia's pre-revolutionary restrictive policies in Finland difficult to accept. The March Revolution appeared to remove this problem and was seen at the same time as bringing the Western powers and Russia closer together to form a more integrated alliance.[40] The moderate right of centre *Svenska Dagbladet*, which had been closely associated with Hammarskjöld's government and supported Swartz's government which had replaced it in the spring of 1917, saw post-revolutionary developments in Finland as likely to ease the pressure on Sweden's international position. Finland and Russia were described as now having the opportunity to establish their bilateral relations on a sound footing based on cooperation and mutual respect. In the longer term, it was hoped that some kind of international guarantee establishing Finland's special position might be forthcoming from the peace conference likely to take place at the end of the war, or some other comparable international meeting.[41]

Aftonbladet, Nya Dagligt Allehanda and *Stockholms Dagblad* all expressed dissatisfaction with the progress of events in Finland, despite the positive developments that had taken place subsequent to the Revolution. All three papers had been sympathetic to the wave of activist opinion which had emerged in Sweden during

39. Nurmio 1957, pp. 18—21, 28—32; Paasivirta 1957, pp. 25, 28.
40. DN 23.3.1917; Soc-Dem 22.3.1917.
41. SvD 25.3.1917.

1915 and had been favourably disposed towards the Finnish volunteer movement. Prior to the announcement of the March Manifesto, *Aftonbladet* warned Finland's politicians to be on their guard against agreeing to partial concessions, as had happened in 1905, and to aim for an internationally-backed solution to the Finnish question.[42] All three papers printed statements by the Stockholm representatives of the volunteer movement at the end of March condemning acceptance of the new post-manifesto status quo in Finland and demanding a radically new approach to the question of guaranteeing the security of Finland's future position.[43]

Although coverage of events in Finland in the Swedish press grew substantially during the spring of 1917, commentators remained cautious in the extent of their political analysis. It had come to be assumed, both within the Swedish government and by the leading Swedish papers, that excessive Swedish comment on the state of Finnish politics could easily rebound against Finnish interests by creating difficulties in Petrograd. The fact that Finland remained to all intents and purposes under Russian occupation forced Swedish observers to be doubtful about the extent of possible future changes in Finland's position and to see these changes as largely dependent on the general development of the international balance of power.[44] Finnish 'separatist' opinion was often closely linked by the liberal and social democratic press with the pro-German lobby.

News of the Finnish reform bill in July 1917 was reported in the Swedish press alongside that of the attempts by the Ukraine to secede from Russia and the German National Assembly's statement favouring a peace settlement. *Aftonbladet*, together with the other Swedish papers which had previously been sympathetic towards the volunteer movement, enthusiastically described the Finnish Diet's decision of 18 July as representing an important step forward towards the country's major aim of independence.[45] The liberal and left-wing press, in the shape of *Dagens Nyheter* and *Social-Demokraten*, took a more cautiously

42. Abl 19.3., 21.3.1917; StD 28.3.1917.
43. Abl 22.3.1917; StD 22.3., 27.3.1917; NDA 22.3.1917.
44. StD 2.5.1817; DN 12.5.1917.
45. Abl 22.7.1917; StD 21.7.1917; NDA 22.7.1917; SvD 21.7., 22.7., 27.7.1917.

optimistic view, stressing the many problems and restrictions imposed on Finland by her political and geographical position.[46]

The October Revolution in Petrograd and the German army's advance into the Baltic provinces during the autumn of 1917 provoked a wide debate in Sweden about the extent of the changes in the overall situation in the northern Baltic and their impact on Sweden's international position. A number of Swedish politicians who had actively supported Swedish activism in 1915 began to demand a reassessment of Sweden's foreign policy strategy. These moves, representing a general right-wing attack on the policy of neutrality advocated by Edén's government, were supported by *Aftonbladet, Nya Dagligt Allehanda* and *Stockholms Dagblad.*

The question of Russia's uncertain internal situation, doubts over the continued existence of the Empire as a political entity and the possible development of Russian-German relations, dominated the increasingly tense Swedish debate surrounding the country's position. It was generally assumed amongst right-wing opinion that Russia was on the decline and entering on a period of gradual disintegration. This also naturally prompted the re-emergence of the Åland Islands question. This was given further momentum following the sensational revelations by the Soviet government of documents showing that the Tsarist authorities had agreed a programme of permanent fortifications for the Islands with France and perhaps the other Western powers in February 1917. News of this provoked a number of Swedish papers to suggest that the Islands should be annexed to Sweden, arguing that this in any case reflected the wishes of the local population.[47]

All this contributed to increased column space being devoted to Finnish affairs, either independently or linked to the Åland Islands issue, in the Swedish press during the late autumn of 1917. *Aftonbladet* made great play of what it described as the 'historical and ethnic obligations' linking Sweden to Finland in an article published on 8 November, while also stressing the importance of improving Sweden's international position in the Baltic. The paper even went so far as to suggest the idea of using Swedish troops to temporarily occupy Finland to protect both countries'

46. DN 21.7.1917; Soc-Dem 21.7.1917.
47. NDA 26.11.1917; StD 27.11., 2.12.1917; SvD 28.11., 30.11.1917.

interests, and hinted that, in compensation, Finland might consider transferring the Åland Islands to Swedish sovereignty.[48]

The November General Strike and its accompanying violence, together with Finland's steadily worsening social conditions, served to strengthen the call in Sweden for sending humanitarian aid to Finland, above all food. Supporters of this move stressed the similarity of some of the problems faced by the two countries, painting a rosy picture of the possibility of an independent Finland closely allied to Sweden. A few hinted at the more distant possibility of Finland's one day being reunited with Sweden, reawakening memories of Sweden's great power past.[49]

Aftonbladet's enthusiasm for the Finnish cause was further reflected in its proposal made on 1 December, nearly a week before Finland's actual declaration of independence, that Sweden should recognise Finnish independence forthwith, a call subsequently taken up in largely similar form by *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* and *Stockholms Dagblad*.[50] Edén's government, supported by a large parliamentary majority, was careful to keep a judicious distance between itself and the views of this vocal, but nevertheless small group sympathetic to the Finnish cause. The Social Democrats and Liberals in particular favoured a cautious and restrained style of foreign policy. *Social-Demokraten* strongly opposed the idea put forward in the pages of *Aftonbladet* at the beginning of December for some form of Swedish intervention in Finland, arguing that any move of this type would seriously undermine Swedish neutrality. It would be foolish to gain sovereignty over the Åland Islands at the cost of sacrificing Swedish neutrality, the paper argued, a view echoed by *Dagens Nyheter* in its condemnation of any acceptance of sovereignty over the Islands in exchange for helping Finland in her hour of need. *Social-Demokraten*, together with the liberal press, nevertheless favoured sending food aid to Finland.[51]

Finland's declaration of independence naturally gave added impetus to the discussion of Finland and Finnish affairs in

48. Abl 8.11.1917.
49. Abl 16.11., 26.11.1917.
50. Abl 1.12.1917; NDA 11.12.1917; StD 13.12.1917.
51. Soc-Dem 7.12., 11.12., 12.12., 13.12., 18.12.1917; DN 10.12.1917; *Forum* 1.12.1917.

Sweden. In line with its overall cautious approach, the Swedish government decided against immediately recognising the Finnish move until the attitude of the major powers, including Russia, became clear. Sweden did not feel herself in a position to recognise Finland's independence alone, as Gustav V made plain to the Finnish government delegation sent to Stockholm to sound out Swedish attitudes on the question on 28 December, and echoed by the Swedish Prime Minister, Edén, in a speech two days later on 30 December.[52] The Swedish government's reserved response was greeted with some bitter comment and dissatisfaction in the Swedish press.[53]

The attitude of the new Soviet government to Finland's declaration of independence was closely linked to its insecure position immediately following the October Revolution. Its influence within Russia was initially restricted to a relatively small area outside Petrograd and Moscow and a few other major cities, and was especially weak in the countryside. Its continued existence was also threatened by White Russian military action and the imminent danger of a German attack south of the Gulf of Finland against Petrograd.

Finland's position was therefore prominent among the Bolshevik government's concerns when it began negotiations with Germany at Brest-Litovsk in December. It was assumed in Petrograd that the Finnish question would emerge at the talks and that an independent Finnish delegation might also take part following Finland's unilateral declaration of independence. The possible attitude of the government in Helsinki, its potential sympathies with Germany and its willingness to adopt a conciliatory approach to Petrograd, were important factors to the new Soviet authorities. Finland represented a significant potential security problem for the government in Petrograd. It is not surprising therefore that Lenin's encouragement to the Finnish socialists to begin a popular uprising and seize power, made in a speech on 5 December at the All-Russian naval congress, was given at the same time as the beginning of the Brest-Litovsk talks. Similar encouragement was

52. Pakaslahti 1937, pp. 27—30. See Edén's speech on 30.12.1917. Also Soc-Dem 31.12.1917.
53. NDA 29.12.1917; Hamilton 1956, p. 193.

also provided by Stalin, the People's Commissar for Minority Nationalities, when he attended the Social Democratic party congress in Helsinki at the end of November.[54]

Svinhufvud's government, however, did not look upon the idea of establishing contact with the ideologically suspect Soviet authorities with any great enthusiasm at the beginning of December 1917. This reluctance was given added weight by Enckell's opinion that it was highly probable that the Bolshevik government would in any event soon collapse.[55] This doubt over the continued existence of the régime in Petrograd and the instability of the internal situation in Russia in general also affected the socialist leaders, who made no attempt to press the Finnish authorities to immediately approach the Soviet government on the question of recognition of Finland's declaration of independence.[56] The view that some move would nevertheless have to be made towards Russia, however, steadily gained ground among the members of the government. By way of a compromise solution, the Diet decided on 22 December to appeal directly to the All-Russian National Constituent Assembly on the question of Russian recognition of Finnish independence, thereby bypassing the contentious issue of Finland's official attitude to the Bolshevik government.

As it became clear that the new government in Petrograd showed all the signs of remaining in office at least for the immediately foreseeable future, the Social Democrats, who up until now had shared a similarly cautious approach to their non-socialist opponents, decided that contact with the authorities in Petrograd would be necessary. The party's executive committee decided on 23 December to send a three-man delegation, made up of Evert Huttunen, Kullervo Manner and Eetu Salin, to Petrograd to meet the Bolshevik leadership to argue the case for a favourable Soviet response to Finland's declaration of independence. During the discussions that entailed, Lenin agreed to the Finnish request in

54. See Lenin's speech to the All-Russian Naval Congress on 5.12.1917 and Stalin's speech at the Finnish Social Democratic Party's conference on 27.11.1917. Also, The Bolshevik Revolution 1917—1918, p. 284; 'Kansalaissota dokumentteina I, pp. 288—91; Lenin: Teokset 35, p. 290.
55. Paasivirta 1957, p. 26.
56. See K. H. Wiik's memorandum 'Miten Suomen itsenäisyys saatiin tunnustetuksi' (TA 327 47:471 "1917").

principle on 29 December. Trotsky, in his capacity as Bolshevik Foreign Minister, emphasised, however, that Finland would have to address an official request to the government in Petrograd before official recognition would be possible.[57]

Finland's failure to gain rapid Western recognition of her independence served to dampen the government's faith in the wisdom of directing the entire weight of the country's diplomatic effort westwards. It also soon became clear that the German government, which, it had been hoped in Helsinki, would be favourable to the Finnish request, would only be willing to recognise Finnish independence after the Soviet government had done so. Sweden's similar attitude had also by now become known to Helsinki.[58] The Finnish government was left with little option but to rethink its initial refusal to present a formal request to Petrograd, especially after the news of the departure of the socialist delegation to the Russian capital leaked out.

The government nevertheless continued its cautious approach towards the Soviet authorities after deciding to sound out the latters' attitude on the question. Only after Enckell and K. G. Idman had established contact with the government in Petrograd and received a favourable response to their enquiries, did Svinhufvud, together with a group of advisors, travel to Petrograd to present the Russian authorities with an official request for Bolshevik recognition of Finnish independence. This was agreed to by the Bolshevik government on 31 December and approved by the party's executive central committee on 4 January 1918.

The background factors which led to the all-important Soviet decision to recognise Finnish independence are difficult to pin down with any certainty.[59] The tense internal situation in Russia and the Bolshevik government's difficult position, the party's declared positive ideological attitude to minority nationalities and the earlier promises given to the Finns, all contributed to the decision. The Bolshevik's need to consolidate their overall position and safeguard the country's north-western border

57. Paasivirta 1957, p. 32.
58. Nurmio 1957, pp. 28—33; Hbl 28.12.1917.
59. Paasivirta 1949A, pp. 460—1; Paasivirta 1957, pp. 121—3; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 155—60, 181—3, 191—3; Lappalainen 1977, p. 89; Upton I 1980, pp. 358—9.

obviously also weighed heavily. Although no other country had agreed to recognise Finland's independence by the end of December, the Bolshevik authorities were no doubt aware of the Finnish government's various attempts to persuade the Western powers to do so and the willingness of some of these to recognise Finland as and when the Soviet government made a similar decision.

It must also be remembered that no other non-Russian nationality within the Empire of the time represented such a clearly-defined geographical and ethnic entity as Finland, a fact backed up by the country's century-long period of autonomy. Many prominent Bolshevik figures also had personal experience of Finland as a result of their stays in Finland and their contacts with other groups opposed to the Tsarist authorities prior to the Revolution.

The ultimate nature of the new government in Helsinki and its likely future attitudes towards a Soviet state remained somewhat unclear to the new Petrograd administration. The Bolshevik analysis of the situation in Finland appears to have concluded that independence was supported by all political groups in Finland to a greater or lesser extent, a fact reflected in the Diet's appeal made to the All-Russian National Constituent Assembly, the discussions the socialist delegation had had in Petrograd and the official request presented by the Finnish government. The additional fact that Lenin, together with the other major Bolshevik leaders, had since the spring of 1917 publicly advocated their support for national self-determination served to give the Soviet government relatively little room for manoeuvre on the issue by December 1917. Taken together, the ideological background and the immediate political situation made the final Bolshevik decision the most probable.

The Soviet decision to recognise Finnish independence was also linked to the Bolshevik vision of future political and ideological developments, including Lenin's own theory developed earlier in the war, which visualised Russia's minority nationalities going through a temporary period of independence before finally returning to the Russian fold as revolution spread outside Russia's national borders. In making his decision as head of the Soviet state to accept Finland's declaration of independence, however, Lenin left himself open to criticism from within the Bolshevik party. His

defence of the government's move against the first wave of criticism at the beginning of January and subsequent ones leaned heavily on the theory of worldwide revolution and the associated idea of the eventual return of the minority nationalities to Mother Russia.

A similar line of argument was also later used by Stalin in his defence of Lenin and the need for a peace treaty against those opposed to its terms, following the signing of the Brest-Litovsk agreement between Russia and Germany at the beginning of March, when the Soviet government was forced to relinquish the Baltic provinces, the Ukraine and part of the Caucasus. In an attempt to lighten the pessimistic mood which followed the treaty during March and April, Stalin listed the national groups, which included Finland, which he assumed would eventually be reunited with Russia.[60] It cannot be ignored, however, that there was a distinct difference in the tone and attitude within Russia towards the whole question of Finnish independence between the Soviet government and the Bolshevik party itself, and between the Russian views communicated at an official level and those aired within the party.

By deciding to recognise Finnish independence on 31 December 1917, the Soviet government also removed the major obstacle standing in the way of recognition for a number of other countries. The Soviet decision alone proved sufficient for the Swedish authorities, who followed the Russian lead and recognised Finland on 4 January. Since the Soviet government's decision was only finally approved by the executive central committee on 4 January, by deciding not to wait for this formality Sweden became the first country to officially recognise Finnish independence, albeit after provisional Soviet recognition.

Unlike the Swedes, the German authorities waited for official confirmation from Petrograd of the Russian decision to reach Berlin, which it did on 6 January, before deciding to recognise Finland's new status. This caution on the part of the German government was linked to the fact that the peace negotiations with the Soviet authorities had reached a critical point following their postponement for ten days on 26 December. France, as the first of

60. Stalin: Teokset IV, p. 75.

the Western powers, made her decision before the Germans, announcing her recognition virtually simultaneously with Sweden on 4 January. This in turn caused the German government when it came to announce German recognition two days later to add that Germany's actual decision had, in fact, been taken on 4 January, the same day as the French one.[61]

This relatively rapid recognition of Finnish independence by Russia, Sweden, France and Germany served to show the progress the Finnish cause had made on the European scene in the matter of only a few weeks. Finland's independent status had been recognised by the successors to the Tsarist authorities, two representatives of the two major alliances involved in the war, and a Scandinavian neutral. Of the major powers, only Britain refused to grant recognition until the opinion of the All-Russian National Constituent Assembly was known.

61. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 33—4.

IV Finland in the Final Stages of the War

The recognition by Soviet Russia and a number of Western countries of Finland's declaration of independence was the cause of some considerable satisfaction in Helsinki, not only to the government but also to the Diet and a wide spectrum of political opinion, following the weeks of uncertainty which had intervened between the government's statement and its first foreign recognition. Despite the general hostility felt among non-socialist opinion towards the Soviet government, the Bolsheviks as a whole, and the Western powers and Sweden as well, there was no disguising the enthusiasm and relief, and some surprise, felt at the news of the recognition of Finland's new status by these powers.

The main focus of attention naturally centred on the Soviet government's decision. A number of non-socialist commentators were surprised that diplomatic recognition had finally proved more rapidly forthcoming from Finland's eastern neighbour than from the West, and that the shedding of the country's constitutional ties with Russia appeared to have taken place so painlessly.[1] Russia was described by some papers as having 'paid her debt' to Finland by granting her her independence. Whilst there was no let-up in the ideological criticism of Bolshevism as an unwelcome social and political phenomenon, commentators found it difficult not to find some grudging words of gratitude for the Soviet authorities. Hopes were also expressed that the future

1. UP 5.1., 8.1.1918.

would bring good relations between the two countries.[2] Those papers which had been most closely associated with the independence cause, including *Uusi Päivä*, nevertheless did not forget to underline Germany's past role in encouraging Finnish moves towards independence, describing Germany as a country which had always supported the interests of the small countries of Europe.[3]

The significance and importance of the wide recognition that the Finnish declaration of independence had achieved was also recognised by the socialist press. Having been effectively excluded from the preparations surrounding the declaration, the socialists now took this opportunity to emphasise their role in establishing the contact with the Soviet authorities which had led to Russian recognition.[4] The socialist papers, in fact, were not slow to claim that the all-important agreement with Russia had been achieved as a direct result of following the policy of negotiated agreement which the socialists had advocated in the Diet on 6 December, in opposition to the uncompromising stance adopted by the Svinhufvud government. The overall tone of socialist comment was optimistic. Internationally, the favourable developments at the Russo-German talks at Brest-Litovsk were seen as strengthening the likelihood of a general European-wide peace agreement, while on the domestic front the country's newly-won independence was seen as offering real potential for a major reform of domestic social injustices and a more open struggle against the capitalist system.[5]

Following the achievement of at least partial international recognition for its declaration of independence, the government now set about the job of appointing Finland's first official diplomatic representatives abroad. Alexis Gripenberg and Edvard Hjelt were appointed as temporary chargés d'affaires, in Stockholm and Berlin respectively, in early January. Carl Enckell was appointed to Petrograd on 23 January to take charge of negotiations with the Soviet government on what were described as 'questions

2. US 6.1.1918; HS 6.1.1918; SvT 7.1.1918; Hbl 6.1.1918.
3. UP 8.1.1918.
4. *Kansan Lehti* 3.1.1918; *Sosialidemokraatti* 10.1.1918; *Kansan Tahto* 4.1.1918.
5. *Työmies* 11.1., 20.1.1918; *Sosialisti* 7.1.1918; *Kansan Tahto* 7.1.1918; *Savon Työmies* 8.1.1918.

relating to the dissolution of Finland's constitutional ties with Russia'.[6] A new government department to handle foreign affairs, the forerunner of the later Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had been established on 10 January. Disagreements about the overall shape of future foreign policy, despite the decision announced to the Diet on 8 January that the government was committed to a neutral foreign policy, served to slow down the early work of the new department. The idea of neutrality ran counter to the views of a number of leading government figures, who advocated close links with Germany as the best way to ensure the country's future security and retain some say in the fate of the volunteer battalion. This conflict of ideas also contributed to the delay which ensued in the naming of a senator responsible for foreign affairs, and meant in practice that Svinhufvud, in his capacity as chairman of the Senate, retained control over foreign affairs questions.[7]

Finland's declaration of independence and its recognition abroad alone, however, did not bring the country immediate and complete national sovereignty at a time when a significant number of Russian troops remained on Finnish soil. Although the overall size of the Russian military presence had significantly fallen from its peak of some 100,000 men reached in August and September 1917 as a result of the Provisional Government's desire to be able to repulse any possible German landing along Finland's southern coastline, some 40,000 men nevertheless remained by the latter half of January 1918, a cause for some understandable disquiet on the part of the Finnish government.[8] The primary importance of resolving this problem was recognised and discussed in non-socialist circles immediately following the news of the first foreign acceptance of Finland's new status. While not blind to the problem, socialist opinion tended to regard the whole question of any evacuation of Russian troops as one ultimately best left alone as long as the Brest-Litovsk negotiations remained unresolved. Convinced as they were of the central importance of maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet government, the socialists argued that Finland should be willing to contribute to the defence

6. Paasivirta 1968, pp. 44—5.
7. Ibid., pp. 41—2.
8. Rauanheimo 1950, p. 167; Lappalainen 1977, p. 99.

of Petrograd against any possible German attack.[9]

The government's second major foreign policy problem revolved around the country's steadily worsening economic isolation, which had set in in earnest following the virtual collapse of trading relations with Russia in the latter half of 1917. The continued severance of trading links with both Germany and the Western allies, Finland's other major trading partners, also presented major problems. Contacts with Sweden, Finland's only other remaining significant partner abroad, had been somewhat improved with the dispatch to Stockholm, in the late autumn of the previous year, of a number of trading agents to supplement the work of the official commercial attaché who had taken up office in October.[10]

Hopes for an improvement in the situation were initially pinned on the peace negotiations then taking place between the Soviet and German governments, which, if successful, held out the opportunity of opening up the Baltic to trade. A Finnish trade delegation was sent to the Ukraine in mid-January following the latter's signing of a separate peace with Germany, in the hope of negotiating an agreement with the Kiev government giving Finland much-needed access to Ukrainian foodstuffs in return for exports of Finnish industrial goods.[11]

The business community hoped that Finland would be able to benefit from her non-combatant status in the war. As and when normal trading relations were re-established, it was hoped that Finnish industry would be able to exploit her large reserves of sawn timber accumulated over the war years in the boom conditions likely to be generated by the first flush of post-war reconstruction.[12]

1. Towards civil war

A combination of circumstances made Finland both the first new independent state to be born out of the First World War and the first country outside Russia to be drawn by its own internal social

9. Paasivirta 1957, p. 46; *Työmies* 26.1.1918.
10. Hbl 2.12.1917.
11. *Mercator* 18.1., 25.1.1918.
12. *Kauppalehti* 23.11., 28.11.1917; Hbl 28.11.1917.

tensions into the whirlwind of civil war. Finnish society had gone through a number of rapid changes during the course of 1917, virtually all of which, to some extent or another, had led to a deepening and consolidation of the schism between Right and Left, a development which had prevented the emergence of any real spirit of social or political compromise. The indecision and argument surrounding the question of supreme governmental power had resulted in the country being deprived of adequate internal policing capable of maintaining social order for the majority of 1917. The state of limbo that had resulted had allowed the pent-up forces within society to range relatively freely and uncontrolled.

The view that what was at stake was little less than the preservation of the entire existing social fabric had spread in non-socialist circles during the latter months of 1917. Any demands for reform had increasingly come to be seen in this camp as direct threats to the continued existence of society in its familiar form and the security of the non-working classes. Reform and social change came to be looked upon as synonymous with a policy of dangerous political concession and one which could only lead to renewed social ferment.[13] Society, for all its injustices and imperfections, had to be defended against revolutionary anarchy, it was argued. The labour movement, with the memory of the revolutionary events of 1905 still fresh in its mind and the example of the October Revolution even fresher, found it difficult to disengage itself from the magic-like aura associated with mass popular action. Socialist leaders were also faced with increasing difficulties in maintaining their authority within the ranks of the labour movement itself. As the year wore on, these problems only worsened, while the more established problems of social insecurity and low living standards among the working class were compounded during the latter half of 1917 by steadily deepening mass unemployment, growing inflation and increasingly severe food shortages.[14]

At the other end of the political spectrum, the General Strike in November and the murders of a number of non-socialist figures

13. Paasivirta 1957, p. 63.
14. Kirby 1979, p. 46.

which took place in its wake, coupled with the revolution in Russia, contributed to a dangerous upswing in suspicion and fear of all things socialist and of the labour movement's ultimate loyalty to the Finnish cause. For the labour movement, both leadership and membership, the sudden ending of the General Strike had been an unwelcome defeat, signalling what appeared to be a major setback to the Left's influence in society. The movement's leaders, in particular, lost some of their earlier confidence in their ability to shape the country's future. The movement's view of its opponents as purely reactionary and committed to opposing socialism in any form intensified, undermining the position of those within the Social Democratic party supporting parliamentary action, while at the same time strengthening that of those calling for open class conflict. The end of 1917 saw a small group of left-wing trade unionists with close links to radical circles in Petrograd going back to 1910 assume a growing role on the Left.[15]

The approval by the Diet on 12 January 1918, in the face of left-wing opposition, of a government proposal, prompted by the activities of the Red Guard militia set up with the approval of the Social Democrats and the trade union leadership, for the establishment of a new police force and army represented an attempt by the government to regain control over the worsening social situation and civil unrest.[16] In practice, however, it came to act very much as a double-edged weapon against social disorder by uniting the labour movement in a concerted defence of its position. It also indirectly gave added impetus to the attempts of the more revolutionary-minded elements within the Social Democrats to gain control of the party. A shift in power in favour of the latter did in fact take place within the party leadership from mid-January onwards. This take-over was rapidly followed by the beginning of preparations for a nationwide uprising at the end of January. The decision by the Left to embark on a course of revolutionary action was, it should be emphasised, the result first and foremost of social and political developments within Finland, rather than of those in

15. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 57—61, 67; Paasivirta 1967, p. 12: Lappalainen 1977, pp. 103—6; Lappalainen I 1981, pp. 15—20; Upton I 1980, pp. 437—42.
16. Paasivirta 1957, p. 66; Lappalainen 1977, p. 104; Kirby 1979, p. 48.

Russia, although events in Russia and particularly the October Revolution obviously served to heighten revolutionary enthusiasm and convince those on the Left of the wisdom of such a move.

Parallel to these developments in the socialist camp, General Mannerheim, acting at the request of the government, had begun military preparations designed to safeguard the maintenance of public order and allow the carrying-out of local cleaning-up operations to give his White forces a secure operational base. Mannerheim planned to establish his headquarters in southern Ostrobothnia, stripping the scattered Russian troops in the area of their arms when the opportunity arose. These and other plans, however, were put in a radically different light following the self-styled occupation of Viipuri in South-East Finland by Civil Guard units on 22 January in a move to isolate the local Red Guards and the Russian troops stationed in the town. This action made Viipuri an immediate focus of national attention and indirectly accelerated the outbreak of open social conflict elsewhere in the country. The trade unions in the area responded by declaring a general strike. The situation was temporarily defused by the local Russian troops who, finding themselves cut off from Petrograd, presented the occupying Civil Guards with an ultimatum to withdraw, which the latter complied with.[17]

The sudden emergence of Viipuri as a dangerous flash-point took Mannerheim largely by surprise, forcing him to bring forward the start of his own operations in southern Ostrobothnia against the wishes of Svinhufvud in Helsinki, who had asked him to postpone action as long as possible. The small scattered Russian garrison detachments in the area were stripped of their arms on Mannerheim's orders on the night of 27—28 January by Civil Guard units.[18] This move exactly coincided with a coup d'état set in motion in Helsinki by radical elements of the labour movement, although purely by chance, as neither Mannerheim nor the revolutionary leaders in the South had any definite forewarning of each other's plans. Of all those involved, it was Svinhufvud who was caught most unprepared by the course of developments, both

17. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 77—8; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 217—20; Lappalainen 1977, pp. 110—14, 118—9; Lappalainen I 1981, pp. 24—6.
18. J. O. Hannula 1956, p. 58; Lappalainen 1977, p. 120.

by the change decided on by Mannerheim in the timetable of operations in southern Ostrobothnia and the Left's surprise coup in the capital, about which he had had only the most general suspicions.[19]

The scale of the chain of events which unfurled after 28 January came as something of a surprise to virtually everybody, the White forces under Mannerheim and their backers in Helsinki, the leaders of the uprising in Helsinki, as well as the more moderate leaders of the labour movement in the capital and the provinces, who suddenly found power had slipped irretrievably out of their hands. Events were to show that developments had in fact gone much further than either side knew or supposed: the country was on the brink of national civil war.[20]

2. Red versus White

Contact had been established by one of the groups within the radical wing of the labour movement responsible for the decision to attempt a coup d'état in Helsinki, prior to its actually taking place on 28 January, with circles in Petrograd in an attempt to secure arms supplies for the uprising. The fact that weapons proved forthcoming points to those who approved the shipment as having had some forewarning of what was planned in Helsinki.[21] While no one in Petrograd could have been under any illusion that arms alone would guarantee the success of an uprising in Finland, it was clearly realised that arms were a necessity if it was to have any chance of getting off the ground. A revolt in Finland would also help to relieve some of the pressure on the new Soviet government.

Following the successful disarming of Russian troops in southern Ostrobothnia, Mannerheim placed the Civil Guards under his command in defensive positions to await further developments. This decision was largely forced on him by his shortage of manpower and the need to secure his base in Ostrobothnia,

19. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 77—8; Lappalainen 1977, pp. 118—26.
20. Paasivirta, 1957, p. 80.
21. Polvinen I 1967, p. 208; Lappalainen I 1981, pp. 52—3.

particularly on his northern flank. Oulu and Tornio were occupied to ensure a secure line of communications across the border to Sweden. A number of Civil Guard units, however, acting against Mannerheim's instructions, decided on their own initiative to advance southwards, fanning out from the important rail junctions at Haapamäki and Pieksämäki in central Finland, rapidly establishing positions to the south of Vilppula and Mikkeli. Civil Guard units operating in Karelia, similarly acting on their own initiative, established a bridge-head to the south of the river Vuoksi. Gaining contact with these far-flung units proved difficult for Mannerheim operating from his headquarters in Ostrobothnia.[22]

Although having sanctioned the uprising in Helsinki, the labour movement's revolutionary leadership actually possessed little control over events in the early stages and, together with the movement as a whole, were to all intents and purposes swept along in the tide of events following the lead given by those in the capital. The aim of the Red leadership centred on radically rewriting the balance of power which had been established in Finland as a result of the parliamentary elections held in the autumn of 1917 and the developments which had followed in their wake. The Left's plan for a future form of government for Finland, giving a central role to the Diet, was only published in February and clearly reflected a conviction that the labour movement would be likely to enjoy the support of the majority of the population. The document did, however, contain the important proviso that 'there shall be no restriction on the means to be used... should reactionary forces (again) threaten the country.'[23] The social reforms proposed in the socialist programme were decidedly more social democratic in nature than revolutionary or socialist, nor did they show much similarity to those favoured in the radical demands espoused by Bolshevik ideology.[24] The reforms called for, in fact, were largely ones which had already been voiced before the beginning of the Civil War from within the labour

22. J. O. Hannula 1956, p. 58; Hersalo I 1966, pp. 483—9, 522, 524; Upton I 1980, pp. 511—16.
23. Holmberg 1943, p. 110; Paasivirta 1957, pp. 84—5; Upton I 1981, pp. 217—21.
24. H. Soikkanen 1975, pp. 273—6; Upton II 1981, pp. 162—6, 214—7, 222—3.

movement.

Lacking any clear idea of what the reception of the Helsinki insurrection might be throughout the country as a whole, even among the working class, the Red leadership appears to have optimistically assumed that its move would somehow inevitably trigger a mass revolutionary landslide, leading to the installation of a revolutionary government. In practice, however, the leadership did not possess any clearly — formulated military strategy about how this was to be achieved. The sudden and unexpected appearance of consolidated opposition to their aims, in the form of Civil Guard forces advancing southwards, forced the Red leaders to hastily improvise defensive positions as far north as was practical, along a line dictated by the rail connections between Pori, Tampere, Riihimäki, Viipuri and Petrograd. With the gravitation of the frontline towards an axis running from the north of Pori through Vilppula eastwards to Mäntyharju and south-east to the Vuoksi, the ground was laid for the development of a trench war style of conflict in those areas where the opposing forces were most firmly established, along the railway lines and major roads.

Mannerheim issued a statement addressed to the Russian forces still remaining in the country on 29 January, appealing for their non-interference in the internal struggle between Red and White forces.[25] The Russian response to events, however, was somewhat uncoordinated. The 22 Army Corps initially instructed the forces under its command to withdraw from western Finland in the direction of Viipuri, where the headquarters staff were based, and the Karelian Isthmus. This was soon counter-ordered by the revolutionary leadership of the Russian Soldiers' Soviet in Helsinki, which instructed Russian forces to remain where they were and be prepared to resist any attempts by the Civil Guards to strip them of their arms, as had taken place in southern Ostrobothnia. This latter order reflected a desire both to continue protecting Russian military interests and to show solidarity with the revolutionary cause in Helsinki. The situation was further complicated by the official orders issued between 5 and 11 February allowing for the withdrawal of conscripts drafted between 1904 and 1914, a move which accelerated the pattern of

25. Paasivirta 1957, p. 78.

progressive Russian withdrawal which had been put in hand in Finland from December 1917 onwards.[26]

A large number of Russian weapons and other equipment fell into the hands of the Red forces in the early days of the Civil War following the beginning of the Russian withdrawal. With the exception of a single unit which appeared on the front in the Vilppula-Ruovesi area in early February, and a Lettish unit operating further eastwards in the area around Mäntyharju somewhat later, however, no Russian units consistently fought alongside Red forces. The Red leadership did have some access to Russian military advisers, but it seems doubtful whether their operational advice had any significant impact on the overall progress of hostilities, largely because of the primitive nature of the Red Guards' military organisation and its inability to respond to the demands of mobile warfare. Some Russian specialists were nevertheless recruited by Red forces to train and direct artillery crews.[27]

Both sides in the struggle were hampered by their lack of military experience and the fact that their forces were made up of hastily-formed units. Action along the front on both sides was in large measure restricted to a small proportion of the total number of men involved. When the flow of volunteers on the Red side began to dry up, the Red leadership turned to the trade unions to act as temporary draft boards to provide the additional manpower needed. This method recommended itself as it served to ensure a fair degree of political reliability among the new recruits. It only proved effective, however, in urban areas and other centres of population where the option of joining the Red Guards provided an attractive alternative to unemployment and poverty.[28] Recruitment among the tenant farmer and rural landless populations operated against a substantially different background. Decisions to join the Red Guard in these areas were often made in the face of the silent opposition wielded by the deadweight of traditional conservative rural opinion and the unspoken threat of

26. Ibid., pp. 124—6.
27. On the part played by the Russians on the Red side, see Paasivirta 1957, pp. 126—8; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 228—39; Lappalainen I 1981, pp. 23—4, 78, 84, 131, 166—8.
28. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 173—4; Lappalainen I 1981, pp. 157—63.

possible future reprisals. This, together with the fact that revolutionary sympathies were at their strongest in urban areas, led to the composition of the Red Guards being distinctly balanced in favour of the urban proletariat against a smaller number drawn from the rural poor.[29]

From the very beginning of the conflict, the White army was able to draw on a reserve of professional officers and other ranks with varying degrees of military training. This group was substantially reinforced at the end of February with the return from Germany of the Jäger volunteer unit, numbering some 1,200 men. The White leadership was therefore relatively well provided with the potential to gradually develop its military infrastructure and adapt its forces to the demands of mobile warfare. Conscription was introduced in the latter half of February in areas under White control when voluntary recruitment began to fail to meet manpower requirements. Those elements known or suspected of socialist sympathies were carefully weeded out. Prior to being deployed, conscripts went through a brief military training programme coordinated by Jäger volunteers.[30]

Administrative power on the Red side in the conflict was wielded by a body known as the People's Delegation. Lower down the administrative hierarchy, progress proved slow in developing a serviceable infrastructure to replace the earlier pattern of local government in Red-occupied areas. The socialist leadership had little time in the midst of the Civil War to outline any overall programme for the future organisation of the country's commerce or industry. The leadership's energies were virtually solely concentrated on keeping industry and agriculture in production and minimising the inevitable dislocations caused by the hostilities.[31]

Following the early events of the conflict concentrated in southern Ostrobothnia, hostilities grew dramatically and spread along wide areas of the front which developed between Red and

29. Estimates of the exact proportions of rural and urban recruits are complicated by the fact that many of the rural landless described themselves, despite their social origins, as working class as a result of their previous employment in the Russian-sponsored fortification programme.
30. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 184—8; O. Manninen 1974, pp. 92—6, 109—14.
31. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 84, 87—9.

White forces in southern Finland. The fact that advancing White forces met purely Finnish resistance with only the barest smattering of a Russian presence caused some surprise among Civil Guard units, although this had been predicted by Mannerheim and his headquarters staff. In their public pronouncements, however, the Whites glossed over this fact. In addition to underlining their task of putting down the Red-inspired revolt and returning the rule of law to southern Finland, they also emphasised the struggle's wider ideological significance. It came increasingly in fact to be referred to as a 'war of liberation' in White circles, particularly in the White stronghold of Ostrobothnia, following the practice introduced by the German-trained volunteers, with the Russians being identified as the White's main and ultimate enemy.

The term 'war of liberation' spread significantly during the latter stages of the conflict until it came to occupy a prominent position in White propaganda, despite the fact that by this stage the role taken by Russian forces had become minimal, as had the overall Russian influence on events in Finland. This was largely a reflection of a clear White desire to give the struggle in its decisive final stages the mark of being one directed against Russian oppression and part, in a wider perspective, of the international struggle against the spread of Bolshevism. By inference therefore, the struggle came to be portrayed in White ideological rhetoric in almost crusade-like terms, as one aimed at purging the Finnish people of the curse of socialism.[32] The Whites' emphasis on describing the Civil War as one of liberation gained added momentum following the arrival of German troops to assist White forces at the beginning of April. Out of the tens of thousands fighting on the Red side, however, the combined White Finnish and German forces were opposed by what probably amounted to only some 150 Russians. The White picture of the Reds as traitors and betrayers of Finnish independence, however, stuck and deepened.[33]

Compared to the Reds, the White forces had the important advantage from the very beginning of the struggle that they were

32. T. Manninen 1982, pp. 155—60, 178—9.
33. Ibid., pp. 101, 190—1, 194—8, 222—3.

able to operate in the areas under their control with the full back-up support of the country's official administrative infrastructure. Added to this, they also had an important edge in military organisation, with a leadership made up of trained and often experienced officers capable of adapting to new demands as they arose, and which, as the struggle developed, took on many of the traits of a true professional army.

The general operational potential of both the Red and White forces was nevertheless hampered by the fact that both the areas under their respective controls lacked internal political uniformity. Taking the results of the elections of autumn 1917 as a yardstick, neither side enjoyed more than a generous 50% of the support of the local population in the spring of 1918.

3. The international and domestic implications of the Civil War

Neither side in the Civil War was able to ignore the need to attract foreign backing for their struggle. Both White and Red forces found themselves faced by a similar problem, however, in the shape of the general lack of Finnish experience in the diplomatic field.

Some form of contact with Sweden was considered important by the revolutionary administration in order to prevent the Left becoming completely cut off from the West and to maintain trading ties with Finland's major trading partners in Western Europe. The movement's various attempts to establish ties with Sweden and further afield with the United States proved totally futile. Isolation from the West indirectly increased the Left's links with and dependence on Russia. The Soviet government soon emerged, therefore, as a central factor in the Left's contacts abroad. Negotiations between the Red authorities and the Bolshevik government were held in Petrograd at the end of February to clarify political relations between Soviet Russia and Finland, or that part of Finland under Red control, negotiations which the socialists hoped would strengthen their disputed political status.

An agreement between what was referred to as the Finnish Socialist Workers' Republic and Soviet Russia was signed on 1 March. Among its clauses, the Red authorities agreed to cede the

area around Ino on the Karelian Isthmus to Russia and guarantee to ensure Russian telegraph links to Sweden through Finland, reflecting the importance Russia attached to Finland as a line of contact between Petrograd and the West. In line with the spirit of internationalist revolutionary thinking of the time, the agreement also allowed the citizens of both countries the right to gain citizenship of the other country if they wished.[34] Despite the socialist leaders' clear desire to be seen to be acting as independently of the Russians as possible, the Soviet side undoubtedly carried the major influence in the negotiations. The potential of the socialists to adopt an independent position in Petrograd was, in the final analysis, limited by their isolation from the West and the instability and inadequacy of their control over the territory they occupied within Finland itself.

Following their occupation of Oulu and Tornio, the White forces were able to open up a land link with Sweden at the beginning of February. Overall communications between Vaasa, the temporary home of the official government, and the outside world, however, were relatively poor given the geographical distances involved and the slowness and inflexibility of the means available. The government's lack of its full complement of members and the absence of Svinhufvud, who had been unable to move to Vaasa, also further complicated the White authorities' handling of foreign affairs. Disagreements, sometimes amounting to open distrust, between the Vaasa government and Mannerheim's headquarters staff over foreign relations issues were also not uncommon.

The Vaasa authorities did have access, however, to the official Finnish diplomatic legations established in mid-January in Stockholm and Berlin. Particular difficulties were caused by the activities of Finnish activists abroad, especially in Sweden. Having supported the independence cause for some considerable time, often since the beginning of the war, activist figures often tended to assume that they had a natural right to a say in the country's affairs. The inevitable result was that much of the diplomacy carried out in the name of the White authorities lacked coordination and often went beyond the wishes and instructions of

34. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 97—8; Polvinen I 1967, pp. 246—50.

the Vaasa government.[35] Finland's representatives in Berlin and Stockholm, Edvard Hjelt and Alexis Gripenberg, both members of the older generation of non-socialist politicians, acted relatively independently of Vaasa in directing the thrust of White diplomacy, often presenting their younger colleagues back home with little more than faits accomplis. Germany, motivated by a desire to develop Finland as a base from which to follow British moves in Murmansk and keep a check on events in Petrograd, was also not slow to use its powers of influence on Finnish affairs.[36]

In the early days of the struggle the White leadership made some effort to recruit volunteers from Sweden and acquire arms from both Sweden and Germany. As time went on, however, the Vaasa authorities increasingly came to abandon the style of neutral foreign policy which had been adopted in the immediate post-independence period. This was reflected in a clear shift during February towards closer contacts with Germany. This was undoubtedly linked to the impressive success of the German army's rapid advance along virtually the entire length of the Eastern Front following the breakdown of the negotiations at Brest-Litovsk and which was only halted by the peace agreement signed on 3 March, which ceded large areas in the East to Germany and brought an extensive eastward spread of German power and influence. Soon after the final signing of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the Vaasa government itself signed two agreements with the Germans in Berlin on 7 March, laying the groundwork for the arrival of German troops in Finland and the development of bilateral trade relations. The latter of these agreements included a secret understanding giving Germany virtual control over Finland's entire foreign trade and tying Finland securely into the German sphere of economic influence.[37]

The arrival of German troops to reinforce White forces took place at the beginning of April with the landing of a division commanded by General von der Goltz at Hanko on the southern coast. This was quickly followed by a rapid advance on Helsinki which, together with the capture of Tampere by White units at about the same time, signalled a major turning-point in the

35. Tuompo 1938, 34—7, 46—8; Paasivirta 1957, p. 104.
36. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 104—5, 112—3; Rautkallio 1977, p. 90.
37. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 113—5; Rautkallio 1977, pp. 132—4.

struggle. The German landing at Hanko effectively broke the Red's hold on western Finland and served to accelerate the pace of White success, which had already begun in any case to outmatch that of their Red opponents. German troops occupied Helsinki and Hämeenlinna to the north, while further east White forces took Viipuri at the end of April. Following their withdrawal from western Finland, Russian troops had halted and taken up temporary positions on the Karelian Isthmus to ensure the protection of Petrograd. Viipuri and its surroundings remained of strategic importance to the Russians as long as scattered Russian units remained in southern Finland. White forces came up against determined joint Russian and Red Finnish resistance at Rautu on the Isthmus on the approaches to Petrograd at the end of April.[38]

The final result of the Civil War was ultimately decided by the superior resources and flexibility of the White army and the wider experience of its officer corps, from its commander-in-chief, Mannerheim, down to its German-trained field officers. Coupled to this, the Whites also possessed a greater sense of internal unity, together with a more integrated set of political aims and better morale.[39]

By the latter stages of the struggle, forces on both sides had reached some 70—80,000 men. The number of dead ran to some 3,000 all told during the course of the three-month conflict. More significantly, however, the number of those who lost their lives, both behind the lines during the war and in the repercussions afterwards, was much higher. Around 1,600 Whites were murdered by Red forces during the course of the war in southern Finland and some 800 Reds by the Whites in the rest of the country. In the aftermath of the occupation of Tampere and the ending of hostilities which followed soon after, over 8,000 Red prisoners were executed, while some 12,000 more Reds died in the hastily set-up prison camps, mainly of malnutrition, inadequate hygiene conditions and poor health. Of the over 28,000 who died in the Civil War and its aftermath, the proportion of those who died in active combat amounted only to between 20—25%.[40]

38. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 214—5; Lappalainen II 1981, p. 88.
39. Paasivirta 1957, pp. 103, 170—1, 189—96; Lappalainen I 1981, p. 228.
40. Tanner 1919, pp. 12, 20; Paasivirta 1957, pp. 227—8; Mikola 1959, pp. 262—3; J. Paavolainen I 1966, 316—23, II 1967, 146—9.

The Civil War of 1918 was a conflict that grew out of, and to an important extent reinforced and consolidated, powerful and deep-rooted social antipathies and its repercussions came to have a significant impact on future developments. This was not restricted merely to those who took part in the struggle but filtered through into the whole body of society, being particularly evident in the reactions of the middle and upper classes in southern Finland, the traditional backbone of the country, who experienced some three months of Red occupation. It was precisely this section of the population which was prominent in celebrating the liberation of Helsinki by the Germans from the Reds. For the defeated Reds, the unhappy fate of many of those interned in the temporary prison camps or forced to flee the country made a deep impression which time proved slow to dim.

The events of the spring of 1918 came to play an important part in reshaping attitudes within Finland to the country's place in Europe and served to establish a distinct set of stereotypical attitudes towards Finland's neighbours and the outside world in general. Understandably, it was the White view of events which came to dominate. Among conservative opinion in the southern part of the country, the role of the German forces under von der Goltz and, by extension, German soldiery and heroism, became the subject of much unbridled admiration. This attachment to things German also tied into the sense of gratitude felt by these groups for the role Germany had played in helping Finnish volunteers earlier in the war. Germany's willingness to assist Finland at her hour of need was often contrasted by commentators with the lack of enthusiasm which had been shown by Sweden. Sweden, in fact, came to be looked upon as having virtually betrayed Finland, both by failing to provide the Whites with as much help as they had needed and by bringing unnecessary pressure to bear on Finland over the Åland Islands question at a time of national upheaval.

The period immediately following the end of the Civil War also saw the emergence of a new and negative attitude towards Britain, particularly amongst the more pro-German elements within Finnish society. The British expeditionary force's recruitment of Red troops which had fled Finland, following its landing in Murmansk, led to it being immediately labelled as pro-socialist and potentially hostile to the White authorities. Post-Civil War White opinion also reflected a pronounced shift towards an

increased hostility and suspicion of Bolshevism and everything Russian. Although in large measure only an extension of earlier non-socialist views, this antipathy, one which developed both political and moral overtones, was given added force by the persistent argument underlying much of conservative comment that the Bolsheviks had been involved in provoking the Civil War from the very start, as part of a bid to strip Finland of her independence and her social and historical heritage.[41]

Powerless and ideologically cowed after its defeat, Red opinion lacked any single common uniting factor which would have served to restore left-wing confidence. Anti-German sentiment was mixed with a vague and ill-defined attitude to the rest of Europe. The Left's overall sense of pessimism was only reinforced by the very real doubts which continued to surround the question of whether the revolution in Russia would be able to continue and expand or be turned back on itself.

4. The aftermath of the Civil War — constitutional and foreign policy debate

The end of the Civil War in May 1918 in a White victory and the withdrawal of the last Russian units remaining on Finnish soil set the seal on the severance of Finland's century-long political and constitutional links with Russia. With the replacement of Russian troops with German ones, in the shape of the expeditionary force commanded by General von der Goltz, however, Finland merely exchanged political and military dependence on Russia for dependence on Germany.

When it became clear to the Western powers that the German force intended staying in Finland, they sent a number of notes to the Finnish government to sound out the extent of Finland's apparent new status as a German satellite state. In an effort to head off a possible German attempt at gaining access to the Arctic Ocean, the British government warned the Finnish authorities in no uncertain terms, in a note sent on 24 April, that they should not

41. T. Manninen 1982, pp. 188—91; Upton II 1981, p. 459.