
The Russian Revolution and Finland

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(Editor of *Säkeniä*, Finnish Socialist Monthly)

Published in the *New York Call*, v. 10, no. 117 (April 27, 1917), pg. 6.

The Russian Revolution realized the yearning hope of the working classes of all countries; it destroyed the intolerable, hideous, and bloody sway of Tsarism, ushering in the dawn of a new day to suffering Russia. The news of this joyous event brought the message that the beautiful spring days of liberty have arrived also in Finland. The dark powers of tyranny met the same fate in Finland as in Russia. According to the news dispatches, the provision government of new Russia has granted Finland autonomy and the constitutional rights, denied by the old regime, were given back. The Finnish Parliament (Diet) was called into session for the purpose of making a new constitution for Finland. The Finnish Senate, the supreme executive body of Finland, has been completely reorganized and, according to the unofficial news, the new Senate consists of 6 Socialist and 6 Conservative members, at the head of which is a Socialist, Comrade O. Tokoi.

The coming events in Finland will be of the greatest importance, especially to the international Socialist and labor movement. Finland is the first, and so far the only, country in the world which has a Socialist majority in its legislative body. In spite of the difficulties that presented themselves in the agitation work on account of the odious restrictions on free speech and press, the Finnish workingmen elected into the Parliament last July [1916] 103 Socialists, the total number of representatives being 200. But during the old regime the Diet was not called into session and even if it

were, the chances are meager that the acts of the Diet would have been tolerated or accepted by the Russian government.

When the Finnish Diet now assembles the Socialists of the world will cast their eyes on that small northern country, waiting with keen interest to see what their Finnish comrades will do. The interest will be so much greater because we know that the Socialist movement in Finland has always been based on sound class-consciousness and Marxism is the real meaning of that term.

In casting a glance at what the Socialists will do, we must, first of all, admit that their task is tremendous. These Socialists will have to overcome many profound difficulties which will arise when they touch the sacred body of the capitalist system in order to fulfill their work for the emancipation of the working class. The Finnish bourgeoisie is not going to give way an inch without resistance. With all its energy the exploiting class will oppose the measures taken by the Socialists, but the Finnish comrades would overcome these inner difficulties were there not more extensive external complications in national affairs.

Finland is but a small nation, surrounded by big capitalist countries — even Russia, in spite of the recent revolution, will be a capitalist nation; in fact, the revolution made possible the free development of the capitalist system of production, as the French Revolution did in France about 100 years ago. That means that, even if the autonomy granted to Finland were so extensive that

Finland would have complete power to act in its internal affairs in accordance with its own desire, even then it could not become a complete Socialist state, free of all capitalist oppression.

The economic life of the world is so complicated and international that it is not possible for any nation to isolate itself from the other nations. Whether it be a big or a small nation, the consequences would be the same. Finland also will, in many respects, be dependent on foreign countries. And, besides, it would be too dangerous an experiment to the foreign capitalists to allow a real Socialist state to set an example to the workingmen of their countries.

It is not to be expected that the Finnish Socialists, in spite of the fact that they are now in power, will be able to create a state which will correspond to all the expectations of a Socialist commonwealth. But, nevertheless, the Finnish Socialists will solve many critical problems concerning the welfare of the working class.

The "Red Parliament" has to begin its work in shaping a new constitution. The old one may be traced back to the days of the middle ages, and, therefore, the alterations will be tremendous. The separation of state from church will be brought forth. Undoubtedly there will be created free schools and universities. The welfare of the working class will naturally be the primary consideration in legislative work; for example, a shorter working day, workingmen's insurance against accident, sickness, unemployment, old age, etc. The critical agrarian problem undoubtedly will be solved in the most satisfactory manner possible.

The Russian Revolution compelled the Socialist movement of Finland to face a significant

test, and we may be assured that it will succeed in carrying it out. Doesn't that prove that, in spite of the most ruthless oppression, the Finnish comrades made surprising progress, so that the Socialist Party of Finland is the strongest relatively in the world?

On behalf of the Finnish Socialists we have no reason to be afraid. If they cannot fulfill their task, the reason will be that trouble has come from without. It may not be long before the Finnish Diet and the Russian government are in conflict. First of all, the war question induces dangers. Heretofore the Finns have been excluded from military service, but the old Russian government compelled Finland to pay yearly war millions, and even without the consent of the Finnish Diet. Now, of course, this illegal act will be cancelled and the question will come up later in the Diet. The Finnish Socialists are uncompromisingly against the war and will not support it. The new Russian government is continuing the war and expects help from Finland, and that will lead to a conflict. But will the new government follow the example of Tsarism and in this respect force Finland to yield? Likely not, at least not in the near future. But the Russian capitalist class may later on intervene in the Finnish internal affairs on behalf of itself and the Finnish capitalists, and hinder the activities of the "red power."

But, let the difficulties be tremendous and the problems ever so complicated, the Finnish comrades will do their work in such a manner that it will arouse astonishment throughout the world. And it will encourage the workers in other countries in their struggle against oppression.

Edited by Tim Davenport.

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