

= Finnish Civil War =

The Finnish Civil War (27 January ? 15 May 1918) concerned leadership and control of Finland during the transition from a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire to an independent state . The conflict formed a part of the national , political , and social turmoil caused by World War I (Eastern Front) in Europe . The war was fought between the Reds , led by the Social Democratic Party and the Whites , conducted by the non @-@ socialist , conservative @-@ led Senate . The paramilitary Red Guards , composed of industrial and agrarian workers , controlled the towns and industrial centres of southern Finland . The paramilitary White Guards , composed of peasants and middle- and upper @-@ class factions , controlled rural central and northern Finland .

Finnish society had experienced - by 1917 , under the Russian regime - rapid population growth , industrialisation , preurbanization and the rise of a comprehensive labour movement . The country 's political and governmental systems were in an unstable phase of democratisation and modernization , while the people 's socioeconomic condition and national @-@ cultural status gradually improved . World War I led to the collapse of the Russian Empire and a power struggle , militarization , and escalating crisis between the left @-@ leaning Finnish labor movement and the Finnish conservatives .

The Reds carried out an unsuccessful general offensive in February 1918 , supplied with weapons by Soviet Russia . A counteroffensive by the Whites began in March , reinforced by an Imperial German Army squad in April . The decisive military actions of the war were the Battles of Tampere and Viipuri , won by the Whites , and the Battles of Helsinki and Lahti , won by German troops , leading to overall victory of the Whites and the German forces . Both the Reds and Whites engaged in political terror . A large number of Reds perished due to malnutrition and disease in prison camps . Altogether , around 39 @,@ 000 people died in the war , including 36 @,@ 000 Finns ? out of a population of 3 @,@ 000 @,@ 000 .

In the aftermath , the Finns passed from Russian rule to the German Empire 's sphere of power . The conservative Finnish Senate attempted to establish a Finnish monarchy , but the plan was aborted by the defeat of Germany in World War I. Finland emerged as an independent , democratic republic . The war divided the nation for many years and remains one of the most emotionally charged events in Finnish history . The society was reunited through social compromises based on a long @-@ term culture of moderate politics and religion , the outcome of World War I , and the postwar economic recovery .

= = Background = =

The main factor behind the Finnish Civil War was World War I ; the Russian Empire collapsed under the pressures of the war , leading to the February and October Revolutions in 1917 . The breakdown caused a large power vacuum and subsequent power struggle in Eastern Europe . The Grand Duchy of Finland , a part of the Russian Empire since 1809 , became embroiled in the struggle for power . Geopolitically less important Finland was a peaceful sidefront until early 1918 , but the war between the German Empire and Russia had indirect effects on the Finns . Since the end of 19th century , the Grand Duchy had become a vital source of raw materials , industrial products , food and labor for the growing Imperial Russian capital Petrograd (Saint Petersburg) , and World War I emphasized the role . Strategically , the Finnish territory was the northern section of the Estonian ? Finnish gateway and buffer zone to and from Petrograd via the Gulf of Finland , the Narva area and the Karelian Isthmus .

The German Empire saw Eastern Europe ? mainly Russia ? as a major source of vital products and raw materials , both during World War I and in the future . Her resources overstretched by the two @-@ front war , Germany pursued a policy of breaking up Russia from within by providing financial support to revolutionary groups such as the Bolsheviks , Socialist Revolutionary Party (SRs) and separatist factions such as the Finnish Activists leaning toward Germanism . Between 30 and 40 million marks were spent on this endeavor . Controlling the Finnish area would allow the Imperial German Army to penetrate Petrograd and the Kola Peninsula , an area rich in raw materials for the

mining industry . Finland possessed large ore reserves and a well @-@ developed forest industry .

From 1809 to 1898 , a period called Pax Russica , the peripheral power of the Finns gradually increased , and the Russian @-@ Finnish relations were exceptionally peaceful compared with other parts of the Russian Empire . Russia 's defeat in the Crimean War in the 1850s led to attempts to speed up the modernization of the country . This caused more than 50 years of economic , industrial , cultural and educational progress in the Grand Duchy of Finland , including improvement in the status of the Finnish language . All this encouraged Finnish nationalism and cultural unity through the birth of the Fennoman movement , which bound the Finns to the domestic governmental system and led to the idea that the Finnish Grand Duchy was an increasingly autonomous state of the Russian Empire .

In 1899 , the Russian Empire initiated a policy of integration through the Russification of Finland . The strengthened , pan @-@ slavist central power tried to unite the " Russian Multinational Dynastic Union " , because the military and strategic situation of Russia became more difficult due of the rise of Germany and Japan . The Finns called the increased military and administrative control " the First Period of Oppression , 1899 ? 1905 " , and plans for disengagement from Russia or sovereignty for Finland were drawn up for the first time . In the power struggle , the most radical political group opposing Russia , the Activist movement , included terrorist factions from the working class and the Swedish @-@ speaking intelligentsia . During World War I and the rise of Germanism , the Svecomans began their covert collaboration with Imperial Germany , and from 1915 to 1917 , a Finnish " Jäger " (Jääkärit) battalion consisting of 1900 volunteers were trained in Germany .

= = = Politics = = =

The major reasons for rising political tensions among the Finns were the autocratic rule of the Russian Czar and the undemocratic class system of the estates of the realm . The system originated in the Swedish Empire regime , preceding the Russian power , and divided the Finnish people into two groups , separated economically , socially and politically . Finland 's population grew rapidly in the 19th century (from 860 @,@ 000 in 1810 to 3 @,@ 130 @,@ 000 in 1917) , and a class of industrial and agrarian workers and property @-@ less peasants emerged . The Industrial Revolution was rapid in Finland , though it started later than in the rest of Western Europe . Industrialization was financed by the state , and some of the social problems associated with the industrial process were diminished via control of the administration . Among urban workers , socioeconomic problems steepened during periods of industrial depression . The position of rural workers had worsened since the end of the 19th century , as farming became more efficient and market @-@ oriented and the gradually developing industry did not fully utilize the rapid population growth of the countryside .

The difference between Scandinavian @-@ Finnish (Finno @-@ Ugric peoples) and Russian @-@ Slavic culture affected the nature of Finnish national integration ; the social upper faction took the lead , though it gained domestic might from the Russian Czar in 1809 . The estates planned to build up an increasingly autonomous Finnish state , led by the elite and intelligentsia . The Fennomans aimed to include the common people in a nonpolitical role in order to reduce unrest due to social problems ; the labor movement , youth associations and temperance movement were initially led " from above . "

Social conditions , the standard of living and the self @-@ confidence of the workers gradually improved due to industrialization between 1870 ? 1916 but , while the standard of living rose among the common people , the rift between rich and poor deepened markedly . The common people 's rising awareness of the socioeconomic and political questions interacted with the ideas of socialism , social liberalism and nationalism (Fennomania) . The commoners ' responses and the corresponding counteracts of the dominating upper factions steepened the social relations in Finland .

The Finnish labor movement , which emerged at the end of the 19th century from temperance , religious movements and Fennomania , had a Finnish nationalist , working @-@ class character . From 1899 ? 1906 the labor movement became conclusively independent , shedding the patriarchal

thinking of the Fennoman estates , and it was represented by the Finnish Social Democratic Party , established in 1899 . Workers ' activism directed both toward opposing Russification and in developing a domestic policy that tackled social problems and responded to the demand for democracy . This was a reaction to the domestic dispute , ongoing since the 1880s , between the Finnish nobility @-@ burghers and the labor movement concerning voting rights for the common people .

Besides their obligations as obedient , peaceful and nonpolitical inhabitants of the Grand Duchy , who had a few decades earlier accepted the class system as the natural order of their life , the commoners had begun to ask for and then demand their civil rights and citizenship in Finnish society . The power struggle between the Finnish estates and the Russian administration gave a concrete role model and free space for the labor movement . On the other side , due to at least a century @-@ long tradition and experience of administrative leadership , the Finnish elite saw itself as the inherent natural power in the Grand Duchy .

The political struggle for democracy was solved outside Finland , via international power politics ; the Russian Empire 's failed 1904 ? 1905 war against Japan led to the 1905 Revolution in Russia and to a general strike in Finland . In an attempt to quell the general unrest , the system of estates was abolished in the Parliamentary Reform of 1906 , which introduced universal suffrage . The general strike increased support for the Social Democrats substantially , as a proportion of the population , the party was the most powerful socialist movement in the world .

The Reform of 1906 was a giant leap in the political and social liberalization of the common Finnish people ; the Russian royal family was the most autocratic and conservative rulers in Europe . The Finns adopted a unicameral parliamentary system with all political rights for female citizens , increasing the number of voters from 126 @,@ 000 to 1 @,@ 273 @,@ 000 . This produced around 50 % turnouts for the Social Democrats , but the Czar regained his authority after the crisis of 1905 , and during the second period of Russification between 1908 and 1917 neutralized the power of the Parliament . He dissolved it and ordered parliamentary elections almost annually between 1908 ? 1916 , and determined the composition of the Finnish Senate , which did not correlate with the assembly of the Parliament , prohibiting true parliamentarism .

The capacity of the Parliament to solve major socioeconomic problems was stymied by confrontations between the representatives of the largely uneducated common man and the representatives of the former estates , accustomed to autocratic rule and attitudes . At the same time , conflict grew between industrial employers and their workers as the industrialists denied collective bargaining and the right of the labour unions to represent working people ; the employers essentially dictated contracts signed on the personal level . Although the parliamentary process disappointed the labour movement , dominance in the Finnish Parliament and in legislation was the workers ' pathway to reach a more balanced society - they identified themselves powerfully to the state . Altogether , these political developments led to conditions that encouraged a struggle for leadership of the Finnish state , during the ten years before the collapse of the Russian Empire .

= = = February Revolution = = =

The more severe programme of Russification , called " the Second Period of Oppression , 1908 ? 1917 " by the Finns , was halted on 15 March 1917 by the removal of the Russian Czar Nicholas II . The immediate reason for the collapse of the Russian Empire was crisis caused by military defeats in the war against Imperial Germany and war @-@ weariness among the Russians . The deeper causes lay in the collision between the most conservative and autocratic regime in Europe and the Russian people urging for socioeconomic modernization . The Czar 's power was transferred to the Russian Parliament , Duma and the right @-@ wing Provisional Government , but it was challenged by the Petrograd Soviet , leading to dual power in the country .

Autonomous status was returned to the Finns in March 1917 , and the revolt in Russia handed to the Finnish Parliament true political power for the first time . The political left , consisting mainly of Social Democrats , covered a wide spectrum from moderate to revolutionary socialists . The political right was even more diverse , ranging from social liberals and moderate conservatives to rightist

conservative elements . The four main parties were :

the conservative Finnish Party

the Young Finnish Party including both liberals and conservatives , the liberals divided to social liberals and economic liberals

the social reformist , centrist Agrarian League , which drew its support mainly from peasants with small or middle @-@ sized farms

the conservative Swedish People 's Party , which sought to retain the rights of the former nobility and the Swedish @-@ speaking minority of Finland .

The Finns faced a detrimental interaction of power struggle and breakdown of society during 1917 . The collapse of Russia induced a chain reaction of disintegration , starting from the government , military power and economy , and spreading downwards to all fields of the society such as local administration and workplaces , and finally to the level of individual citizens as changes and questions of freedom , responsibility and morality . The Social Democrats aimed at retaining the political rights of the labor movement already achieved , and gaining power over the people and society . The conservatives were fearful of losing their long @-@ held socioeconomic might . Both factions , with groups aiming at major supremacy , collaborated with the corresponding political forces in Russia , deepening the split in the nation .

As a consequence of the unbalanced social development and the labour movement 's continuous position in the political opposition , the Social Democratic Party had gained an absolute majority in the new Parliament of Finland , in the general parliamentary elections of 1916 . The new Senate was formed in March 1917 by Social Democrat and trade union leader Oskari Tokoi . His cabinet did not reflect the assembly of the Finnish parliament , with the socialists ' absolute majority . It comprised six representatives from the Social Democrats and six from non @-@ socialist parties .

In theory , the new Senate consisted of a broad national coalition , but in practice , with the main political groups unwilling to compromise and the most experienced politicians remaining outside it , the cabinet proved unable to solve any major local Finnish problems . After the First Russian Revolution of 1917 in February , real political power shifted to the street level in the form of mass meetings , strike organizations , and the street councils formed by workers and soldiers , and to active organizations of the employers , all of which served to undermine the authority of the state .

The rapid economic growth stimulated by World War I , which had raised the incomes of industrial workers and profits of the employers during 1915 and 1916 , collapsed with the February Revolution . The consequent decrease in production and economy led to unemployment and high inflation . For those who had a job , the February revolution gave freedom to reach for resolving long @-@ term problems of their laborious working life . The workers called for eight @-@ hour @-@ per @-@ day working limits , better working conditions and higher wages . The demands led to demonstrations and large @-@ scale strikes in both industry and agriculture throughout Finland .

The food supply of the country depended on cereals produced in southern Russia , while the Finns had specialized in milk and butter production . The cessation of the cereal imports from disintegrating Russia led to food shortages in Finland . The Senate responded by introducing rationing and price controls . The farmers opposed the state control ; a black market with sharply rising food prices formed and export to free market of the Petrograd area increased . Food supply , prices , and in the end the fear of starvation became emotional political issues between farmers and industrial workers , in particular the unemployed ones . The common people , their fears exploited by the politicians and the political media , took to the streets . Despite the food shortages , no large @-@ scale starvation hit southern Finland before the war . Economic factors remained a supporting factor in the crisis of 1917 , but only a secondary part of the power struggle of the state .

= = = Battle for leadership = = =

The passing of the Tokoi Senate bill , called the " Power Act " , in July 1917 became the first one of the three culminations of the power struggle between the Social Democrats and the conservatives during the political crisis from March 1917 to the end of January 1918 . The fall of the Russian emperor opened the question of who would hold the highest political power in the former Grand

Duchy . Although the Finns had accepted the liberating manifesto (from the period of 1908 ? 1916) of March 1917 issued by the Russian Provisional Government , they planned at least an expansion of the former autonomy .

The February Revolution offered the Finnish Social Democrats momentum : they had the absolute majority in the Parliament and a narrow dominance in the Senate . After the decades of political disappointments , the socialists gained an opportunity to take power . Conservatives were alarmed by the continuous increase of the socialists ' might since 1899 , with the climax in 1917 without the offsetting control of Russian administration ; the Social Democrats had to be halted before they were able to markedly alter the power structure of the country .

The " Power Act " incorporated a plan by the Social Democrats to substantially increase the power of Parliament , as a reaction to the non @-@ parliamentary and conservative leadership of the Finnish Senate between 1906 and 1916 . The bill furthered Finnish autonomy by restricting Russia 's influence on domestic affairs : the Provisional Government would determine the foreign and military policies of Finland . In Parliament , the bill was adopted with the support of the Social Democrats , the Agrarian League , some members of the Young Finnish Party and some Activists eager for Finnish sovereignty . The conservatives opposed the Act and some of the most right @-@ wing representatives resigned from Parliament .

In Petrograd , the Social Democrats ' plan had the backing of Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks , who by July 1917 were plotting a revolt against the Provisional Government . In the end , the Government still had the support of the Russian military ; Lenin was thwarted during the " July Days " and forced to flee to Finland . As the Russians ' war against Germany came increasingly closer to total defeat , the significance of the Finnish area as a buffer zone protecting Petrograd was highlighted , the Provisional Government disapproved the " Power Act " and sent reliable troops to Finland . There , with the demands and co @-@ operation of Finnish conservatives , the Finnish Parliament was dissolved and new elections announced .

In the October 1917 elections , the Social Democrats lost their absolute majority , which radicalized the labor movement and decreased support for relying on parliamentary means of achieving its aims . The events of July 1917 did not bring about the Red Revolution in January 1918 on their own , but together with political development based on the labor movement 's interpretation of the ideas of Fennomania and socialism since the 1880s , these events were decisive for the goals of a Finnish revolution . In order to win power , the socialists had to overcome the Finnish Parliament .

The collapse of Russia in the February Revolution resulted in a loss of institutional authority in Finland and the dissolution of the police force , creating fear and uncertainty . In response , both the right and left began assembling their own security groups , which were initially local and largely unarmed . By Autumn 1917 , in the power struggle and vacuum following the dissolution of Parliament , and in the absence of a stable government or a Finnish army , such forces began assuming a paramilitary character . The Civil / White Guards were organized by local men of influence , conservative academics , industrialists , major landowners and activists , and were armed by the Germans . The Workers ' Security / Red Guards were recruited through their local party sections and the labor unions , and were armed by the Russians .

= = = October Revolution = = =

Vladimir Lenin 's Bolshevik October / November Revolution on 7 November transferred political power in Petrograd to the radical , left @-@ wing socialists . The German Empire 's intrigue , based on idea that Lenin was the most powerful weapon they could launch against Russia , to finance the Bolsheviks and arrange safe conduct of Lenin and his comrades from exile in Switzerland to Petrograd in April 1917 , was a success . An armistice between Germany and the Bolshevik regime came into force on 6 December and peace negotiations began on 22 December 1917 at Brest @-@ Litovsk .

November 1917 saw the second turning point in the 1917 ? 1918 rivalry for the leadership of Finland . After the dissolution of the Finnish Parliament , polarization between the Social Democrats and Conservatives increased dramatically , including political violence . An agricultural worker was

shot during a local strike on 9 August at Ypäjä and a Civil Guard member was killed in aftermath of local political crisis at Malmi on 24 September 1917 .

The informal truce between the Finnish non-socialists and the Russian Provisional Government was disrupted by the October Revolution . After political wrangle how to react on the revolt , the majority of the politicians accepted a compromising proposal of Santeri Alkio , the leader of the Agrarian League . The Finnish Parliament seized the highest power in Finland , on 15 November , on the model of the " Power Act " of the socialists , and ratified the Social Democratic proposals from July 1917 of eight-hour working day and universal suffrage in local elections .

A purely non-socialist , conservative-led cabinet of Pehr Evind Svinhufvud was appointed on 27 November . The nomination was both a long-term aim of the conservatives and a respond to the labour movements ' acts during November 1917 . Svinhufvud 's main goals were to separate Finland from Russia , strengthen the military power of the Civil White Guards and to return at least a part of the Parliament 's new power to the Senate .

There were 149 Civil White Guards in Finland (local units in towns and rural communes) on 31 August 1917 , 251 on 30 September , 315 on 31 October , 380 on 30 November 1917 and 408 on 26 January 1918 . The first attempt at serious military training among the Civil Guards was the establishment of a 200-strong " cavalry school " at the Saksanniemi estate , in the vicinity of the town of Porvoo , in September 1917 . The vanguard of the Finnish Jägers and German weapons arrived in Finland in October ? November 1917 , on a ship Equity and a German U-boat (SM UC 57) ; around 50 Jägers had returned by the end of 1917 .

After the political defeats in July and October 1917 , the Social Democrats put forward , on 1 November , an uncompromising program called " We Demand " in order to push for political concessions ; they demanded a return to the power political status before dissolution of the Parliament in July 1917 , disbanding of the Civil Guards and elections to establish a Finnish Constituent Assembly . Following the October Revolution , based on the " Power Act " , socialists planned to ask the Bolsheviks for acceptance of Finland 's sovereignty in a manifesto on 10 November , but the uncertain situation in Petrograd stalled the plan . After the " We Demand " program had failed , the socialists initiated a General strike on 14 ? 19 November 1917 to increase the political pressure , in particular on the conservatives , who had opposed the " Power Act " and the 15 November parliamentary Power proclamation .

Revolution had been the goal of the radical left since the loss of the political power in July and October 1917 , and November 1917 offered momentum for an uprising . At this phase , Lenin and Joseph Stalin , under threat in Petrograd , urged the Social Democrats to seize power in Finland . The majority of Finnish socialists were moderate and preferred parliamentary methods , prompting Lenin to label them " reluctant revolutionaries . " The reluctance diminished as the General strike appeared to offer a major power for the workers in southern Finland . The strike leadership voted by a narrow majority to seize power on 16 November , but the proposed revolution had to be called off the same day , due to lack of true revolutionaries for executing the decision .

The moderate socialists won a repeated vote over revolutionary versus parliamentary means at a special party meeting in the end of November 1917 , but when they tried to pass a resolution to completely abandon the idea of a socialist revolution , the party representatives and several powerful leaders voted it down . The Finnish labor movement wanted to sustain a military force of its own and keep the revolutionary road open too . The Finnish socialists ' weak interest in revolutionary activity was a disappointment to Lenin . He lost his faith in them finally in December 1917 and shifted his energies toward encouraging the Finnish Bolsheviks in Petrograd .

Among the labor movement , a more marked consequence of Autumn 1917 was the rise of the Workers ' Guards . There were approximately 20 ? 60 Guards of the Working class in Finland between 31 August and 30 September 1917 , but on 20 October , after the defeat in the October Parliamentary elections , the Finnish Labor Union proclaimed the need to establish more Guards in the country . The announcement led to a rush of recruits to the Guards ; on 31 October their number was 100 ? 150 , 342 on 30 November 1917 and 375 on 26 January 1918 . There were two parts to the Workers ' Guards since May 1917 , most of them being Security Guards . The minority were Red Guards ; partly secret groups formed in industrialized towns and industrial centres including Helsinki

, Kotka , Tampere , Turku , Viipuri and the Kymenlaakso area , on the model of the domestic Red Guards built up during 1905 ? 1906 in Finland .

The presence of the two opposing armed forces , the Red and White Guards , imposed a state of dual power and multiple sovereignty on Finnish society , typically the prelude to a civil war . The decisive cleavage between the guards broke out during the General strike ; the Reds executed several political opponents in southern Finland , and the first armed clashes between the Whites and Reds broke out . In total , 34 casualties were reported . Eventually , the political rivalries of 1917 led to a race for weapons and an escalation towards civil war .

= = = Independence of Finland = = =

The disintegration of Russia offered the Finns a historic opportunity to gain national independence , but after the October Revolution , the positions of the conservatives and the Social Democrats on the sovereignty issue became reversed . The conservatives were eager for secession from Russia , in order to control the left and minimize the influence of the Bolsheviks . The socialists feared a loss of support among nationalistic workers , after constant promises of increasing liberty , in particular through the " Power Act " , and they hoped to renew political majority later . Both political factions agreed on the need for Finnish sovereignty , despite strong disagreement on the selection of its leadership .

Nationalism had become a " civic religion " among the Finns by the end of 19th century , but their main goal , in particular during the First Period of Russification and the General strike of 1905 , was a return to the autonomy of 1809 ? 1898 , not independence . Since 1809 , under the less uniform Russian rule , the domestic power of the Finns increased substantially , compared to the unitary Swedish regime . In economy the Grand Duchy benefited from an independent domestic state budget , own currency (the markka , since 1860) and customs organization , and the industrial progress during 1860 ? 1916 . The economy of the Grand Duchy was dependent on the huge Russian market , and separation from Russia would create a risk of losing Finland 's preferred position . The economic collapse of Russia and the political power struggle of the Finnish state during 1917 were among the key factors that brought sovereignty to the fore in Finland .

P.E. Svinhufvud 's Senate proposed Finland 's declaration of independence , which the Parliament adopted on 6 December 1917 . The Social Democrats voted against the Senate 's proposal while presenting an alternative declaration of independence . The establishment of an independent state was not a foregone conclusion for the small Finnish nation ; recognition by Russia and the major European powers was essential . Svinhufvud accepted , by the end of December 1917 , that he had to negotiate with Lenin for Russian recognition . The socialists , reluctant to talks with the Russian leadership in July 1917 , sent two delegations to Petrograd to ask Lenin to approve Finnish sovereignty .

In December 1917 the Bolsheviks were under intense pressure from the Germans to conclude peace negotiations at Brest @-@ Litovsk , and Russia Bolshevism was in crisis , with a demoralized army and the fate of the October Revolution in doubt . Lenin calculated that the Bolsheviks could hold central parts of Russia but had to give up some peripheral territories , including Finland in the geopolitically less important north @-@ western corner . As a result , Svinhufvud and his senate delegation won Lenin 's concession of sovereignty on 31 December 1917 .

By the beginning of the Civil War , Austria @-@ Hungary , Denmark , France , Germany , Greece , Norway , Sweden and Switzerland had recognized Finnish independence . The United Kingdom and United States did not approve it ; they were standing by and followed the relations between Finland and Germany , the main enemy of the Allies , which hoped to override Lenin 's regime and get Russia back into the war against Germany . As to Finland 's separation from Russia , Germany hastened it , in order to get Finland within the German sphere of power . France broke off diplomatic relations to the White government later , during the war of 1918 , as a consequence of White Finland 's co @-@ operation with Germany .

= = Warfare = =

== Escalation ==

The final escalation towards war began in early January 1918, as each military or political act of the Reds or the Whites resulted in a corresponding counteraction by their opponents. Both sides justified these acts as defensive measures, particularly to their own supporters. On the left, the vanguard of the war was the most active, urban Red Guards from Helsinki, Kotka and Turku; they led the rural Reds, and convinced the socialist leaders who wavered between peace and war to support revolution. On the right, the vanguard of the conflict was the Finnish "Jägers" who had been moved to Finland by the end of 1917, and the most active volunteer White Guards of Viipuri province in the southeastern corner of Finland, southwestern Finland and southern Ostrobothnia. The first local battles were fought during 9 - 21 January in southern and southeastern Finland, mainly to win the race for weapons and for controlling the Viipuri town.

The Svinhufvud Senate and the Parliament decided, on 12 January 1918 to create a "State power of internal order and discipline", leaning on the White forces. On 15 January, Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, a competent former general of the Imperial Russian Army, was appointed supreme commander of the White Guards. He established a major power base in Vaasa @-@ Seinäjoki area. The Senate renamed the White Guards the Finnish White Army and the White Order to engage was issued, on 25 January. The Whites gained weaponry by disarmament of Russian garrisons during 21 - 28 January, in particular in southern Ostrobothnia.

The Red Guards, led by Ali Aaltonen, refused to recognise the Whites Guard's power status, and decided to establish a military authority of their own. Aaltonen placed the Red power base in Helsinki. The Red Order of Revolution was issued on 26 January 1918, and a red lantern, a symbolic indicator of the Uprising, was lit in the tower of the Helsinki Workers' Hall. The large scale mobilization of the Reds began in the late evening of 27 January, with the Helsinki Guard and some of the Guards located along the Viipuri @-@ Tampere railway having become active between 23 - 26 January, in order to safeguard vital positions and escort a heavy railroad shipment of Bolsheviks' weapons from Petrograd to Finland. White troops tried to capture the shipment; 20 - 30 Finns, Red and White, died in the "Battle of the Rahja Trains" in the Karelian Isthmus on 27 January 1918.

The third and final culmination of the Finnish power struggle and the disintegration of the society had begun.

== Finland divided into White and Red ==

At the beginning of the war, a discontinuous front line ran through southern Finland from west to east, dividing the country into White Finland and Red Finland. The Red Guards controlled the area to the south, including nearly all the major towns and industrial centres, and the largest estates and farms with high numbers of crofters and tenant farmers. The White Army controlled the area to the north, which was predominantly agrarian with small or medium @-@ sized farms and tenant farmers, and where crofters were few, or held a better social position than in the south. Enclaves of the opposing forces existed on both sides of the front line: within the White area lay the industrial towns of Varkaus, Kuopio, Oulu, Raahe, Kemi and Tornio; within the Red area lay Porvoo, Kirkkonummi and Uusikaupunki. The elimination of these strongholds was a priority for both armies in February 1918.

Red Finland, called also the Finnish Socialist Workers' Republic, was led by the People's Delegation, established on 28 January, in Helsinki. The delegation sought democratic socialism based on the Finnish Social Democratic ethos; their visions differed from Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat. Otto Ville Kuusinen formulated a proposal for a new constitution, influenced by those of Switzerland and the United States. Political power was to be concentrated to Parliament, with a lesser role for Senate. The proposal included a multi @-@ party system, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and press, and the use of referenda in political decision making. In order to

ensure the power of the labour movement , the common people would have a right to " continuous revolution " .

The Reds ' plans concerning private property rights were in conflict with their plans for an " ultrademocratic " and free society ; the state and local administration of municipalities would have had true property rights . In agriculture the crofters were liberated from the control of the landowners at the beginning of the war , but they were allowed a right of containment of the farms under the plans of a later general socialization in the country . All these plans , including the new constitution , remained unfulfilled , as the Reds lost the 1918 war .

In foreign policy Red Finland leaned on Bolshevik Russia . A Finnish @-@ Russian Red treaty and peace agreement was signed on 1 March 1918 . The negotiations for the treaty revealed , that , as in World War I in general , nationalism was more important for both sides than the principles of international socialism . The Red Finns did not accept alliance with the Bolsheviks and major disputes appeared e.g. over demarcation of the border between Red Finland and Soviet Russia . The bargaining sides exchanged land areas ; an artillery base , Ino , located in the Karelian Isthmus , was transferred to Russia , while Finland received Petsamo in north @-@ eastern Lapland . The significance of the Russian @-@ Finnish Treaty evaporated soon , due to the signing of the Treaty of Brest @-@ Litovsk between the Bolsheviks and the German Empire on 3 March 1918 .

V. I. Lenin 's policy of the right of nations to self @-@ determination aimed at preventing the disintegration of Russia during the period of military weakness . He tried to utilize the power vacuums and political rivalries commonly formed inside fledgling nations as they separated from major , splintering countries . Lenin expected that in the political circumstances of Europe at the time , the proletariat of free nations would carry out socialist revolutions , and unite with Soviet Russia later . The majority of the Finnish labor movement supported Finland 's independence . The Finnish Bolsheviks , influential though few in number , favoured annexation of Finland by Russia . The question of annexation , in the aftermath of WWI , was resolved by the defeat of Red Finland and weakness of Russia .

The government of White Finland , Pehr Evind Svinhufvud 's first senate , was called the Vaasa Senate after relocation to the west @-@ coast city of Vaasa , acting as the capital of the Whites from 29 January to 3 May . In domestic policy the White Senate 's main goal was to return the political right to power in Finland . The conservatives planned a monarchist political system , with a lesser role for Parliament . A section of the conservatives had always been against democracy ; others approved parliamentarianism since the revolutionary reform of 1906 , but after the crisis of 1917 and the outbreak of the 1918 war concluded , that empowering the common people would not work . Social liberals and reformist , moderate non @-@ socialists opposed any restriction of parliamentarianism . They initially resisted German military help , but the prolonged warfare changed their stance .

In foreign policy , the Vaasa Senate leaned on the German Empire for military and political aid , in order to defeat the Finnish Red Guards , end the influence of Bolshevik Russia in Finland , and expand Finnish territory to Russian Karelia , which held geopolitical significance , and was home to people speaking Finno @-@ Ugric languages (Irredentist campaigns / Heimiosodat) . The weakness of Russia induced an idea of Greater Finland among the expansive factions of both the right and left ; the Reds had claims concerning the same areas . General Mannerheim agreed on the need to take over eastern Karelia and for German weapons , but opposed German intervention in Finland . Mannerheim recognized the lack of combat skills of the Finnish Red Guards , and he leaned on the high military skills of the Finnish Jägers . As a former Russian army officer , Mannerheim was well aware of the demoralization of the Russian army . He co @-@ operated with White Russian officers in Finland and Russia .

The competing parties ' war propaganda aimed to prove their support of democracy and liberty and their ability to represent the whole Finnish nation . Both failed by allowing the political crisis to end up in the bloody Civil War and a comprehensive terror , instead of reaching a compromise to accomplish a peaceful political settlement .

= = = = Soldiers on rails = = = =

The number of Finnish troops on each side varied from 70 000 to 90 000 ; both sides had around 100 000 rifles , 300 - 400 machine guns and a few hundred cannons . While the Red Guards consisted mostly of volunteers (wages paid at the beginning of the war) , the White Army contained only 11 000 ? 15 000 volunteers , the remainder being conscripts . The main motives for volunteering were economic factors (salary , food) , idealism , and peer pressure . The Red Guards included 2 000 female troops , mostly girls recruited from the industrial centres of southern Finland . Urban and agricultural workers constituted the majority of the Red Guards , whereas land owning farmers and well educated people formed the backbone of the White Army .

Both armies used child soldiers , mainly between 14 and 17 years of age . The usage of juvenile soldiers was not rare in World War I ; children of that time were under the absolute authority of adults and generally were not shielded against exploitation . In the Finnish case , chaotic conditions , particularly at the start of the war , provided an additional reason to recruit child soldiers ; military leaders took whoever they could get their hands on . In the Red Guards there was also the chance for salary and food supplies .

The Finnish Civil War was fought primarily along the railways , the vital means of transporting troops and supplies . One of the most important objectives for both Guards was the seizure of Haapamäki , a railway junction northeast of Tampere which connected both western - eastern and southern - northern Finland . The Whites captured the junction at the end of January 1918 , leading to fierce battles at Vilppula . The Whites ' bridgehead south of the River Vuoksi at Antrea on the Karelian Isthmus threatened the railway connection Viipuri - Petrograd also . The other vital railway junctions during the war were Kouvola , Riihimäki , Tampere and Toijala . The significance of the railways is well symbolized by the most frightening weapon used in the turmoil : armoured train , carrying light cannons and heavy machine guns .

= = = Red Guards and the Russian troops = = =

The Finnish Red Guards seized the early initiative in the war , taking control of Helsinki on 28 January , and with a general attack phase lasting from February till early March 1918 . The Reds were relatively well armed , but a chronic shortage of skilled leaders , both at command level and in the field , left them unable to capitalize on their initial momentum , and most of the offensives came to nothing . The military order chain functioned relatively well at Red company and platoon level , but leadership and authority were weak , as most of the field commanders were chosen by the vote of the troopers . The common troopers were more or less armed civilians , whose military training , discipline and combat morale were both inadequate and low .

Ali Aaltonen found himself rapidly replaced in command of the Red troops by Eero Haapalainen , who in turn was replaced by the triumvirate of Eino Rahja , Adolf Taimi and Evert Eloranta . The last commander of the Red Guards was Kullervo Manner , who led the final retreat into Russia . Some talented men with a high sense of responsibility such as Hugo Salmela rose up to take the lead , but they could not change the course of the war . The Red Guards achieved victories , only at local level , as they retreated from southern Finland towards Russia ; they won German troops in the fierce battles on 28 ? 29 April 1918 at Hauho and Tuulos , Syrjäntaka , where female Red Guard platoons played a combat role .

Although some 60 000 Russian soldiers of the former Czar 's army remained stationed in Finland at the start of the Civil War , the Russian contribution to the Reds ' cause was negligible . V.I. Lenin tried to commit the troops on behalf of Red Finland , but the soldiers were demoralized , war - weary and home - sick after years of World War I. The majority of the troops returned to Russia by the end of March 1918 . In total 7 000 to 10 000 soldiers participated in the 1918 war , of which around 4 000 , in separate smaller units of 100 ? 1 000 men , could be persuaded to fight in the front line .

The Russian revolutions split the Russian army officers politically and their attitude toward the Finnish civil war varied ; Mikhail Svechnikov led Finnish Red troops in western Finland in February

and Konstantin Yeremejev the Russian forces in the Karelian Isthmus , while other officers were mistrustful of their revolutionary underlings and co @-@ operated with their former colleague General Mannerheim , assisting the Whites in the disarmament of the Russian garrisons in Finland . On 30 January 1918 Mannerheim proclaimed to Russian soldiers in Finland that the White army did not fight against Russia : the goal of the White campaign was to beat the Finnish Red rebels and the Russian troops supporting them .

The number of Russian soldiers active in the Civil War declined markedly once Germany attacked Russia on 18 February 1918 . The German @-@ Russian Treaty of Brest @-@ Litovsk of 3 March , restricted the Bolsheviks ' support to the Finnish Reds to weapons and supplies . The Russians remained active on the south @-@ eastern front , defending the approaches to Petrograd .

= = = White Guards and Sweden 's role = = =

While the conflict has been called by some " The War of the Amateurs " , the White Army had two major advantages over the Red Guards in the war : the professional military leadership of General Mannerheim and his staff ? which included 84 Swedish volunteer officers and former Finnish officers of the Czar 's army ? and 1 @, @ 450 soldiers of the 1 @, @ 900 @-@ strong , elite Jäger (Jääkärit) battalion . This battalion was trained in Germany during 1915 ? 1917 , and battle @-@ hardened on the Eastern Front . The main part of the battalion arrived in Vaasa on 25 February 1918 .

On the battlefield the Jägers provided strong leadership that made disciplined action by the common White soldiers possible . The White troopers were similar to those of the Red Guards : most of them had brief and inadequate training . At the beginning of the war , the leadership of the White Guards had little authority over volunteer White Guard platoons and companies , which obeyed only their dominant , local leaders . In the end of February , the Jägers started rapid training of six Jäger Regiments , with conscripts .

Even the Jäger battalion was divided in the same way that the rest of the country was : 450 mostly socialist Jägers remained stationed in Germany as they could have chosen the Red side in the conflict . The leaders of the White Guards faced a similar problem with drafting young men to the army in February 1918 : 30 @, @ 000 obvious supporters of the Finnish labor movement never showed up . It was also uncertain whether common troopers drafted from the small @-@ sized and poor farms of central and northern Finland had strong enough motivation to fight the Finnish Reds ; the White 's propaganda promoted a nationalist war against the Red , Bolshevik Russians , and belittled the significance of the Red Finns .

Social divisions did appear both between southern and northern Finland and within rural Finland . The economy and society of the north had modernized more slowly than those of the south , there was a more pronounced conflict between Christianity and socialism in the north , and farmland had a major social status ; ownership of even a small parcel of land created a motivation to fight against the Reds .

Sweden declared neutrality during WWI and the Finnish Civil War . The general opinion , in particular among the Swedish elite was divided between supporters of the Allies and the Central powers , Germanism being somewhat more popular . Three war @-@ time priorities determined pragmatic policy of the Swedish liberal @-@ social democratic government ; sound economics , via export of iron @-@ ore and foodstuff to Germany , sustaining tranquility of the Swedish society and geopolitics . The government accepted participation of Swedish volunteer officers and soldiers in the Finnish Civil War , on the White side , in order to block expansion of revolutionary unrest to Scandinavia .

A 800 ? 1 @, @ 000 @-@ strong " Swedish Brigade " , led by Hjalmar Frisell , took part in the battles of Tampere and those fought in the area south of the town . In February 1918 , the Swedish Navy escorted the German naval squadron , transporting Finnish Jägers and German weapons , and allowed it to pass through Swedish territorial waters . The Swedish socialists did not aid the Finnish Reds but tried to open peace negotiations between the Whites and Reds . The weakness of Finland gave Sweden a chance to take @-@ over geopolitically vital Finnish Åland islands , east of Stockholm , but the German army 's Finland @-@ operation stalled the plan .

=== Battle of Tampere ===

In February 1918 General Mannerheim weighed the question of where to focus the general offensive of the Whites , between two strategically vital enemy strongholds : Tampere , Finland 's major industrial town in the south @-@ west , and Viipuri , Karelia 's main city . Although seizing Viipuri offered major advantages , the lack of combat skills of his army and potential for a major counterattack by the enemy in the area or in the south @-@ west made it too risky .

Mannerheim decided to strike first at Tampere . He launched the attack on 16 March at Längelmäki , 65 km north @-@ east of the town . At the same time , the White Army began advancing along a northern and north @-@ western frontline , through Vilppula ? Kuru ? Kyröskoski ? Suodenniemi . Many Red Guard units collapsed and retreated in panic under the weight of the assault , while some detachments defended their posts relentlessly , and were able to slow the advance of the White Guards , who were unaccustomed to offensive warfare . Eventually , the Whites lay siege to Tampere . They cut off the Reds southward connection in Lempäälä on 24 March and westward in Siuro (Nokia , Finland) and Ylöjärvi on 25 March .

The battle for Tampere was fought between 16 @,@ 000 White and 14 @,@ 000 Red soldiers . It was Finland 's first large scale urban battle , and , along with the battles of Helsinki and Viipuri , one of the three decisive military engagements of the 1918 war . The fight for the Tampere town area began on 28 March , on the eve of Easter 1918 , later called the " Bloody Maundy Thursday " , in the Kalevankangas graveyard . After this fierce combat , won by the Whites , with more than 50 % losses in some of the attacking units , the White army re @-@ organized the troops and plans , and attacked the town centre , in the early hours of 3 April .

After a heavy , concentrated artillery barrage , the White Guards began advancing from house to house and street to street , as the Red Guards retreated . In the late evening of 3 April the Whites reached the eastern river banks of Tammerkoski . The Reds ' major attempts to break the siege of Tampere from outside , along the Helsinki @-@ Tampere railway , failed . The Red Guards lost the western parts of the town between 4 and 5 April . The Tampere City Hall was among the last strongholds of the Red troops . The battle ended 6 April 1918 with the surrender of Red forces in the Pyynikki and Pispala sections of Tampere .

In the battle , the Reds , now on the defensive , had shown markedly increased motivation to fight . General Mannerheim had been compelled to deploy parts of his best trained detachments , the fresh Jäger regiments , which he had initially hoped to conserve for later use in the Viipuri area . The fighting in Tampere was purely a civil war ? Finn against Finn , " brother rising against brother " ? as most of the Russian army had retreated to Russia in March and the German troops had yet to arrive in Finland . The Battle of Tampere was the bloodiest action of the Civil War . The White Army lost 700 ? 900 men , including 50 Jägers , the highest number of deaths the former Jäger battalion suffered in a single battle of the 1918 war . The Red Guards lost 1 @,@ 000 ? 1 @,@ 500 soldiers , with a further 11 @,@ 000 ? 12 @,@ 000 captured . 71 civilians died , mainly due to artillery fire . The eastern parts of the city , consisting mostly of wooden buildings , were destroyed completely .

After their defeat in Tampere , the Red Guards began a slow retreat eastwards . As the German army seized Helsinki , the White Army shifted the military focus to Viipuri , taking it on 29 April 1918 with a major attack of 18 @,@ 500 men , against 15 @,@ 000 Red troopers . 500 ? 800 Reds died , and 12 @,@ 000 ? 15 @,@ 000 were imprisoned .

=== German intervention ===

The German Empire intervened in the Finnish Civil War on the side of the White Army in March 1918 . The Finnish Activists leaning on Germanism had been seeking German aid in freeing Finland from Russian hegemony since Autumn 1917 , but the Germans did not want to prejudice their armistice and peace negotiations with Russia because of the pressure they were facing at the Western front . The German stance changed after 10 February when Leon Trotsky , despite the weakness of the Bolsheviks ' position , broke off negotiations , hoping revolutions would break out in

the German Empire and change everything . The German government promptly decided to teach Russia a lesson and , as a pretext for aggression , invited " requests for help " from the smaller countries west of Russia . Representatives of White Finland in Berlin duly requested help on 14 February ; on 13 February the German Imperial Military Council had made the decision to send troops to Finland .

The Germans attacked Russia on 18 February ; the offensive led to a rapid collapse and retreat of the Russian troops and to signature of the first Treaty of Brest @-@ Litovsk by the Bolsheviks on 3 March 1918 . Finland , the Baltic countries , Poland and Ukraine were transferred to the German power sphere . The economic and political investments that Germany had made in Vladimir Lenin had paid off . The German army did not alter the military plans concerning Finland after the peace treaty with the Bolsheviks because the Civil War of the Finns opened an easy access with low costs to Fennoscandia , where the geopolitical status altered as troops of a British Naval squadron invaded the harbour of Murmansk on the northwestern coast of Russia by the Arctic Ocean on 9 March 1918 .

On 5 March a German naval squadron landed in the southwestern archipelago of Finland , on the Åland Islands , which the Swedish military expedition took over in mid @-@ February (departed in May) . On 3 April 1918 , the 10 @,@ 000 @-@ strong Baltic Sea Division , led by Rüdiger von der Goltz , launched the main attack , west of Helsinki at Hanko , followed on 7 April by the 3 @,@ 000 @-@ strong Detachment Brandenstein taking the town of Loviisa on the south @-@ eastern coast . The main German formations advanced rapidly eastwards from Hanko and took Helsinki on 12 ? 13 April . The Brigade Brandenstein overran the town of Lahti on 19 April , cutting the connection between the western and eastern Red Guards . The main German detachment advanced northwards from Helsinki and took Hyvinkää and Riihimäki on 21 ? 22 April , followed by Hämeenlinna on 26 April . The efficient performance of the German top detachments contrasted strikingly with that of the demoralized Russian troops . The final blow to the cause of the Finnish Reds was dealt when the Bolsheviks broke off the peace negotiations at Brest @-@ Litovsk , leading to the German eastern offensive in February 1918 .

= = = = Battle of Helsinki = = = =

After peace talks between the Germans and the Finnish Reds were broken off on 11 April , the true battle for the capital of Finland began . On 12 April , at 5 a.m. 2 @,@ 000 ? 3 @,@ 000 German soldiers from the Brigade von Tshirsky attacked the city from the north @-@ west , supported via the Helsinki @-@ Turku railway . The Germans broke through the area between Munkkiniemi and Pasila , and advanced on the central @-@ western parts of the town . The German naval squadron Meurer blocked the city harbour , bombarded the southern town area , and landed naval troops at Katajanokka .

Around 7 @,@ 000 Finnish Reds defended Helsinki , but their best troops fought on the main fronts of the war . The main strongholds of the Red defence were the Workers Hall , the Railway station , the Red Headquarters of " Smolna " (the former palace of the Russian governor @-@ general , in southern Esplanade) , the Senate @-@ University area , and the former Russian garrisons in Helsinki . By the late evening of 12 April most of the major southern parts and all the western area of the city had been occupied by the Germans , who cleared the city house by house , street by street . Local Helsinki White Guards , hidden in the city during the war , joined the battle as the Germans advanced through the town .

On 13 April German troops took over the Market Square , " Smolna " , the Presidential Palace , and the Senate @-@ Ritarihuone area . Toward the end , the Brigade Wolff with 2 @,@ 000 ? 3 @,@ 000 soldiers joined the battle . The units rushed from north to the eastern parts of Helsinki , pushing into the working @-@ class neighborhoods of Hermannin , Kallio and Sörnäinen . German artillery bombarded and destroyed the Helsinki Workers ' Hall , and put out the Red lantern of the Finnish revolution . The eastern parts of the town surrendered around 2 p.m. , 13 April ; a white flag was raised in the tower of the Kallio Church , but sporadic fighting lasted until the evening . In total , 60 Germans , 300 ? 400 Reds and 23 White Guard troopers were killed in the battle . Around 7 @,@

000 Reds were captured . The German army celebrated the victory and demonstrated its might with a major military parade in the centre of Helsinki on 14 April 1918 .

= = = Red and White terror = = =

During the civil war , the White Army and the Red Guards both perpetrated acts of terror , called the Red terror and White terror . The threshold of political violence had been crossed in the primarily peaceful Grand Duchy of Finland during the first period of Russification 1899 ? 1905 ; the Finnish Activists murdered a Russian governor @-@ general , police officers and a Finnish civil servant . World War I enhanced the potential of terror as it was widespread between the Allies and the Central Powers . The February Revolution in 1917 initiated a comprehensive terror in Finland ; the Russian army common soldiers murdered several Russian army officers in March 1917 . The first Finnish socialist victim was killed at the beginning of August and the first non @-@ socialist victim was killed at the end of September 1917 . The general strike in November 1917 led to a marked political terror ; the Workers ' Guards murdered 27 Finns .

During the war of 1918 there were two kinds of Red and White political violence : (i) a calculated part of the general warfare , (ii) local , personal murders and corresponding acts of revenge . In the former , the highest staffs of both sides planned and organized these actions and gave orders to the lower level . At least a third of the Red terror and most of the White terror was centrally led . At first the governments of White Finland and Red Finland officially opposed acts of terror , but such operational decisions were made at the military level .

The main purpose of the Red and White terror was to destroy the power structure of the opponent , clear and secure the areas governed by the armies since the beginning of the war and the areas seized and occupied by the common units during the conflict . Another goal of the terror was to create shock and fear among the civil population and the opposing soldiers . The common troopers ' paramilitary nature and lack of combat skills , in the both armies , led and created the opportunity to use terror as a military weapon . Terror achieved some of the intended military objectives , but also gave additional motivation to each side to fight against an enemy perceived to be inhuman and cruel . The propaganda of the Reds and Whites utilized the terror acts of the opponent effectively , which increased the local political violence and the spiral of revenge .

The number of casualties and the timing of the terror differed markedly between the Reds and Whites .

The level of killings by the Red Guards varied over the months because the Reds could never seize and occupy new areas outside Red Finland , and they had to focus their efforts on the industrialized southern Finland , where they faced the establishment of Finland , and because in the end the Reds retreated from southern Finland . The Red Guards were less organized than the White army in respect to the political terror . The level of killings by the Whites varied over the months of the war because they occupied southern Finland , and initially did not encounter marked resistance from the area of White Finland . The comprehensive White terror started with the general offensive of the Whites in March 1918 , increased constantly , culminated in the end of the war , and ceased soon after the enemy had been sent to the prison camps .

The Red Guards executed the representatives of economic and / or social power in Finland , including politicians , major landowners , industrialists , police officers , civil servants , teachers , and leaders and members of the White Guards . Ten priests of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland and 90 (moderate) socialists were executed also . The two major sites of the Red terror were Toijala and Kouvola . There 300 ? 350 Whites were executed between February and April 1918 .

The White Guards executed Red Guard and party leaders , Social Democratic representatives of the Finnish parliament and local Red administrations , members of the Red tribunals and police , and common troopers of the Red Guards , and those who had participated in a way or another to the Red Terror . During the peak of the White terror , between the end of April and the beginning of May , 200 Reds were shot per day . The White terror hit particularly strong against the Russian soldiers who fought with the Finnish Red Guards , and several Russian non @-@ socialist civilians

were executed in the aftermath of the Battle for Viipuri .

Most of the terror was undertaken by " flying detachments " deployed by the both armies . These were cavalry units , usually consisting of 10 to 80 soldiers aged 15 to 20 , under the absolute authority of an experienced adult leader . The detachments , specialising in search @-@ and @-@ destroy operations behind the front lines and during and after battles , have been described as death squads . They resembled German Sturmbattalions and Russian Assault units organized during WWI .

In total , 1 @, @ 650 Whites died in the Red terror , while 10 @, @ 000 Reds perished in the White terror , which eventually became political cleansing , typical for victors of many civil wars . The White victims have been recorded quite exactly , but there are questions and permanent uncertainty about the Red victims of the terror . It is unclear which of the victims died in the battles and which of them were executed immediately after the battles . Together with the prison camp experiences of the Reds later in 1918 , the terror caused the deepest mental wounds and scars of the Civil War among the majority of the Finns regardless of their political allegiance . Some of those , who carried out the terror were seriously traumatized , a phenomenon that was later to become well @-@ documented .

= = = End = = =

After the defeat in Tampere and under the threat of invasion by the German division on the south coast , the People 's Delegation retreated from Helsinki to Viipuri on 8 April . After the loss of Helsinki , most of them , only Edvard Gylling standing by his warriors , moved to Petrograd on 25 April 1918 . The escape of the Red leadership made the ranks of the Red soldiers bitter and resentful . At the end of April , thousands of them , without true leadership , tried to flee to Petrograd from Red Finland , but the majority of the refugees were besieged by the White and the German troops . The Reds surrendered on 1 ? 2 May in the Lahti area .

The long caravans of the Reds included women and children , who experienced a desperate , chaotic escape with several human losses due to the attacks of the enemy . It was a " road of tears " for the Reds , for the Whites the long enemy caravans heading east was a victorious scene . The Red Guards ' last stronghold in south @-@ east Finland , the area between Kouvola and Kotka , fell by 5 May . The war of 1918 ended on 15 May , when the Whites took over Ino , a Russian coastal artillery base on the Karelian Isthmus , from the Russian troops . White Finland and General Mannerheim celebrated the victory with a large military parade in Helsinki on 16 May 1918 .

The Red Guards had been defeated . The initially pacifist Finnish labour movement had lost the Civil War , several military leaders committed suicide and a majority of the Reds were sent to prison camps . The Vaasa Senate returned to Helsinki on 4 May 1918 , but the capital was under the control of the German army . White Finland had become a protectorate of the German Empire . General Rüdiger von der Goltz was called " the true Regent of Finland . " No armistice or peace negotiations were carried out between the Whites and Reds , and an official peace treaty in order to end the Finnish Civil War was never signed .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Bitter legacy = = =

The Civil War was a catastrophe for Finland ; around 36 @, @ 000 people , 1 @. @ 2 percent of the nation 's total population , perished . The war left about 15 @, @ 000 children orphaned . As is often the case during (civil) war , most of the deaths occurred outside the battlefields , in the terror campaigns and from the appalling conditions in the prison camps . Many Reds fled to Russia at the end of the war and during the period that followed . The traumatic war deepened the divisions within Finnish society , many moderate @-@ neutral Finns identifying themselves as " citizens of two nations . "

The war of 1918 led to disintegration within both socialist and the non @-@ socialist factions . The power political shift toward the right caused a dispute between conservatives and liberals on the best system of government for Finland to adopt : the former demanded monarchy and restricted parliamentarianism , the latter demanded a Finnish republic with full @-@ scale democracy and social reforms . Both sides justified their views via political and legal grounds .

The monarchists leaned on the Swedish regime 's year 1772 monarchist constitution , belittled the Declaration of Independence 1917 and proposed a modernized monarchist constitution for Finland . The republicans argued that the 1772 law , accepted by Russia in 1809 , lost its status in the February Revolution , the might of the Russian Czar was assumed by the Finnish Parliament on 15 November 1917 and Finnish republic was accepted on 6 December . The republicans were able to postpone processing of the monarchists ' proposal in the parliament , and in the end a new monarchist constitution was not accepted in Finland . The monarchists responded by applying directly the 1772 law to select a new monarch for the country .

A major consequence of the 1918 conflict was the breakup of the Finnish labour movement into three parts : moderate Social Democrats and left @-@ wing socialists in Finland , and communists acting in Soviet Russia with the support of the Bolsheviks . The Social Democratic Party had the first official party meeting after the civil war on 25 December 1918 . The party proclaimed commitment to parliamentary means and disclaimed Bolshevism and communism . The leaders of Red Finland , who had fled to Russia established the Communist Party of Finland in Moscow on 29 August 1918 . After the power struggle of 1917 and the bloody civil war , the former Fennomans and Social Democrats , who had supported " ultrademocratic " means in Red Finland , declared to have committed to revolutionary Bolshevism @-@ communism and to dictatorship of proletariat , under the control of V.I. Lenin .

A conservative @-@ monarchist Senate was formed by JK Paasikivi in May 1918 . All members of the Parliament , who had taken part in the red uprising were removed from office . Eventually three Social Democrats continued there ; the Parliament was called a " Rump Parliament " . In May 1918 , the Senate asked the German troops to remain in Finland , but overall the 3 March Treaty of Brest @-@ Litovsk and the 7 March 1918 German @-@ Finnish agreements bound White Finland to the power sphere of the German Empire . General Mannerheim resigned his post on 25 May after disagreements with the Senate about German hegemony over Finland , and about his planned attacks on Petrograd to repulse the Bolsheviks , and to Russian Karelia . The Germans opposed these attacks under the peace treaties they had signed with Russia .

On 9 October 1918 , under pressure by Germany , the Senate and Parliament elected a German prince , Friedrich Karl , brother @-@ in @-@ law of German Emperor William II , to become the King of Finland . Eventually , General Rüdiger von der Goltz was able to utilize the weakness of Finland for the power political benefit of the German Empire . All of these measures diminished Finnish sovereignty . The Finns , both right and left , had achieved independence on 6 December 1917 without a gunshot , but then compromised that independence by allowing the Germans to enter the country without difficulty during the Civil War .

The economic condition of the country had deteriorated so drastically that recovery to pre @-@ conflict levels was not achieved until 1925 . The most acute crisis was in the food supply , already deficient in 1917 , though starvation had at that time been avoided in southern Finland . The Civil War , according to the leaders of Red Finland and White Finland , would solve all past problems ; instead it led to starvation in southern Finland too . Late in 1918 , Finnish politician Rudolf Holsti appealed for relief to Herbert Hoover , the American chairman of the Committee for Relief in Belgium : Hoover arranged for food shipments and persuaded the Allies to relax their blockade of the Baltic Sea , which had obstructed food supplies to Finland , to allow the food in .

= = = = Prison camps = = = =

The White Army and the German troops captured around 80 @,@ 000 Red war prisoners , including 5 @,@ 000 women , 1 @,@ 500 children and 8 @,@ 000 Russians . The largest prison camps were Suomenlinna , an island facing Helsinki , Hämeenlinna , Lahti , Riihimäki , Tammisaari (

Ekenäs) , Tampere and Viipuri . The Senate decided to keep the prisoners detained until each person 's guilt could be investigated ; a law for a Tribunal of Treason was enacted on 29 May 1918 . The Tribunal did not meet all the standards of neutral justice , due to the mental atmosphere of White Finland after the war . In total 76 @,@ 000 cases were examined and 68 @,@ 000 Reds were convicted , primarily for complicity to treason ; 39 @,@ 000 got out on parole and mean punishment of the rest was 2 ? 4 years in penitentiary . 555 people were sentenced to death , of which 113 were executed . The trials revealed that also some innocent adults had been imprisoned .

Combined with the severe food shortage , the mass imprisonment led to high mortality rates in the camps , and the catastrophe was compounded by a mentality of punishment , anger and indifference on the part of the victors . Many prisoners felt that they were abandoned by their own leaders , who had fled to Russia . The physical and mental condition of the prisoners declined rapidly in May as food supplies had disrupted during the Red Guards ' chaotic retreat in April , and a high number of Red prisoners had been sent to the less organized prison camps already during the first half of April in Tampere and Helsinki . As a consequence , in June 2 @,@ 900 starved to death or died as a result of diseases caused by malnutrition and Spanish flu , 5 @,@ 000 in July , 2 @,@ 200 in August , and 1 @,@ 000 in September . The mortality rate was highest in the Tammisaari camp at 34 percent , while in the others the rate varied between 5 percent and 20 percent . In total around 13 @,@ 000 Finns perished (3 @,@ 000 ? 4 @,@ 000 due to Spanish influenza) . The dead were buried in mass graves near the camps .

The majority of the prisoners were paroled or pardoned by the end of 1918 , after the change in the political situation . There were 6 @,@ 100 Red prisoners left at the end of the year , 4 @,@ 000 at the end of 1919 (3 @,@ 000 pardoned in January 1920 , at the same time civil rights were given back to 40 @,@ 000 prisoners) , 500 in 1923 , and in 1927 the last 50 prisoners were pardoned by the Social Democratic government led by Väinö Tanner . In 1973 , the Finnish government paid reparations to 11 @,@ 600 persons imprisoned in the camps after the civil war . Several reasons for the long @-@ term and relatively high support of communism in Finland can be found ; for the civil war generation of the left , the traumatic hardships of the prison camps were decisive .

= = = Compromise = = =

Just as the fate of the Finns was decided outside Finland in Saint Petersburg on 15 March 1917 , so it was decided outside Finland again on 11 November 1918 , this time in Berlin , as Germany accepted defeat in World War I. The grand plans of the German Empire had come to nothing , and revolution had spread among the German people due to lack of food , war @-@ weariness , and defeat in the battles on the Western Front . General Rüdiger von der Goltz and the German troops left Helsinki on 16 December , and Prince Friedrich Karl , who had not yet been crowned , left his post on 20 December . Finland 's status altered from a monarchist protectorate of the German Empire to an independent democratic republic , with a modernizing civil society . The system of government , the primary Constitution of Finland , was confirmed on 17 July 1919 .

The first local elections based on universal suffrage in the history of Finland were held during 17 ? 28 December 1918 , and the first parliamentary election after the Civil War on 3 March 1919 . The United States and the United Kingdom recognised Finnish sovereignty on 6 ? 7 May 1919 . The Western powers demanded establishment of democratic republics in post @-@ war Europe in order to calm down the widespread revolutionary movements in Europe . The Finnish @-@ Russian Treaty of Tartu (Russian @-@ Finnish) signed on 14 October 1920 aimed to stabilize the political relations and settle the border line between the former Grand Duchy and its mainland .

In April 1918 , the leading Finnish social liberal , the eventual first president of Finland , Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg wrote : " It is urgent to get the life and development in this country back on the path that we had already reached in 1906 and which the turmoil of war turned us away from . " A moderate Social Democrat , Väinö Voionmaa agonised in 1919 : " Those who still trust in the future of this nation must have an exceptionally strong faith . This young independent country has lost almost everything due to the war " He was a vital companion for the leader of the reformed Social

Democratic Party , Väinö Tanner .

Santeri Alkio supported moderate politics . His party colleague Kyösti Kallio urged in his Nivala address on 5 May 1918 : " We must rebuild a Finnish nation , which is not divided into the Reds and Whites We have to establish a democratic Finnish republic , where all the Finns can feel that we are true citizens and members of this society . " In the end , many of the moderate Finnish conservatives followed the thinking of Lauri Ingman , who wrote in spring 1918 : " A political turn more to the right will not help us now , instead it would strengthen the support of socialism in this country . "

Together with the other broader @-@ minded Finns , the new partnership constructed a Finnish compromise which eventually delivered stable and broad parliamentary democracy . This compromise was based both on the defeat of the Reds in the 1918 war and the fact that most of the Whites ' political goals had not been achieved . After the foreign forces left Finland , the militant factions of the Red and White lost their backup , while the pre @-@ 1918 cultural and national integrity , and the legacy of Fennomania , stood out among the Finns .

The weakness of both Germany and Russia after World War I empowered Finland and made a peaceful , domestic Finnish social and political settlement possible . The reconciliation led to a slow and painful , but steady , national unification . In the end , the power vacuum and interregnum of 1917 ? 1919 gave way to the Finnish compromise . From 1919 to 1991 , the democracy and sovereignty of the Finns withstood challenges from right @-@ wing and left @-@ wing political radicalism , the crisis of World War II , and pressure from the Soviet Union during the Cold War .

= = In popular culture = =

Between 1918 and 1950s the mainstream of literature and poetry presented the 1918 war from the point of view of the White victors ; e.g. " Psalm of the Cannons " (Finnish : Tykkien virsi) by Arvi Järventausta in 1918 . In poetry , Bertel Gripenberg , who had volunteered for the White army , celebrated its cause in " The Great Age " (Swedish : Den stora tiden) in 1928 and V.A. Koskenniemi in " Young Anthony " (Finnish : Nuori Anssi) in 1918 . The war tales of the Red side were kept in silence or hidden at home or inside spheres of the workers .

The first neutral @-@ critical books were written soon after the war : " Devout Misery " (Finnish : Hurskas kurjuus) written by the Nobel Laureate in Literature Frans Emil Sillanpää in 1919 , " Dead Apple trees " (Finnish : Kuolleet omenapuut) by Joel Lehtonen in 1918 and " Home coming " (Swedish : Hemkomsten) by Runar Schildt in 1919 . They were followed by Jarl Hemmer in 1931 with the book " A man and his conscience " (Swedish : En man och hans samvete) and Oiva Paloheimo in 1942 with " Restless childhood " (Finnish : Levoton lapsuus) . Lauri Viita 's book " Scrambled ground " (Finnish : Moreeni) from 1950 , presented life and experiences of a worker family in Tampere in 1918 , including a point of view of outsiders in the Civil War .

Between 1959 and 1962 , Väinö Linna , in his trilogy " Under the North Star " (Finnish : Täällä Pohjantähden alla) , described the Civil War and World war II from the point of view of the common people . Part II of Linna 's work markedly opened the larger view and the tales of the Reds in the 1918 war , and it had a significant mental effect in Finland . At the same time , a new point of view for the war was opened by the books of Paavo Haavikko " Private matters " (Finnish : Yksityisiä asioita) , by Veijo Meri " The events of 1918 " (Finnish : Vuoden 1918 tapahtumat) and Paavo Rintala " My grandmother and Mannerheim " (Finnish : Mummoni ja Mannerheim) , all published in 1960 .

In poetry Viljo Kajava , who had experienced the horrors of the Battle of Tampere at the age of nine , presented a pacifist view of the civil war in his " Poems of Tampere 1918 " (Finnish : Tampereen runot) in 1966 . The similar point of view , in the same battle , is emphasized in the novel " Corpse bearer " (Finnish : Kylmien kyytimies) by Antti Tuuri from 2007 . Väinö Linna 's trilogy turned the general tide , and several books were written mainly from the point of view of the Red side in 1918 : e.g. Tampere @-@ trilogy by Erkki Lepokorpi in 1977 , " John " (Finnish : Juho) by Juhani Syrjä in 1998 and " The Command " (Finnish : Käsky) by Leena Lander in 2003 . Kjell Westö 's epic novel " Where We Once Went " (Swedish : Där vi en gång gått) published in 2006 deals with period of

1915 @-@ 1930 , from both the Red and the White point of views . Kjell Westö 's book " Mirage 38 " (Swedish : Hägring 38) from 2013 describes Finnish pre @-@ World War II mental atmosphere and post @-@ war traumas of the 1918 war . F.E. Sillanpää 's , Väinö Linna 's , Lauri Viita 's , Jarl Hemmer 's , Paavo Rintala 's , Leena Lander 's and Kjell Westö 's stories have been utilized in motion picture and in theatre .