

Nordic Communism 1917-1990



The research project **Nordic Communism 1917-1990**, which started in January 2002, involves scholars from all the Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The purpose of the project is to stimulate research about the history of communism in the Nordic countries in a comparative perspective. A final aim is to publish in English a comprehensive, comparative survey of the history of Nordic communism, including its relation to the broader international communist movement.

The project is lead by a committee consisting of members from each of the Nordic countries. Project leader is professor Asmund Egge at the Department of History at the University of Oslo. The project is supported by [Nordiska samarbetsnämnden för humanistisk forskning \(NOS-H\)](#) - a joint committee formed by the Councils for research in the humanities and social sciences in the Nordic countries, with the purpose of funding research projects in the humanities.



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Finnish and Scandinavian Communists and revolution in the inter-war years

by Tauno Saarela -2004

The communist movement wanted to make a revolution, in order to transform the society fundamentally. It was obviously considered self-evident that the October Revolution was a universally applicable model and consequently the nature or preconditions for revolution were not much discussed in the international communist movement. It was enough to say that the world was living in a period of revolutions and to explain the incapacity of the capitalist system to solve its own problems. In the wake of the Russian Revolution it was as if the foundation of the Communist Party and the knowledge of the necessity to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat were the only prerequisites needed for a future uprising.

After the Russian Revolution the hopes of the communist movement rested in Europe but in the mid-1920s the expectations shifted to the colonial countries. At the same time the movement started to talk about a temporary stabilization of capitalism. The belief in immediate revolution was restored in 1928 as the Communist International declared the beginning of the third period, a period of new revolutionary uprisings.

The strong economic deterioration at the turn of the decade seemed to support the observation that the capitalist world was living out its last years, but the revolutionary uprisings didn't materialize, or at least they didn't take the shape the Communist International was expecting. The rise to power of National Socialists in Germany in 1933 was rather a defeat.

It was a painful process for the Comintern to change its policy and carry out a reassessment of the relationship between bourgeois democracy and fascism. At its Seventh Congress in 1935 it finally launched a slogan for a People's Front. Under this slogan the communists wanted to unite various groups of population in action against fascism. The revolution was once again a matter that was postponed to the more distant future.[1]

The national communist movements lived very much according to these changes in the interpretations of the Communist International but their ideas and actions were also influenced by earlier traditions and events, the circumstances and times of the birth of the movements and the actual conditions in the countries in question. This is evident in the cases of the communist movements in Finland and the Scandinavian countries.

Revolution and the national background of the movements

All the Nordic communist movements more or less had their roots in the more or less German Social Democracy of the Second International. Massenstreik-debate, Rosa Luxemburg's and Anton Pannekoek's controversies with Karl Kautsky and the ideas of the left in the Second International in general inspired the Nordic movements.[2] Their inspiration also included the American impact ; many Finns, Swedes and Norwegians worked in America in the first decades of the 20th century and while returning to their native countries brought with them ideas of the American labour movement, particularly those of the militant Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).[3]

Though the ideological background was roughly similar, the birth processes of the Nordic Communist movements were different and dependent on the conditions in the specific countries in question. In the Scandinavian countries the development of the communist movements was a slow and peaceful process, but in Finland the movement was born rather quickly and under dramatic circumstances.

The Scandinavian communist movements were born out of various oppositions that had developed in the Social Democratic Parties and trade unions from the first decade of the 20th century. These oppositions criticized the bureaucratic character of the parties and their co-operation with the bourgeois parties. Anti-militarism and certain ideas of self-government were central parts of their identity and they were distrustful of parliamentary work. The outbreak of the war and the incapacity of the authorities to protect the workers during the war increased their criticism. Through the influence of the German example these oppositions turned into independent parties; the Social Democratic Left Party was founded in Sweden in May 1917 and the Socialist Workers' Party in Denmark in March 1918.[4]

In Norway the opposition was born within the trade union and youth movement and had a larger number of followers. The opposition argued that in order to overthrow the existing state the labour movement had, above all, to conquer the economic power and put the means of production into the hands of workers. This would not be possible via a parliamentary road. There were obviously some differences of opinion in the opposition as to whether the workers should conquer state power outright or whether they could acquire power by other means. The opposition was, however, unanimously in desire for activities which would have a revolutionizing effect on participants. Besides mass meetings and demonstrations such revolutionizing activities were deemed to be strikes, sympathy strikes, go-slow actions, boycotts and industrial sabotage.[5]

Although the opposition in Norway initially regarded labour organizations and municipalities as the proper governmental organizations, developments during the hard times of the war years gave rise to new experiences and attitudes. Because of the food shortages new local labour organizations evolved which began to control prices and delivery of various items in December 1917. The congress of these new organizations, soviets, decided in March 1918 that they should take control of industry, agriculture, fisheries, transport and delivery as well as the social services. The decision, though, was never enacted, and as the opposition successfully took a firm hold over the party and trade unions, these soviets began to wither away.[6]

Once the opposition turned into a majority, the Norwegian Labour Party consequently changed and began to emphasize extra parliamentary actions. Its political definitions were, however, ambiguous, and it identified

political power with the attainment of an overall majority in the parliament. Moreover, its statements about the revolutionary mass actions and revolution as such [7] were vague.

In Sweden the distrust of the Social Democratic Left Party (Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti) (SSV) towards parliament was not as marked as in Norway and Denmark and the party spoke in 1917 for increasing the power of parliament in the governmental system and increasing its influence with regards of foreign policy in particular. The party also wanted to introduce referenda in order to increase the possibilities of the people to influence on politics.[8]

The contacts with the left of the Zimmerwald movement, especially the German part, were important for the Scandinavians in this phase but the oppositions were also influenced by the two Russian revolutions of 1917 as well as uprisings elsewhere. These raised the hopes for a world revolution but also made the oppositions more willing to distance themselves from the parliament-centred politics and to assert that the idea of gradual peaceful transition to socialism via parliamentary road was utopian. Simultaneously the emphasis on the importance of extra-parliamentary actions grew. The Bolsheviks didn't, however, have an immediate ideological influence on the oppositions.[9]

In Finland the war didn't arouse as much unrest as in the Scandinavian countries but the Russian Revolutions had a much deeper effect on Finland which at that time was part of the Russian Empire. The revolutions opened up possibilities for independence but at the same time raised the question of who was to take power something which became increasingly acute resulting in greater tension in the relations between the labour movement and the bourgeoisie. Independence was achieved in December 1917, but the rivalry ended in a division of the country and a bitter Civil War, fought from January to May 1918 and resulting in the defeat of the reds.[10]

A revolution ending in the Civil War was, though, not the revolution the Finnish labour movement had dreamed of and lived for. As the votes for the social democrats in the parliamentary elections rose from 37% to 47% between 1907 and 1916 and as the party got a majority in the parliament in 1916, it could rely on becoming the ruling party in the country as soon as the ties to the Russian empire were broken. Although there was some disappointment that only minor successes were achieved through the parliament, not even the loss of the majority position in October 1917 gave reasons to abandon a parliamentary strategy.[11] Thus, the constitution the red government presented in 1918 was parliament-centred supplemented with the possibilities of people's initiatives and referenda.[12]

It was the failure of the revolution and the escape of the reds to Soviet Russia which determined the conditions for their immediate orientation and for the emergence of their ideas about revolution. The lessons the red refugees in Soviet Russia drew from the failed Finnish revolution were that the reds had lost because they had stayed within the boundaries of bourgeois democracy and relied too much on its possibilities. The lack of centralized Communist Party and an unwillingness to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat were also considered reasons for the defeat.

As a result of these assessments the red refugees founded the Finnish Communist Party (from 1920 the Communist Party of Finland) (SKP) in Moscow in August 1918. The new party abandoned the former working methods of the Finnish labour movement -that is concentrating on working within the parliament, trade unions and co-operative movement -and demanded armed struggle in order to establish iron hard dictatorship of the proletariat. A communist society would then be created by expropriating all the land and capitalist property.

These guidelines were general but in practice the activities of the young SKP were limited to Soviet Russia where it recruited refugees to the Red Army, started the education of Red officers and defended the Russian Revolution against various counterrevolutionary forces. In the beginning of 1919 the party managed to send some members to Finland in order to create armed cells.

The Finnish communists in Sweden also wanted to promote an armed revolution in Finland and in January 1919 wrote plans for the creation of a revolutionary army and red guard in Finland. The former would be established inside the Finnish army, the latter outside it. The plans gave instructions on their organizational structure and on the initiation of the rebellion -no actual dates were mentioned. In fact, all hopes rested entirely on spontaneous formation of these organizations. The plans failed, though, to arouse interest in Finland and they came to nothing.

This indicated that the conditions for revolutionary work in Finland were poor after the Civil War. The winners regarded it as a war for freedom, fought against Russians and red Finns for the independency of Finland. As a result that part of the labour movement which spoke for another kind of society and revolution was especially eyed with suspicion. The SKP was a forbidden party, and persons having contacts with it or the Communist International or who possessed their material were sentenced to prison for high treason.[13]

The representatives of the SKP in Finland realized, at the latest, in the autumn of 1919 that the creation of armed cells and initiation of an armed uprising was not the primary task of the emerging movement. Thus, they had to reassess the guidelines of the founding congress of the SKP. In this reassessment the representatives of the SKP were guided by various groups in the evolving Finnish labour movement which didn't accept the politics of the re-founded Social Democratic Party but rather wanted to create a movement on the basis of old traditions of the Finnish labour movement together with the new communist ideas. These groups, which created the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland (Suomen Sosialistinen Työväenpuolue) (SSTP), were inclined to admit that the revolution was not possible without the use of weapons but didn't share the belief in the feasibility of an immediate armed insurrection. For them the way forward was rather along process during which the support of the labouring classes would be secured and the prevailing order weakened, although they didn't state their goals very clearly.[14]

This didn't entirely extinguish the SKP's enthusiasm for the armed revolution. The conflicts between Finland and Soviet Russia kept alive the idea of a transformation of war between the countries into a civil war even after the Tartu treaty in 1920. In these conflicts the Finnish Communists in Soviet Russia defended the Soviet State rather than tried to carry out a revolution in Finland. Even the 'fat rebellion' (läskikapina) in January 1922, during which Finnish troops from Soviet Karelia crossed the border and made contact with lumberjacks at a logging enterprise in the northern backwoods, declared workers' power and returned to Soviet Russia with many recruits, can be regarded in such a way.[15] The idea of an armed uprising was also revived among the leaders of the SKP in October 1923 as they expected the rebellion in Germany to spread to Finland and gave instructions accordingly.[16]

There were, thus, various ideas on the concept of revolution to be found in Finnish communism[17]. The interest in soldiers indicated that the leaders of the SKP were inclined to regard revolution as the capture of the state apparatus of power and placing it in the hands of communists. According to them this was best promoted by an underground organization. Among the followers of communism in Finland the idea prevailed that the revolution was to be made by winning them oral and intellectual domination for the working class and by strengthening its positions and influence in the existing society. These tendencies were not necessary in contradiction to one another as the SKP regarded the work done in Finland as preparatory for the revolution.

For the evolving Scandinavian communist movements the questions concerning the character of revolution were more 'academic'. They repeated the principles of the impossibility of a parliamentary road to socialism and the importance of extra parliamentary actions.[18] The expressions 'armed revolution' and 'dictatorship of the proletariat' also appeared in their programmes indicating some kind of adaptation to the principles formulated by the Communist International. The communist movement wanted to break the tradition of the labour movement whereby the connection between the end goals and daily activities was vague. This, however, cannot be said of the initial Finnish or Scandinavian programme documents where

the traditional division between great goals and daily activities was evident as in the SSTP's program of 1920.[19]

Thus the definitions of the character of the revolution or the dictatorship of the proletariat were given not as guidelines for the daily activities of the movements but rather as expressions of solidarity with the Russian Revolution and a desire to belong to a large international movement. Although embracing these definitions indicated acceptance of the principles the Communist International had presented, they were mainly taken up as a means of expressing identity. In this, though, the earlier traditions also had a part to play.

Dictatorship of the proletariat

The October revolution could be regarded as an event where the Bolsheviks conquered the executive power of the state by force and managed to hold it by establishing the proletarian dictatorship, the coercive power of the proletariat.

Although an ambiguous concept, the expression dictatorship of the proletariat began to distinguish communists from others on the left. After the Russian Revolution many Bolsheviks identified it with the existence of a socialist society. This attitude was also reflected in the SKP. In spite of its vagueness the dictatorship of the proletariat was an important concept for the emerging communists in order to separate themselves from the social democrats. It was, however, not easy for all the becoming communists to accept the concept.

The emerging Scandinavian communists had fought for democracy which was a very positive concept for them and in the view of the Swedish left social democrats especially, dictatorship was connected to the right or right-wing social democrats. Thus it was a negative concept.[20]

These democratic traditions came to expression in the early characterizations of the dictatorship of the proletariat. In 1920 the SSV emphasized that it would not be possible to establish a dictatorship of the proletariat unless the great majority of the organized workers was for it.[21] For the Scandinavian movements it was also important to define the dictatorship of the proletariat as a transitional period during which the working class alone would hold political and economic power -after that class domination and class struggle would cease to exist.[22] The DKP emphasized the transitional character as late as 1925.[23]

The early Scandinavian characterizations of the dictatorship of the proletariat also reflected the anti-militarist and humanist traditions of the movements. This was illustrated in the formulations about how the duration and nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat was dependent on the actions of the bourgeoisie after they had lost power. Communists had no desire for a bloody outcome, said the Danes in 1921.[24]

The young Scandinavian communist movements were not willing to declare that the workers would start an armed revolution. According to them the revolution would only turn violent because the capitalists would use all the possible means in order to maintain their power.[25] The workers would thus be forced to take up arms in order to defend their revolution. The Swedes, for instance, stated in 1920 that the labouring classes had, after they had taken the power, the right to use arms in self-defence against the rebellious capitalist class or counter-attacks by the capitalist state.[26] The Swedes continued to hold to this idea, although it was not stated so unambiguously. Not even the major internal split in the party in 1924 gave rise to other formulations.[27] It was only in 1930 that the Sillén communists[28] talked about an armed uprising.[29]

The old traditions may also have had an influence on formulations regarding the takeover of the power. The Scandinavian movements talked about the replacement of bourgeois state apparatus rather than of crushing it. In this replacement the soviets had an important role, and the focus of the class struggle would be in the economic fights.[30]

Norwegian communist movement could not stick to this tradition. In 1924 their leading figure, Arvid Hansen, was at least willing to emphasize the oppressive character of the dictatorship of the proletariat. For him the "iron hard" proletarian dictatorship was rather a goal than a transitional period. He was also doubtful as to whether power would only be conquered by getting the majority behind the movement - achieving majority support would rather come after the conquest of power. There was also a tendency to downplay the role of soviets in the future revolution and only see them as governmental organs after the takeover of power.[31] This expressed the need of the new Communist Party to strongly express its positions in order to emphasize the difference between itself and the Labour Party.[32] This was obviously also the case in Sweden after the split of the party in 1929. At least the language of the Sillén communists became more aggressive.[33]

In Finland the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat didn't become popular, although recent developments and the coercive measures exercised by those in authority gave probably more reasons to discuss it than in the Scandinavian countries. The concept was mentioned at the start of the division of the labour movement in the autumn of 1919, but, nevertheless, it was not included in the program of the SSTP in spring 1920. Instead reference was made to 'a transitional state apparatus' which would have the task of suppressing opposition from the exploiters and liberating the workers from the yoke of the capital. It was also seen as a means to end the freedom for exploitation and remove the privileges of the oppressors.[34]

There was less discussion about the dictatorship of the proletariat by the Finns in comparison with the communists in the Scandinavian countries. It was avoided for reasons of self-preservation which was even more the case after the imposition of a ban on the SSTP in 1923-24 when the courts regarded the mention of concepts like soviets and the dictatorship of the proletariat as evidence of the preparation to commit high treason.

Although the communist principles emphasized that the world was living in a period of revolutions, talk about revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat became less common at the turn of 1923-24 as the hopes for immediate revolution withered away and the division in the labour movement became final.

The communist movement, however, developed new slogans in order to express its goals. The notion of 'a workers' and peasants' government' was born at the third plenum of the ECCI in June 1923 and it replaced the earlier formulation 'a workers' government'. Initially the purpose of the concept was to remind communists of the importance of the peasant question but it was also adopted in order to indicate how the Bolsheviks had solved the problem. According to the ECCI-plenum, a workers' and peasants' government was the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. The concept, was, however, ambiguous, and at the fourth congress of the International in the summer of 1924 Grigory Zinoviev stated that it was a pseudonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat.[35]

Although the definition of the ECCI-plenum referred mainly to the peasant question, the Norwegian Labour Party didn't regard it as actual or feasible in Norway. Thus the workers' and peasants' government was one of those issues contributing to its separation from the Communist International. The NKP spoke at its founding congress in November 1923 for the foundation of the workers' and peasants' government, but it didn't, however, become important for the NKP as its main figures preferred to speak about the dictatorship of the proletariat.[36]

In Sweden the reception of the new concept was more favourable. It was perhaps introduced in order to compensate the ambiguous earlier definitions of the proletarian dictatorship but maybe the foundation of the Social Democratic government also had something to do with it. However, the intention of ending ambiguous formulations was obviously not met; in the election programme of SKP in 1924 the concepts workers' and peasants' government, the dictatorship of the proletariat and workers' and

peasants' democracy were presented side by side as being synonymous.[37]

The leaders of SKP(F) also proposed that the new concept should be introduced during the presidential election campaign at the turn of 1924-25 in order to keep the question of power uppermost in the eyes of the public in Finland. They, however, encountered resistance from some of the leading figures of Finnish communism in Finland as they recognized the concept as the pseudonym of the dictatorship of the proletariat and regarded its introduction as dangerous for the movement. The danger became greater as the SKP-leaders wanted to nominate Otto Ville Kuusinen as the presidential candidate for Finnish communism. Those in Finland managed to reject the nomination of Kuusinen but the call for a workers' and peasants' government was presented in the election manifesto.[38] It didn't, however, become commonly proclaimed or used as a slogan and was not dropped in later elections.

The correspondence between workers' and peasants' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat became more evident in the late 1920s and early 1930s as the Danish and Swedish parties used the terms interchangeably. The Danes, however, changed the formulation to the workers' and small-holders' government in 1932 in order to give a more effective alternative to the sitting Social Democratic government. The formulation allowed for the interpretation that after the revolution there would be a wide participation of both workers' and peasants' organizations.[39]

The Danes didn't speak of armed revolution even at this time. In Norway and Sweden it became more common to make mention of it from 1929 onwards. In 1930 Arvid Hansen wanted to carry out the revolution "arms in hand". Besides soviets he also included a workers' militia and red army as necessary components in the future state apparatus of the working class.[40] The other movements didn't express the coercive character of the revolutionary dictatorship as clearly, although statements regarding armed revolution and for the establishment of a dictatorship of the proletariat became more evident in the writings of the Sillén communists in Sweden.[41]

During the last years of the 1920s the emphasis on the transitional character of the proletarian dictatorship disappeared and it became rather a goal in itself. The slogans for a Soviet Sweden or a Soviet Norway didn't anymore refer to the countries governed by the soviets as direct organs of workers' power but to the example of the Soviet Union. This change also implied an acceptance of the increasing role of the communist party in the administration of the future socialist society but none of the Nordic parties did, however, say out aloud that the communist party would hold enormous power during the dictatorship of the proletariat or afterwards. The SKP(S), for instance, said in 1934 that the dictatorship of the proletariat would mean struggle for the implementation of a wide democracy for the labouring masses.[42]

In the mid-1930s the enthusiasm for the dictatorship of the proletariat began to wane, and it was no longer publicly propagated -at least not in the election campaigns.[43] In 1936 the NKP, however, required the acknowledgement of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a precondition for forming a single labour party in Norway. Accordingly the new party should state that it would be necessary to overthrow bourgeois rule by revolutionary means and to put in its place the dictatorship of the proletariat as a soviet power.[44]

The decrease in the importance of the proletarian dictatorship coincided with the change of the line of the Comintern in the mid-1930s. As the revolution the communists were expecting didn't materialize or was carried through by right-wing forces, the need grew for the Communist International to make a reassessment regarding the question of the immediacy of the revolution. The change was painful for the International, but gradually it declared that defending bourgeois democracy against the fascist threat was its main task. The change also gave the Communist Parties a better possibility for taking their national conditions into consideration. This was something that further contributed to the disappearance of the dictatorship of the proletariat as something to be advocated. The purges in the Soviet Union may also have increased the unwillingness of the movements to identify with it in the Soviet sense.

Arms

The idea of an armed revolution preached by the communist movement was contradictory to the pacifist and humanist traditions of the emerging communist movements in the Nordic countries. The Russian Revolution and the Civil War in Finland contributed, however, to the weakening of these traditions and to willingness to accept the use of arms.[45]

In the immediate after-war years this anti-militarist tradition was, however, evident in the demands for the abolition of the army, although this was sometimes argued for by hinting at the great cost of the army. Occasionally it was also explained that the army was a force directed against the working class.[46] In the early 1920s the abolition of the army was replaced by the demands of not appropriating money for military purposes but giving it to the unemployed or for other social purposes.[47]

In Norway the anti-militarist tradition also took other expressions such as the Venstre kommunistisk Ungdomsfylking (VKU), the youth movement of the DNA, which in January 1924 took up the old slogan of an organized military strike. The VKU also advocated the formation of workers' own guards. The decision was supported by the DNA but the campaign with demonstrations and proclamations from the conscripts not to go into the army had to be abandoned in March 1925 as many members were given prison sentences of three to six months but also because of its poor results. The young NKP and its youth organization regarded VKU's campaign for a military strike as a crime against the working class. According to them young men should go in the army in order to change it.[48] The underground and tiny Communist Youth League of Finland (SKNL) considered the strike ridiculous.[49]

Although the DKP stated in 1921 that soviets should defend soldiers' daily interests in the army[50], the questions regarding conditions in the army were not central to the Scandinavian parties in the 1920s.[51] It was only in the latter half of the 1930s that the democratization of the army became an important slogan for them.[52] In Finland the abolition of the army was not mentioned, but the cutting of military expenses was put forward every year in the 1920s.

There was also the difference that the SKP was more inclined to work inside the army than the other Nordic parties. Initially that was because of the great hopes of the SKP of being able to revolutionize the soldiers. The creation of an underground military organization by the SKP -seven to ten functionaries and their contacts -was an expression of these hopes. The task of this organization was above all to agitate among conscripts but it was also active in military intelligence.

Although the Finnish army was built on the foundation of the White army, it was a conscripts' army. As the conscripts were mainly sons of workers and peasants, the representatives of the SKP counted on their willingness to become revolutionaries. In the beginning of the 1920s it was customary to estimate the 'redness' of the army as being over 50%. However, such claims were quietly dropped as it became clear that Finnish communism could recruit at best one percent of the 20,000 conscripts.

This turned the interest of the military organization to the inner conditions of the army and it tried to encourage soldiers to express their dissatisfaction on various shortages in the army. This was not very successful and probably caused more harm than good to the conscripts as many of those who were in contact with the military organization of the SKP were sentenced to prison. The message about the shortages in the army was probably more effectively done from the platform of the parliament and through the press.[53]

Despite the paucity of the successes achieved and the imprisonment of many functionaries of the organization in 1927-28 the SKP didn't, however, abandon its military organization. In the early 1930s it obviously tried to organize more short-term military schooling for the Finns in the Soviet Union but the achievements of the organization remained insignificant and it faded away in the mid-1930s.

The weak success of the military organization of the SKP indicates that an interest in trying to form secret organizations in the army was not entirely shared by the members of Finnish communism in Finland. The pacifist sentiments of the youth movement before 1918 grew weaker after the Civil War, but also the experiences in the war could engender doubts about an armed revolution also in those who joined Finnish communism.

The demands for the creation of workers' defence or the arming of the people[54] were ideas brought up by the upheavals in other countries but could also be seen as reflections of direct democracy. In the early 1920s this idea didn't materialize. It was only in the last years of the decade that workers' defence guard (Arbejdevaern) was founded in Denmark following the example of German Roter Frontkämpferbund. Its intention was to protect the Communist Party in the demonstrations, and it got into fights with the conservative and social democrat youth which led to the institution of a general ban on the wearing of uniforms. The organization was an expression of the left turn period and was dissolved in 1934.[55]

As the members of the right wing Lappo-movement attacked the Communist printing house in Vaasa in Finland in spring 1930 and broke up its printing presses, some workers' defensive guards were formed in order to protect the property of the labour organizations. They failed, though, to offer any resistance as the right wingers or authorities began to close labour halls.

Although the communists, also the Nordic communists, spoke a lot about the proletarian dictatorship and armed revolution, these discussions had little practical effect on the activities of the movements. It was rather the economic, social and legal position of the workers that were the determining factors for the actions of the Communist movements in the Nordic countries.

Reforms

According to the international communist movement the capitalist system was unable to generate or accept reforms as it had done during its golden era. By raising the question of reforms the communist movement wished to emphasize that its attainment necessarily entailed the overthrow of the capitalist system. Thus, for Communists, stimulating workers to fight for reforms and broadening out these struggles so that they challenged whole system were important tasks. The winning of reforms was also considered important in order to improve the immediate position of the workers, although there was also a tendency in the Communist movement believing that immiseration would revolutionize the workers. In many cases, though, the need for total opposition towards the bourgeois system limited the possibility of the movements to take full advantage of the issue of reforms.

It is difficult to say what the general attitude of the Nordic Communist movements was to the question of reforms. The leaders of the SKP(F), however, were inclined to regard some reform issues in the early 1920s as a means by which the revolution would be brought closer. Of greater importance for every movement was probably, in the final analysis, the fact that through the agitation for reforms it was possible to question the legitimacy of the existing order. The Nordic countries were, however, not alike in this respect.

Although not explicitly stated, it is possible to discern that the fight for some structural reforms in Finland would make the work of Finnish communism easier. After the Civil War the winners of the war created a semi-official paramilitary organization Suojeluskunnat which by its mere presence made bourgeois democracy questionable. The abolition of Suojeluskunnat was one of the main goals of Finnish communism. Occasionally its members implied that there was a contradiction between a strong armed organization and the principles of bourgeois democracy but it was more common to attack the Suojeluskunnat and call for its disbandment by referring to its class character.

The call for the abolition of the Detective Central Police, the political police, was also a demand which was supposed to improve the legal position of the workers. Thus, creating a society where the political rights of the workers were respected was also one of the main aims of Finnish communism. Although its members saw that in this respect the conditions were much better in the Scandinavian countries, they may, however, have cherished the idea that the realization of the workers' civil rights also meant the realization of socialism.

One of the structural reforms, closely connected to the workers' position and rights, that Finnish communism fought for was the improvement of the position of the trade unions in the labour markets. In Finland the employers didn't accept labour organizations as their counterpart and thus they opposed entering collective labour agreements and wanted to negotiate only with individual workers. They also preferred strike-breakers and lockouts to negotiations.

Although Finnish communism, which dominated the trade unions, was initially very sceptical about the benefits of the collective bargaining and making agreements with employers, it gradually realized their importance in safeguarding the economic position of the workers. From the mid-1920s achieving collective labour agreements was the main objective of the trade unions. In many struggles forcing the employer to recognise the trade union as a negotiating partner was more important than gaining a wage increase. attaining collective labour agreements was also the main objective in the great national strikes in 1927-28.

However, the trade unions only managed to force the employers to accept local collective agreements. There were local agreements especially in communist dominated building and metal industries. Although the employers stated that their unwillingness to make collective labour agreements was because of communist domination in the trade unions, they didn't make agreements with trade unions led by the social democrats or change their policy after the ban on the communist led trade unions in 1930.[56]

The persecution of the communists was not as great in the Scandinavian countries and the employers didn't oppose collective labour agreements. Thus, the demand for structural reforms regarding the legal position of the workers and labour movement in society was not as important for the Scandinavian movements, although the workers' right to strike was occasionally included in their platforms.[57] For them matters concerning the economic and social position of the workers were more central, although the latter were, of course, important for Finnish communism, too.

In the Scandinavian countries the early 1920s unemployment was a major problem, and demands for effective unemployment insurance and for public works became commonplace.[58] In Finland unemployment was felt especially during the winter months, but after the first years of the 1920s it no longer rose to such staggering heights.

For a short period in the mid-1920s the Scandinavian [at least Swedish] and Finnish movements put forward slogans calling for unemployment insurance to be financed by the employers alone. The idea was, however, soon given up and it was accepted that the state alongside the employers would finance the reform. What the communists didn't approve of though was that the workers should also participate in the financing of the reform.[59]

This was true also of other insurances -health, disability, old age, motherhood -which were also included in the platforms of all the movements.[60] These were obviously more important in Finland where the insurance system was less developed and the willingness of the bourgeois parties to discuss the matter weak. However, the unwillingness of the movement to compromise was evident in 1929 when its representatives, alongside the conservatives, voted against the Sickness insurance legislation because the insured would have to contribute to its costs and the small-holders were not included. -The reform was only implemented in the 1960s.[61]

Reforms concerning social and welfare issues were frequently proposed in the parliament and from the mid 1920s Finnish communism regularly attempted, by means of interpellations, to get the government to pay attention to the problem of unemployment. As the local authorities had responsibility for taking care of the unemployed, proposals for reform involved criticism of the prevailing social policy, and an attempt to create a more state-centred social policy.

Through their motions in parliament the representatives of Finnish communism could raise the whole question of other insurances. Arguably they had some influence on governments' bills on insurances in 1927-28 but more often than not their own motions on such matters were buried in the parliament. This was, for instance, the case with a detailed motion to change the taxation system into one based more on progressive taxation. Demands for the abolition of customs duties and indirect taxes were, however, presented every year. These old slogans of the labour movement kept their place among the key objectives at least in Sweden, Denmark and Finland in the 1920s.[62]

The communist movements also attempted to organize demonstrations and workers' meetings in support of these reforms, but in Finland they were on many occasions defensive. Very occasionally movements evolved out of the various campaigns and it was the unemployed that were most successful in this respect. In Finland these organizations worked in close connection with the trade unions in the 1920s; the local committees of the unemployed were often part of the local trade union organization and their national conferences were organized with the help of the trade unions. In Scandinavia this kind of co-operation didn't run as smoothly; in Sweden and in Norway the organization of the unemployed had difficulties with the trade union leadership which demanded the acceptance of their political line.[63]

Support for reforms in the interests of small-holders and peasants were not as usual in the Scandinavian movements as in Finland in the 1920s. All the Nordic movements demanded the confiscation of the lands of great landowners, big companies and church in the first years of the decade.[64] Rural issues were, however, down played in the Scandinavian movements whereas in Finland peasants' and small-holders' welfare was of importance all the time, even taking precedence over the interests of urban workers in the mid-1920s.

This was due to a whole number of factors. From the very beginning the Finnish labour movement had strong support in the countryside, and the situation of crofters had been one of the main questions for the labour movement before the Civil War. It remained an important issue as Finnish communism regarded the land reform implemented in 1918 as inadequate. The participation of many peasants in the white army in 1918 also gave it an added significance. In addition the attention paid to the peasant question by Otto Ville Kuusinen, especially in the years 1923-24, ensured that it was given a high priority in the Finnish communist movement.[65]

It was only in the beginning of the 1930s that the importance of the interests of those living in the countryside was recognised in the platforms of the Scandinavian movements. The Norwegians wrote a special relief program for the peasants in 1933.[66] This increased interest was closely connected to the deteriorating position of the peasants and small-holders as the depression hit the world economy.

In the early 1930s it was common for all the Nordic communist movements to demand the implementation of relief measures for peasants', calling for debt-relief, a reduction of interest payments and taxes, even writing them off entirely, and an end to compulsory auctions. Also the old demands were given a new lease of life in response to the enormous rise in unemployment; there were calls for the creation of work schemes for the unemployed and for the introduction of effective unemployment insurance. During these years it also became customary to oppose wrong rationalization which resulted in job cuts and to demand shortening of the working day.[67]

During the depression the expectations regarding the revolutionizing effect of the economic and social demands were greater than in the 1920s, and the Nordic communist movements stated their belief in the political character of the economic struggles which reflected that workers were moving from a defensive to an offensive stance.[68]

The various protest movements became more important for the Scandinavian communist parties. In Denmark the movement of the unemployed was very important for the Communist Party, and the platform it presented in the elections in 1932 was based mainly upon its demands.

In the Scandinavian countries demonstrations by the unemployed and those still in work led to clashes with the authorities. In February 1931 in Nakskov, Denmark, the unemployed occupied the municipal council chambers and by May there were clashes in the streets with police and soldiers.[69] In Sweden attempts by workers to force out blacklegs led to many confrontations with the police and army. In Ådalen five people were killed and several wounded as soldiers shot demonstrating workers in May 1931. The incident led to solidarity strikes and demonstrations, and the SKP(S) tried to take the leadership of the protest movement but was not very successful against the authorities or social democrats.[70]

Even in Finland the peasants angered by their economic difficulties came to blows with police in the so called hack rebellion in Nivala in 1932, but Finnish communism had very little to do with the actual events that unfolded.[71]

Winning the battle for hegemony

Although the international communist movement laid heavy stress on the coercive character of the bourgeois state, the Nordic movements always gave importance to the fact that the bourgeoisie dominated society by means of its ideological apparatus, i.e. school, church, religion, press, literature, etc. This was also mentioned in Finland, although the coercive character was more evident than in the Scandinavian countries. The issue of how to break the dependence on bourgeois culture or ideological institutions was, however, very rarely discussed in the movements. If the matter was broached it was usually done in order to emphasize the importance of their own cultural activities and institutions.[72]

In practice this, however, indicated a struggle against the dominating ideas, values, norms and practices of the existing society. This aspiration can be seen as an hegemonic project, although it had plenty of deterministic features in it. The thoughts behind it were not formulated as distinctively as they were by the Austrian social democrats or the German left-wing social democrats.[73] For the Nordic communist movements the struggle against dominant ideas in society was in many cases only expressed in vague terms or through condemnation and rejection.

The communist challenge to the existing society was first and foremost formulated in terms of the basic precept of the Marxist theory concerning the contradiction between the worlds of work and capital.[74] It was customary for the Nordic communist movements to emphasize that injustices were based on this contradiction and that speeches about living in a democratic society were only empty phrases as long as this contradiction continued to exist.[75]

The capitalist system was also characterized as chaotic in order to contrast it with the order and system of the socialist society.[76] This way of critique became especially prominent in the early 1930s as the economic problems of capitalist societies were negatively compared with the achievements and prospects of the Soviet Union.[77]

It was not only on the basis of these general lines of criticism that the communist movement tried to challenge the capitalist system. The way it gave prominence to the international working class as the subject of the revolution indicated a desire to replace the nation state and nationalism with workers and internationalism. But the communist challenge also touched upon the ideological institutions of the bourgeois society.

Religion, church and priests

Religion was an important part of the ideology of the whites in Finland and therefore its role in political life was more prominent than in other countries. The political character of religion had increased during the Civil War as the church and priests had taken a strong stand in favour of the Whites. They didn't call for mercy in the aftermath of the Civil War and didn't condemn the White violence but rather promoted it. The attitude of the clergymen was also expressed in the influential positions they held in the right wing parties and movements.

This is probably the reason why the old demand of the labour movement for the separation of church and state was more regularly taken up in Finland than in Scandinavia where it was only occasionally raised.[78] Opposition to the appropriation of money to the church and priests was also much more profoundly expressed in Finland than elsewhere.[79]

In Finland it became possible for the citizens to leave the church in 1922. The whole labour movement campaigned for the separation but the results did not live up to expectations. Campaigns for the separation became an annual event particularly for the youth movement of Finnish communism from the mid 1920s. During these campaigns, organized in March, it was usual to explain the nature of religion, church and priests and, in the last years of the decade, to organize mass separations from the church. The agitprop groups which flourished in years 1928-30, performed many songs and plays that mocked priests and the church. A great number of the members and supporters of Finnish communism, however, remained members of the church.

The main target of the criticism of Finnish communism was the church and the priests whose greed and war-mongering were oftentimes in the newspapers and periodicals. In this Finnish communism was partly following in the traditions of the Finnish labour movement which had long attacked the church and the priests for not following the teachings of Jesus Christ. In the communist press Jesus was sometimes named as the first communist and those in the labour movement as his only true followers. The position of the established church was also challenged by organizing Christmas churches in the labour halls with speeches from known representatives of the movement as the sermons and labour songs in the place of the psalms.

For the others antireligious or anti-church activities were not as important, although the Communist International intervened on this question in Sweden and in Norway in 1923. The International wanted to make clear that the members of the Communist Party were atheists and materialists, although it advised cautiousness when it came to the production of antireligious propaganda. Although the disagreement about religion was one of those issues contributing to dissolution of the movements in Both countries, the young NKP or the Kilbom communists didn't pay much attention to the matter.[80]

School and education

For a movement that wants to create a new society the future education is very important, stated the Danish communists in 1921.[81] That was shared by the movements in the other countries but for all of the Nordic communist movements education meant, above all, courses and lectures organized by the party or the labour movement. The working class had to oppose bourgeois education with its own, said the Swede Zeth Höglund in 1923.[82]

An interest in the general state education was expressed mainly in the early 1920s. Then some of the movements presented guidelines for the school system and demanded proper conditions -decent class rooms, free meals, books and other equipments -for the pupils.[83] Teaching, its contents and methods, was rarely touched upon. The Danes, however, felt that teaching should be controlled by joint teachers' and parents' councils. They also called for senior school pupils to be given education in sex and ethics and instruction as to the dangers of alcohol, all in accordance with modern principals.[84] The other Nordic movements occasionally made calls for the abolition of religious instruction in schools.[85]

In Finland the whole question of school education was probably more important as most teachers had been on the side of Whites during the Civil War and there were many right-wing teachers who expressed their nationalist and anti-labour sentiments to the children. Finnish communism was concerned about their behaviour and tried to give publicity to cases of misconduct by teachers. Their attitude was, however, defensive. This was also shown their resistance to the formation of the youth organizations of the Suojeluskunnat among school children. The ideas about organizing communist children at school were never attempted in practice.

In 1920s it was not very common for the children of communists to continue with their school education after the elementary phase. The reason for this was usually economic but there was also a certain fear among the followers of Finnish communism that those who studied at school for years would abandon their class. This fear reflected the strong conservative attitudes that were dominant in the schools and among the intellectuals in Finland. This is why the movement was rather reticent concerning the demands it made in the field of education.

In Denmark the Communists took a much more offensive stance. In 1938 the DKP stated that the equal rights for schooling could increase possibilities for the working class more possibilities to break the power of the upper classes in state and municipal government. This was dependent, though on teaching in the schools being unprejudiced and democratic.[86]

Direct versus representational democracy

According to the founding congress of the Communist International the organs of the bourgeois democracy were not appropriate governmental organs for a society led by the workers. The suitable organs in a workers' state were the soviets. A strong stand was thus made in favour of direct participation; the soviets were considered to represent the will of the workers more directly and completely than representative bodies like parliament and municipal councils.

For the emerging Scandinavian communist movements this was easy to accept; the socialist oppositions, especially in Norway and Denmark, had expressed their distrust of parliamentary activity from as early as 1910s. These sentiments were strengthened by the incapacity and unwillingness of the parliamentarians to prevent the outbreak of the war in 1914 and the subsequent rise in the cost of living. In Norway this distrust was more of a general feeling than elsewhere.

Although before 1918 the Finnish labour movement believed in the possibilities of a parliamentary strategy, there were also strong memories of the impact of extra-parliamentary actions; the parliamentary reform in

1906 was partly a result of large demonstrations. After the 1917 March Revolution workers set up militias which assumed the function of the police. In some towns they also founded their own general organs, representatives of workers organizations. They were supposed to be a kind of counterbalance to the bourgeois municipal government and attempted to control the delivery and distribution of food.[87]

The importance of soviets as organs of working class power was referred to especially in Norway and Denmark. For the DNA from 1918 onwards the soviets were regarded as organs that should take power. This attitude was adopted a little later in Denmark.[88] In Finland soviets were rather regarded as governmental organs in a future socialist society. This was the idea expressed in the program of the SSTP and also in the motion made by two members of the party in the parliament in autumn 1921, according to which, Finland should be transformed in to a socialist soviet republic.[89]

The talk about soviets didn't last very long; the Communist International regarded their formation as only important on the eve of revolution. They also lost their position of power and significance in the Soviet Union. Also in Finland the fact that it was not safe to promote the idea of soviets, as the courts regarded the goal of soviet government as prima-facie evidence of treasonous activities, contributed to the disappearance of any mention of them in the manifestos. The idea of direct participation, however, survived in demands which spoke of the right of the various groups of the population to take part in the matters that directly concerned them. These demands for self-government were, in many respects, a criticism of the bureaucratic methods of exercising power.

In the beginning of the communist movement the attitude towards parliament and elections was not clear. The Finnish communists in Soviet Russia wrote a declaration concerning the elections in February 1919 which explained how erroneous it was to participate in them and urged workers to overthrow the state of the exploiters. There were good reasons not to participate as there were only very limited possibilities for the labour movement to express its ideas in the campaign. The declaration was not, however, followed -if it was ever received -in Finland and the workers instead took an active part in the elections in order to improve their legal position.[90]

The boycotting of elections and parliamentary work was also touched upon at the extraordinary party congress of the DNA in June 1919. The congress merely speculated about the possibility of a situation in the future when the party would have to leave parliament and concentrate on direct actions. The only result of the discussion was, however, an expression of the preference for socialist democracy to that of bourgeois variety.[91] There were obviously talks about boycotting the elections in Sweden in 1921, too, but here at least the SKP explained in its platform the reasons why a boycott would merely strengthen the forces of reaction at this point in time.[92]

The question of boycotting the elections was not mentioned later. Not even in 1930 as Finnish communism lost its right to participate in the elections.[93]

However, simply rejection was not the only instruction to be given by the international communist movement regarding parliament. The resolution made by the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 was much more important. According to it, parliament could not, in conditions of imperialism, serve "as the centre of the struggle for reforms" or for improving the lot of the working class", as it had done in the preceding epoch. For communists, parliament was useful only as a platform for making revolutionary agitation. In summer 1920 the Communist International was still affected by feelings of euphoria about the possibility of immediate revolution and believed that speeches from the parliament could "help the masses to shatter the State machine and parliament itself".[94] Thus the influence of the agitation was regarded as a spark for immediate revolutionary actions.

The idea of using parliament as a tribune for agitation was easy to accept in every country as the idea was familiar from the writings of the left of the Second International, especially those of Rosa Luxemburg and

Anton Pannekoek. They spoke, however, of the need for a period of prolonged agitation, and it was in their spirit that the communist movements in Scandinavia and Finland interpreted the idea.

In Finland the SSTP considered its main tasks in parliament as that of revealing "the rotten world of slaughter", arousing extra parliamentary actions and forcing the bourgeois parliament into deadlock.[95] In the Scandinavian countries the communist parties also expressed the need to give priority to extra-parliamentary actions but probably warned more clearly than the Finns about the danger of parliamentary illusions. For the Danes it was important to reveal "the humbug democracy" of the country and to demonstrate opposition to the bourgeois society.[96]

It was usual for the movements to demonstrate their arrival in the parliament. In Finland the members of the SSTP presented their principles in the opening session and pointed out the white injustices of 1918 and demanded their release of the imprisoned reds. Also the nomination of a member of the group unable to take his seat in the parliament because of imprisonment for the candidate of the chairman was a demonstrative act.[97] In Denmark the winning of two seats in 1932 was a significant moment, and the occasion was marked by a procession with red flags and 5000 persons to the parliament where a meeting was held before the two members entered the parliament.[98]

In the long run it was, however, difficult to follow the guidelines. In Finland it became evident as early as 1922-23 that the speeches made in parliament didn't produce any significant extra-parliamentary actions or bring the workings of the bourgeois parliament to a standstill. The speeches from the parliament had rather a defensive character. Thus for Finnish communism it was a platform to reveal injustices taking place in Finland and by means of that try to undermine the position of the bourgeois society which didn't follow its own ideals on rights and freedom.

Revealing various injustices and defending workers were the most important tasks of the parliamentary group of Finnish communism. In the latter half of the 1920s the motions in order to improve the economic position of the workers gave the parliamentary work more of an offensive character. The motions and speeches concerning reforms were also aimed at undermining the legitimacy of the prevailing system. However, it was not able to determine the agenda of the parliament and very often it had to respond to the proposals made by the government or other political groups. Little by little the representatives of Finnish communism more or less accommodated to the working methods of the parliament; they didn't, for instance, oppose the orders of the chairman and use delaying tactics with long speeches.[99]

For the leaders of the SKP the behaviour of the parliamentary group was a constant source of dissatisfaction. According to them, the parliamentary group didn't agitate but whined and whimpered. They urged the group to stop making appeals to humanity and bourgeois laws and reveal to more forthrightly the nature of bourgeoisie. This urging, though, didn't bring any tangible changes.[100]

In Denmark the communist parliamentarians could, at least in the beginning, take advantage of the possibilities to be able to speak more freely. The speeches made uncompromisingly attacked the government and other political parties blaming them for acquiescing to Nazi Germany. This obviously reflected the politics of the third period but it was also due to the fact that no communist members were elected to any of the various committees of the parliament. The provocative behaviour of Aksel Larsen, though, diminished after the first years.[101]

The behaviour of the Nordic communist movements in the parliament was heavily influenced by their insistence on not initiating or taking part in any horse trading in parliament.[102] This attitude indicated that the communist parliamentarians were not willing to enter into any compromises but wanted to speak for and advocate their own proposals until the bitter end. There were of course exceptions to the rule. The Finns did, in their weak moments, follow the social democrats, and the small NKP-group followed the example of

DNA-members.[103] In the late thirties even the DKP obviously had to look for compromises as the attempts to co-operation became a general rule.[104]

The negative attitude towards bourgeois democracy meant that communists made virtually no demands which could be regarded as structural reforms of the bourgeois governmental system. An exception, however, was the demand for lowering the age of voting and the abolition of various restrictions on the right to vote -the non-payment of taxes, for instance -which remained a part of the platforms of all the Nordic communist movements.[105]

The fall of the empires during and after the war made the question of monarchy more relevant also in Scandinavia. Its replacement by a republic or people's republic were central slogans for the Social Democratic Left Party in Sweden.[106] In the early years of the Communist Party the slogans, though, were changed to just the call for the abolition of the monarchy[107] but this soon vanished and from then on the party only occasionally raised the demand for an end to appropriations for the royal family.[108] The same happened in Norway, whereas the DKP continued to express its wish for the abolition of the monarchy even in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[109]

After 1917 the abolition of the two chamber parliament was an important goal for both the Swedes and Danes. They were also keen to remind people of the deficiencies of representational democracy and campaigned to supplement it with referenda and people's initiatives. The Danes also wanted to shorten the parliamentary term of office and advocated annual elections. All this as well as the idea of electors having the possibility to recall their parliamentary representatives were obviously results of being influenced by the German discussions on soviets.[110]

The slogans for the abolition of the upper chamber, the chamber not elected directly by the people but by other representational organs, became less frequent as the movements declared themselves communist and started to oppose the system as a whole.[111] In 1924 the SKP(S), however, demanded the abolition of the upper chamber in order to destroy the illusion of the importance of one-chamber parliament.[112] In Denmark the demands were more regular.[113]

Although Finnish communism in many respects followed the labour movement traditions regarding the parliament, it was no longer committed to the parliament-centred system as had been strived for before 1918. That became evident in their attitude towards the question of how the president should be elected; they denounced the old method of the president being elected by parliament, as advocated by the social democrats, and spoke in favour of a direct election. However, they didn't touch upon the question of the relations of power between various governmental organs although the position of the president was very strong in Finland.

In spite of their similar principles, parliament had a different role and value for the movements. Finnish communism was much more involved in the parliamentary work than its counterparts in the Scandinavian countries. This could reflect the difficult conditions in the country -it was safer to work in parliament -but could also be due to the traditions of the labour movement. Before the Civil War the labour movement had seen possibilities in parliamentary work, and this belief was not entirely destroyed by the limited nature of what had been legislatively achieved, the Civil War or SKP's propaganda about the insignificance of parliament. Because of its relative strength Finnish communism could also occupy a more prominent position in parliament than the small parties in Scandinavia.

Municipalities

In Finland the realization of the general voting right in communes was for the labour movement an important reform although the 'stump' parliament watered it down in 1918.[114] In Norway the municipalities were regarded as being more important than parliament by the DNA.[115]

The high regard for municipal reforms was in contradiction with the statements of the Communist International according to which local authorities were part of the bourgeois state apparatus. The communists were to use municipal organs as platforms for revolutionary agitation and in the event of winning a majority they should try and mobilize them against the central state.

The instructions of the Communist International, accepted in 1920, reflected the belief in imminent revolution and were not very practical. Nevertheless, the Nordic movements accepted them but also interpreted them in their own way.

In Finland the main directive was that the communists should work in the municipal organs in accordance with the interests of the working class, not to those of the municipality as such. It was, however, possible to define the interest of the workers in many ways; the leaders of the SKP considered that the communists should get the municipalities to present demands and actions in opposition to the state, while those at the municipal level tried rather to use them to promote the daily interests of the workers. These approaches were not necessarily contradictory; the campaigning for the abolition of the costs caused by elementary education, the payment of poor relief, and unemployment support from the communes to the state were also attempts to challenge the overall prevailing social policy of the state.

These demands were not successful and the attempts to carry out worker-friendly politics in the communes had to be financed otherwise. In practice the instructions on increasing the taxation of the wealthy were not helpful in those communes where Finnish communism was in a dominating position. The communes were usually rather poor and they had, as many other communes, to finance their activities by taking loans. The willingness to take loans, however, varied; for instance, in Kemi commune the representatives of Finnish communism didn't mind getting into debt, while in Kajaani commune, Pyhäjärvi or Karttula cautiousness to taking loans was much greater.

Getting into debt would threaten municipal self-government the protection of which against central state and regional bureaucracy was an important task in Finland and elsewhere. The representatives of Finnish communist movement were also concerned at the bureaucratization of the municipalities as the number of officials grew. Proposals for the introduction of various measures of direct democracy were, however, rare.

The idea of broadening the economic activities of the communes was an old goal of the Finnish labour movement but Finnish communism was not very enthusiastic about it. In 1928 its members in many cities, however, proposed that the loading and unloading of ships be put in the hands of municipal authorities. The long harbour strike obviously encouraged the adoption of the idea but it failed to arouse any interest in the other political groups. It was also soon discarded as Comintern orthodoxy was imposed.

The interference of the Communist International in the municipal politics of the Nordic communist movements was evident from the beginning of the third period; in May 1929 the Political Secretariat of the ECCI passed a resolution concerning the programme of the Finns in the municipal election in 1928. The Norwegians and the Danes published booklets to reiterate the basic position that work in municipalities should aim to mobilize them against the central state. In Norway the Paris Commune was raised as an example with respect to communist work in municipalities.[116] The Communist International's interference quite obviously narrowed the possibilities for the communist movements to work in the local government in their respective countries.

In Denmark the question of working in the communes was rather academic in the 1920s as the party didn't have any municipal councillors.[117] In Finland this also became the case in the summer of 1930 as all the councillors deemed to be followers of Finnish communism were forced to leave municipal councils.

Notes

- [1]. On the changes in the Communist International's line, see e.g. Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern. A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin*. MacMillan Press Limited. Basingstoke and London 1996, 41-138.
- [2]. See e.g., Einhart Lorenz, *Arbeiderbevegelsens historie. Enn innføring. Norsk sosialisme i internasjonalt perspektiv. 1. del 1789-1930*. Borgens förlag. Drammen 1972, 87-96; Jorunn Björgum, *Martin Tranmael og radikaliseringsen av norsk arbeiderbevegelse 1906-1918*. Universitetsforlaget AS. Oslo 1998, 24-25, 42-43, 226-236, 499-500; Werner Schmidt, *Kommunismens rötter i första världskrigets historiska rum. En studie kring arbetarrörelsens historiska misslyckande*. Symposion. Stockholm 1996, 91-96, 100-109; Jouko Heikkilä, *Kansallista luokkapoliittikkaa. Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905-1917*. SHS. Helsinki, 227-237.
- [3]. This is not to say that all those who were in America automatically became communists. Of the Norwegians, for instance, Martin Tranmael, the trade union leader, and Erling Falk, of the *Mot Dag* group, worked in America, see e.g., Lorenz, op. cit. (1972), 90-92, 142; Björgum, op. cit., 121-122, 515-516; of the Finns, e.g. Leo Laukki, the member of the SKP in 1921-25, and Santeri Mäkelä, the most important peasant propagandist, see, e.g. Auvo Kostianen, *The Forging of Finnish-American Communism, 1917-1924. A Study Ethnic Radicalism*. Turun Yliopisto. Turku 1978, 38-39; Leevi Norrena, *Talonpoika, pohjalainen - ja punainen*. Tutkimus Etelä-Pohjanmaan Järvisseudun työväenliikkeestä vuoteen Tampere 1993, 191-234.
- [4]. Schmidt, op. cit., 107-108, 145-149; Lennart Berntson, 'Sveriges kommunistiska parti och leninismen 1919-1929', in *Från SKP till VKP. En antologi redigerad av Sven E. Olsson*. Bo Cavefors förlag. Lund 1976, 118-121; Öyvind Björnson, *På klasskampens grunn (1900-1920)*. Tiden Norsk Förlag. Oslo 1990, 408-431, 530-535; Björgum, op. cit., 37-72, 124-133, 173-
- [5]. Einhart Lorenz, *Norwegische Arbeiterbewegung und Kommunistische Internationale 1919-1930. Untersuchung zur Politik der norwegischen Sektion der Kommunistischen Internationale*. Pax Förlag, Oslo 1978, 54-70; Björgum, op. cit., 71-93, 124-133, 213-216; see also Odd-Björn Fure, *Mellom reformisme och bolsjevisme. Norsk Arbeiderbevegelse 1918-1920*. Bergen 1983.
- [6]. Lorenz, op. cit. (1978), 70, 74-77.
- [7]. Lorenz, op. cit. (1978), 81-82.
- [8]. *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Vänsterparti (SSV) 1917*, in *Svenska valprogram. Vol. 1: 1902-1926*. Sammanställda av Sven-Olof Håkansson. Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Göteborgs universitet. Göteborg 1959, no page numbers.
- [9]. Lorenz, op. cit. (1978), ; Schmidt, op. cit., 110-168; Björgum, op. cit., 241-303; *Principielle grundlinjer for Danmarks Socialistiske Arbejderparti*. Kobenhavn 1918, 3; *Love, program og retningslinjer*. Det Norske Arbeiderparti (Avdelingen av den Kommunistiske Internationalen). Kristiania 1921 (DNA 1921), 16-17; SSV 1920, in *Svenska valprogram. Vol. 1*.

- [10]. On the development in Finland, see e.g. Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution 1917-1918*. University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis 1980; Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*. California University Press. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London 1988.
- [11]. Hannu Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1. 1899-1937*. Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta. SDP. Vaasa 1975, 186-198.
- [12]. Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena*. VAPK. Helsinki 1986. 321-330.
- [13]. Lars Björne, "... syihin ja lakiin eikä mielivaltaan". *Tutkimus Turun hovioikeuden poliittisista oikeudenkäynneistä vuosina 1918-1939*. Suomalainen lakimiesyhdistys. Vammala 1977, 41-107, 201-231; Saarela, op. cit. (1996), 179-183, 352-355.
- [14]. . On the beginning of Finnish communism, Tauno Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918-1923*. KSL. Tampere 1996, 26-192.
- [15]. See, e.g., Matti Lackman, *Jahvetti Moilanen -läskikapinan johtaja (Poliittinen elämäkerta 1881-1938)*. Oulun Historiaseura. Oulu 1993, 41-65; Saarela, op. cit. (1996), 77-79, 249-254; Markku Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehllinnosta. Nationalismi ja suomalaiset punikit Neuvostoliiton vallankäytössä 1920-1939*. SKS. Helsinki 2000, 112-125.
- [16]. Tauno Saarela, 'International and National in the Communist Movement', in *Communism: National & International*. Edited by Tauno Saarela and Kimmo Rentola
- [17]. In Finland the movement to the left of social democrats was at all times more extensive than ust the Communist Party. Therefore I use expressions like Finnish communism or Finnish communist movement in order to describe this movement as a whole.
- [18]. Ernst Christiansen, *Hvad vil kommunisterne? DKP*. 1921, 9; *Program og Love for Danmarks Kommunistiske Parti (Sektion af Kommunistiske Internationale)*. 1925 (DKP 1925), 3-5.
- [19]. Saarela, op.cit. (1996), 170; Christiansen, op. cit., 6-20; DKP 1925, 3-14.
- [20]. Leif Lindkvist, *Program och parti. Principprogram och partiideologi inom den kommunistiska rörelsen i Sverige 1917-82*. Arkiv, Lund 1982, 98.
- [21]. SSV 1920, in *Svenska valprogram*. Vol. 1. 0,
- [22]. SSV 1920 in *Svenska valprogram*. Vol. 1; Christiansen, op. cit., 7; Lindkvist, op. cit., 29, 33-34.
- [23]. 1925, 4, 13.
- [24]. Christiansen, op. cit., 9; DKP 1925, 7.
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