

# Aappo Kähönen

## Activity in Finland and Limits of the Possible, 1919–1932\*

### **Introduction: Finnish independence from Russia in 1917 and civil war in 1918**

The development of the Finnish polity and state building can be observed through the concepts of ‘structure’ and ‘event.’ According to historical sociologist William Sewell, structure is a consistent stream of social practices based on a combination of cultural schemas, distributions of resources and modes of power. Thus, an event is a group of historical phenomena that can cause a local breach in the practices, having potential to cause a chain reaction leading to lasting changes in structures<sup>1</sup>. Based on recent research, the hypothesis of this article is that on a structural level, there was a greater probability that Finnish society would develop along the Scandinavian model. The Scandinavian model is based on ‘moderate inequality’ in the allocation of important resources, peasant and worker organizations as a counterweight for enterprises and the state and on the stability of the political system and democratization<sup>2</sup>. However, the level of events includes several elements that distinguish Finland from the Scandinavian countries<sup>3</sup>.

Analyses of the radical nationalist Lapua Movement through the legacy of the civil war, or ‘War of Liberation’ and the politicization of the common bourgeois ‘whiteness’<sup>4</sup> connects it to the discussion on the role of structure and event when comparing Finland to the Scandinavian or Baltic countries. If the civil war in Fin-

land in 1918 can be seen not only as a phenomenon differentiating Finland from the Scandinavian countries, but also as an event leading to structural changes<sup>5</sup>, then it is relevant to ask, could the Lapua Movement have become such an event too? Similarly, just as the civil war as an event distinguishes Finland from Scandinavia, it connects Finland to the Baltic countries and Russia. Estonia offers an interesting point of comparison to certain developments in Finland

The main questions for this article are: what was the basis for extreme right activity in Finland in the 1920's and early 1930's? what kind of limits did it set? why did it not succeed in rising to power? what were the results of the right-wing challenge in the Baltic Countries or in Eastern Europe?

### **Limits of the Possible, 1919–1927**

Traditional ties between the local Finnish, and imperial Russian elites were permanently severed only after the Bolshevik revolution in November 1917. This enabled cooperation between different political groups in Finland, as well as open social conflict and a crisis of legitimacy<sup>6</sup>. Together with the collapse of the state's monopoly on violence, it allowed social and political tensions to break out as a civil war in Finland, unlike during the Russian revolution of 1905. The social polarization and disintegration of the political system that led to the civil war had a strong influence on the Finnish independence process and its later significance.

The civil war, terror, and c. 30,000 casualties from January to May 1918 led in Finland to greatly differing interpretations of the causes of the conflict and the role of Russia in it. For the Reds, the civil war was a 'revolution' or even a 'class war'; for the Whites it was a 'Red Rebellion' and a 'War of Liberation' against Russia and the communists. Partly in contrast with both the Red and White interpretations, the question was not about the defeat of a carefully planned, class-conscious revolution in Finland, nor was (Soviet) Russia its determined foreign supporter<sup>7</sup>. Instead, Russia had been more of a starting point for the collapse of the state's monopoly on violence, as had been the case elsewhere in the civil wars in the territory of the former empire. However, for the core group of the Whites, radical nationalists who often had an Activist background, the decisive experience was that part of the people, the Reds, had betrayed the nation by allying with communist Russia. The radical nationalists saw these 'traitors' as unreliable, and they were to be excluded from the nation<sup>8</sup>.

Finland got a parliamentary political system after the civil war that was based on a republican constitution. This was by no means self-evident. After the First World War in 1919, it has been noted that as a result of the modernization process, a liberal state emerged in Finland in place of the former estate-based state and society. This and a republican constitution were based on a post-civil war compromise, in which no social group could be permanently excluded from decision-making. Its central characteristic was the inclusion of West European civil rights in legislation<sup>9</sup>. When

studying the resilience or fragility of the state, it is necessary to see how thoroughly these civil rights were reflected in the Finnish political system. Democratization of municipal administration in 1919 reshaped Finnish society in an important way. In addition, however, the application of civil rights in practice and both the loyalty and representativeness of the armed forces reflected the functioning of the political system.

Independence had been declared in the name of a republic in December 1917. Nevertheless, in the autumn of 1918 Finland had passed, with the support of the conservative part of the bourgeoisie, a monarchist constitution and elected a German prince as king by decision of a rump parliament from which the Social Democratic Party (SDP) as losers of the civil war had been excluded. However, the king-elect decided in November 1918 against ascending to the throne, as Germany had been defeated in the First World War. On the other hand, the precondition of the Entente Great Powers, Great Britain and United States, for recognizing Finnish independence in the spring of 1919 was a new government without German orientation, formed on the basis of free elections in which the SDP would be allowed to participate<sup>10</sup>. Therefore, the Finnish republic can be seen as resulting just as much from the collapse of the German empire and from the pressure of the Entente great powers as from the unqualified support of the winners of the civil war.

Indeed, bourgeois groups did not have a completely unified view on the legacy of the civil war. New divisions among the bourgeois parties emerged in relation to the constitution, the labor movement and the White revolt of the countryside, which the constitutional question divided the most. The National Coalition Party (Coalition) favored monarchy; the National Progressive Party (Progress) favored a republic. Unlike Coalition, Progressives was ready to recognize a limited role for the labor movement. This would support national unity, as 'the front against Bolshevism' would be moved to the left of the SDP. The Agrarian League (Agrarians) had cooperated with the SDP already before the civil war, and it favored a republican constitution. On the other hand, the Agrarians underlined the significance of the White revolt of the countryside for Finnish rural democracy<sup>11</sup>. As a result of the civil war, a rift emerged also within the labor movement between reformist social democrats and revolutionary communists, who had different support bases. The support of the SDP was stronger in the countryside and in regions that had suffered more on White terror during the civil war, whereas Communist support was stronger in urban areas and in regions, where casualties and terror had been less severe<sup>12</sup>.

Already by the summer of 1919, the temporary executive power and the legislative power in the parliament, only recently elected on a more representative basis, were about to end up in a conflict. After the civil war, pressure for the liberalization of the system formed by the winners, denouncing monarchy and organizing free elections, came quite visibly also from abroad. Thus, it is not surprising that strong resistance against this could be found in the ranks of the military elite of the new 'White Finland'. It was based on the plans of the Activists, the radical core of Finnish na-

tionalists, and the regent, former commander-in-chief of the White army, C. G. Mannerheim, for staging a *coup d'état* and beginning a war of aggression against Soviet Russia in order to conquer Petrograd for the White Russians. In June – July 1919 Finland was on the verge of a military coup.

While Mannerheim was postponing the ratification of the republican constitution, he negotiated a preliminary military agreement with a White Russian general, Nikolai Yudenich. According to the agreement, Mannerheim was to remain regent, or other some other kind of head of state, and declare war on Soviet Russia in addition to the undeclared 'kindred wars' waged in Olonets Karelia. Because of this, it was necessary to prevent the ratification of the constitution and dissolve the parliament in order to prevent the risk of elections and the opposition of a center-left majority. However, a key precondition of the plan was the support, or at least approval, of the bourgeois parties. Despite being anti-communist in principle, the majority of the Coalition leadership, especially Lauri Ingman, but also people like J. K. Paasikivi, were not prepared to be part of a coup government. They thought that beginning the Petrograd operation with the dissolution of the parliament would break the unity of White Finland<sup>13</sup>.

The conspirators were right about parliamentary opposition to the plan, even though they thought it would not be decisive. The SDP, again the largest party in the parliament, had already proposed through Väinö Tanner on June 12<sup>th</sup> 1919, as a price for supporting the republican constitution, that bourgeois parties supporting the republic must not vote for Mannerheim in the upcoming presidential elections. The bourgeois republicans agreed on this, together with a decision to withdraw Mannerheim's prerogatives as regent, unless he would ratify the constitution, which he finally did on July 17<sup>th</sup> 1919<sup>14</sup>.

The first presidential elections, conducted exceptionally by the parliament, ended the plans for a war of aggression and a coup. Open pressure by the Activists, the Civil Guards and the army towards Mannerheim turned against itself. Together with partial exposition of the aggressive plans, this influenced the outcome of the election, showing the limits of Mannerheim's support: in the end, he won only 50 votes against 147 for K. J. Ståhlberg, who became the first President of the Republic. Despite previous serious considerations, the coup plans were not carried out, as there were no significant bourgeois parties supporting them. Regardless of Mannerheim's initiatives and considerable interest in power, he was realistic enough to understand that 'a soldier cannot deal in politics without the support of at least one political party', meaning he could not rule the country with the support of the Activist group alone<sup>15</sup>.

When evaluating the legitimacy of the Finnish system of organized violence, attention should be drawn not only to its representativeness, but also to its loyalty to the constitution. After the civil war, the loyalty of the conscripted army to the republic could not be taken for granted. However, the problem was not just the potential unreliability of the conscripts – 'redness' – but also the divisions among the winners. The best example of this is the so-called 'officers' revolt', in which the officers

with jäger background from the German army aimed, along with larger reforms of the Finnish army, to expel 'the Russkies', officers trained in the Russian imperial army. This demand was backed by threats of mass resignations. As about 90 % of the officers in 1924, the president in practice had no choice but to submit to their demands<sup>16</sup>.

The Civil Guards, a 70,000 men-strong voluntary defense organization of the winners which was formally under army command, were a central element in securing the outcome of the 'War of Liberation' against both internal (communists) and external (Russia/Soviet Union) threats. These were understood as two sides of the same problem. Civil Guard activity was based on an interpretation that saw the events of the autumn of 1917 and the spring of 1918 as a mass movement against 'Russkiness' and 'redness'. According to the concept of White democracy, what took place in Finland in 1918 was not only an anti-government red rebellion, but also a white uprising, or the arising of the peasants to the 'War of Liberation'. The role of the Civil Guards among the bourgeoisie was based on two concerns. The first was that parliamentary democracy might not enable a state that is compatible with the legacy of the 'War of Liberation'. The second, however, was that 'the people who had won the War of Liberation' could lose their right to political participation, e.g. as a consequence of monarchist plans or a *coup d'état*<sup>17</sup>. This was the basis for the Civil Guards becoming a strong and armed pressure group in Finland, but there were also divisions within them<sup>18</sup>.

Political control was an essential part of the operation of the winners' voluntary paramilitary organization in a country that had waged a civil war. It was based directly on the function of the Civil Guards in securing conquered and occupied territories during the civil war in 1918, and it was practiced throughout the interwar period in cooperation with the local police, the Investigative Central Police (EK) and military intelligence. Social democratic and communist labor movements were the priority targets, but surveillance was also directed at centrist bourgeois groups. Regarding the state's system of organized violence, this took forms such as loyalty evaluations of candidates for the Civil Guards as well as army conscripts. Especially the employers in the wood processing industry profited from cooperation with the Civil Guards in their efforts to create from their workers a 'reliable core workforce' and keep the 'unreliable ones' outside through blacklisting<sup>19</sup>. In this regard, civil rights did not apply in the same sense to those who were seen as representatives of the losers of the civil war<sup>20</sup>.

The role of the Civil Guards as a conditioning factor for democracy and as a pressure group can be studied briefly through two cases. These are the so-called Civil Guard Conflict in 1921 and the reactions to the SDP minority government in 1927. In both cases, the expected limitations or dispersion of Civil Guards led to plans of a *coup d'état*. However, neither of these plans was carried out, as the planners could not be sure of the support of the rank-and-file troops for a coup, even in the name of the generally admired Mannerheim<sup>21</sup>.

## Test for the Political System from the Extreme Right,

## 1929–1932

'The limits of the possible' and fragility of the state after 1918 were reflected first and foremost in the legitimacy crisis and extra-parliamentary pressure emerging from the radical nationalists or fascists in 1929–1932, the Lapua Movement. Its last scene, the Mäntsälä rebellion in 1932, revealed the limitation and threat of the Civil Guards to the political system. The Lapua Movement's threats and use of violence, first against the communists and their supposed supporters, then against the social democrats and centrist bourgeoisie taking too 'soft' a stance against communism, is difficult to understand without considering the divisions among the winners of the civil war regarding the legacy of the 'War of Liberation'.

The failure of the coup and the war plans of Mannerheim and the Activists in the summer of 1919 were a crystallization of the resentment on which the legitimacy crisis of the extreme right was based: the 'War of Liberation' was not over, as an internally and externally strong state, led by a patriotic elite, had not emerged. Thus, 'White Finland' was not white enough. Another reason was the balance of power in the parliament, since despite bourgeois hegemony, the left parties and the Swedish People's Party (SPP) held a majority. The language conflict on the official position of the Finnish and Swedish languages and the SPP's left wing's sympathy for social reforms separated it from other bourgeois parties in a number of questions. In addition to this, neither Progress nor the Agrarian party were ready for unconditional cooperation with Coalition for the creation of a broad all-bourgeois front. Regarding the direct action of the Lapua Movement, the visibility of the communists and their ability to act at all were more important than their quite limited activities in practice. The cooperation between the SDP and the centrist bourgeoisie, mostly the Agrarians and Progressives, threatened the politically right kind of 'Whiteness' and made the latter parties 'half red'. A conflict between the 'half red' government and the army was believed to be possible, but not the use of armed force against the radical nationalist opposition<sup>22</sup>.

This basis clarifies the subversive potential of the extreme right and the fascist Lapua Movement, which reached its peak in the approximately 10,000-strong 'Peasant March' to the capitol in July 1930. At that moment, violent regrouping against an 'external threat' (communists and the Soviet Union) received passive support from a broader spectrum of bourgeois groups and parties. The Lapuans demand of banning communist activity was legalized through the so-called Communist Laws in the autumn of 1930<sup>23</sup>.

The change in the support of the Lapua Movement immediately after reaching its peak can probably be best analyzed by observing it systematically from the viewpoints of 'Whiteness' and politicization of the legacy of the 'War of Freedom', as Miika Siironen has done. In this case, Whiteness is understood as a hegemonic interpretation of Finnish independence and Finland's relationship with the Soviet Union that was shared by the different bourgeois groups. Even though anti-communism was a shared characteristic within this hegemony, there were different emphases re-

garding enemy stereotypes and post-civil war policies for national reconciliation. By including those bourgeois groups that criticized the use of violence against their enemies, the Lapua Movement created preconditions for the cooperation between the centrist bourgeoisie and the SDP<sup>24</sup>.

In this political context, the Mäntsälä Rebellion in 1932 can be defined as the final act, or postscript, of the Lapua Movement. Like the Civil Guard Conflict of 1921, it can be seen as a conflict in the chain of command and as a loyalty problem of the armed forces in relation to the political system. The disappointment of the extreme right in its expectations again formed the background. The influence of the Lapua Movement was diminishing, as the failed abduction of former president Ståhlberg had dented their following after October 1930. In addition, incumbent president P. E. Svinhufvud, who the Movement had believed to be their 'own man', had appointed only a coalition government led by an Agrarian prime minister instead of a pure right-wing government.

The political violence of the Lapua Movement in Mäntsälä when shutting down a labor hall in February 1932 was not exceptional as such, but carrying it out in Civil Guard uniforms made it politically embarrassing. When this illegal action was supported by the leaders of the Lapua Movement, Vihtori Kosola and general major Kurt Wallenius, who demanded the resignation of the government, the chain of command conflict had turned into an open rebellion. Unlike during the peak of the Lapua Movement's support, there was no more latent bourgeois support for an extra-parliamentary and armed pressure group. Publicly, the Agrarian League took a stance against the rebellion, and its supporters in the Civil Guards spoke openly against going to Mäntsälä. Far under one tenth of the seventy thousand-strong Civil Guards organization participated in the rebellion, which signified the weakness of support for that kind of action.

Government policy had also changed since the peak of the Lapua Movement's following. Even though the rebellion was to be put down without bloodshed, if possible, the government was now prepared to use armed force as the last option, and Mäntsälä was encircled by regular army units. Nevertheless, Svinhufvud's speeches were the most effective means used in defeating the rebellion, and after the radio speech he gave on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> of March 1932, the rebels began to disperse. Because of Svinhufvud's own Civil Guard membership and positive attitude on them, punishments were very lenient. There was no general purge or large-scale legal processes in the Civil Guards<sup>25</sup>.

A coalition base – looking for support from a combination of bourgeois groups – was both a weakness and a strength for the Lapua Movement. On the one hand, the movement did not have a single clear support group behind it, but on the other hand, it was able to claim that it represented the whole hegemonic bourgeois coalition. This way, it was able to try to enforce stricter values first in this hegemonic coalition, then in the rest of society<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, the subversive potential of the Lapua Movement was not so much based on the peasants and the Agrarian League moving to

the right, but on the fact that the differences between the bourgeois groups were so small<sup>27</sup>. This made it possible to attempt to hijack the prevailing bourgeois or White hegemony under the leadership of the radical nationalist Lapuans. Thus, the Lapua Movement politicized the hegemony of the bourgeois groups, based on the generally shared legacy of the 'War of Liberation'. However, its potential as an authoritarian alternative did not materialize during 1930–1932, and it did not become an event which would have changed the structures of Finnish society and political system.

## **Comparison with Estonia and General East European Development**

The development that took place in Finland needs to be put in the perspective of its geographic context between Scandinavia and Eastern Europe, especially the Baltic countries. Observing certain parallels with developments in Estonia should provide some viewpoints.

The Scandinavian social or class structure was decisive for the formation of the Finnish political field. Until 1905, this was visible in the Diet, the representative organ of the estates. The following division into four main parties took place in all Scandinavian countries – Denmark, Norway and Sweden – but also in Finland: conservatives, liberals, agrarians and social democrats<sup>28</sup>. Conversely, regarding the prerequisites for the labor movement, Finland was closer to small, dependent East European nations, which underlines the significance of the sudden changes within the empire they were part of. The Finnish labor movement achieved its major objective, universal suffrage, through one push during the Russian revolution of 1905 and increased its support significantly. Unlike in the Scandinavian countries, this did not require decades of negotiations on collective labor agreements, the building of strike movements or looking for alliances with the liberals.

Regarding the formation of the national elite, the differences in the relationship between the local, foreign language-speaking elite and the majority of the population were decisive. In Finland, the Swedish-speaking elite's position in administration was quite recent. It had obtained its status only after Finland had been incorporated into the Russian empire as an autonomous Grand Duchy in 1809. Because of this, it could seek allies from the local Finnish-speaking population in the form of nationalist ideology in order to strengthen its position in relation to the empire. A number of the Swedish-speaking elite were even ready to change their language into Finnish. The older Baltic German land-owning nobility did not have these needs, as the emperor had directly guaranteed their position<sup>29</sup>. Instead, an Estonian-speaking elite emerged much later than the Finnish-speaking elite and in a more limited scope because of greater restrictions for the operation of associations. A partial land reform was implemented in the Baltic Provinces through which the nation states of Estonia and Latvia were formed before the emancipation of serfs in Russia in 1861.



It kept the large estates in the hands of the Baltic Germans and created a quite limited but rather wealthy peasant class. The organization of this peasant class took place through agrarian associations, and from the 1880's onwards, in the cooperative movement in conflict with the Baltic Germans<sup>30</sup>.

Unlike in the Nordic countries, including Finland, the political field was divided in three after Estonian independence: the agrarian parties, the liberals and the socialists. Even though Estonian independence in 1917–1919 involved the characteristics of social conflict and civil war, it was easier for the national elite to argue that independence was achieved through a war of liberation against both Soviet Russia and the Baltic Germans as well as Germany. The question of land or land reform was a decisive factor in Estonia, and the local Bolsheviks' decision to resolve this through collectivization in 1918 destroyed mass support for Bolshevism. The strongest supporters of a land reform dividing the lands of the Baltic German estates were the social democrats and the liberals, but as a consequence of the reform in 1919–1920, the support for these parties diminished. Another peasant party for the new farmers emerged alongside the older party of the wealthy peasants. On the other hand, as the Baltic Germans had lost their landed property, there were no prerequisites for a clear conservative movement.

Consequently, unlike in the Scandinavian countries and in Finland, an 'agrarian hegemony' emerged in Estonia. Because Estonian foreign trade began to focus, with state support, on the export of agricultural products through cooperatives, political and economic power began to merge in the country from the mid-1920's onwards. Because of the lack of a clear conservative party, the party of the wealthy peasants that controlled the cooperatives, led by Konstantin Päts, took its place. In this regard, the reaction to the extra-parliamentary challenge and demands for strong executive power, presented by the veterans' union of the Estonian War of Liberation (Vapsi) in 1929–1933 was different from the Finnish reaction. In 1934, an 'Agrarian coup' took place in which Päts with his agrarian party took power with the support of the army so as to stop an extreme right movement with growing support. The decision to stage the coup was easier, as in Estonia the legacy of the War of Independence was shared more widely in the political field than in Finland, the social democrats included<sup>31</sup>.

## Conclusions

Why did the extreme right and authoritarian system not become an alternative for Finland? The civil war as an event changed social structure in Finland, making it different from other Nordic countries. A large number of the losers was convicted and executed and initially excluded from the nation as traitors. Thus, the immediate consequences of the civil war unsettled the representativeness of the political system and especially the loyalty of the losers towards it. On the other hand, the winners were divided by the conflict over the constitution, and the loyalty of the armed

forces for the republican constitution was not undisputed. However, the functioning of the political system was soon reestablished through a reform of municipal democracy based of universal suffrage and holding free parliamentary elections in 1919<sup>32</sup>. The Finnish version of land reform in the 1920's created the social basis for this development, as crofters became independent farmers through legislation. The cooperation between the centrist bourgeoisie and the reformist labor movement thus created institutional bases for reconciliation.

A Nordic social structure made probable both the post-civil war policy of reconciliation and repulsion of the extreme right through cooperation between the Agrarian League and the social democrats. Nevertheless, this cooperation had not been tested under acute crisis conditions before the years 1930–1932. Only then the authoritarian alternative was finally weighted and checked, and as a consequence of the failure of the Mäntsälä rebellion, the basis for a resilient state was strengthened decisively.

It is interesting to compare the significance of extra-parliamentary action for the left and right from the viewpoint of the political system. Mass demonstrations and direct action opened for the left and the liberal bourgeoisie in Finland a quick way for broadening political participation in 1905. For the left, the conditions in 1917 offered an opportunity to take over the entire state. At that point, the labor movement had an opportunity to both exercise political power through the government and to act as a pressure group within the political system, but without an officially organized armed force. The extreme right was partly in a similar position in 1929–1932. It could act within the political system as a pressure group, 'a bourgeois minority could claim it was representing a national majority', according to historian Juha Siltala<sup>33</sup>. Even though both the labor movement in 1917 and the Lapua Movement could use direct action and violence against their political opponents, for the Lapua Movement it was possible to rely at least on the passive support of the armed forces and to believe in their active support in a tight spot. Unlike during 1905, the goal of the extra-parliamentary actions of the extreme right was not the broadening of political participation, but limiting it to right kind of White patriots.

From the viewpoint of international comparison, we can see in Finland a greater, though unrealized, potential for an authoritarian alternative than in the Scandinavian countries. However, the probability for its emergence still remained clearly smaller than in East European countries. The landowning elite mostly retained its position in Poland, Hungary and Romania after the First World War, and authoritarian systems rose to power during the 1920s or 1930s. From the viewpoint of structural explanation, Estonia is in an interesting way between Finland and Eastern Europe: in Estonia, the authoritarian alternative was realized, despite a thorough land reform and the strong position of peasant parties. In the Soviet Union, securing the legacy of the civil war, the revolution in this case, took a different form. For the faction of the Bolshevik party that had won the power struggle, forced collectivization, the 'liquidation of the kulaks as a class' and accelerated industrialization were the means for it. Radicalization of the political system was actively encouraged by

the party leadership as a ‘revolution from above’<sup>34</sup>.

Thus, Estonia offers the closest and most practical point of comparison for the development of the political system in Finland in the 1920s and 1930s. The legitimacy of the political system and the means for legitimizing it were different in Finland and in Estonia. It was not possible to restrain the extreme right in Estonia the same way as it was in Finland. There were no prerequisites, but also no need, for cooperation between conservatives and the centrist, legality-minded bourgeoisie with social democrats integrated to parliamentarianism: a *coup d'état* based on agrarian hegemony and support of the armed forces was ‘enough’ for repelling the extreme right. In Finland, the system that had won the civil war was able to restrain, but also partly to integrate, the pressure from the moderate left and the extreme right and tolerate difference in a limited context within the prevailing White hegemony. This may have offered a faster route from a fragile state to a resilient one where the changing expectations of the population are governed not by force and coercion, but by political processes, even if they are incomplete.

#### References

AHTI M. *Salaliiton ääriviivat: Oikeistoradikalismi ja hyökkäävä idänpolitiikka 1918–1919*. [Contours of

- <sup>1</sup> *Sewell W. H. Jr.* Historical events as transformations of structures: Inventing revolution at the Bastille // *Theory and Society*. 1996. No. 25. P. 841–844; *Alapuro R.* Nordic and Finnish Modernity: A Comparison // *Teoksessa Jóhann Páll Árnason ja Björn Wittrock (eds.) Nordic Paths to Modernity*. New York: Bergham Books, 2012. P. 198–199, on applying Sewell’s definitions to Finnish history
- <sup>2</sup> *Senghaas D.* *The European Experience: A Historical Critique of Development Theory*. Berg: Leamington Spa, 1985. P. 87, 90–92. Scandinavia is geographically and historically limited to Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Nordic Countries also include Finland and Iceland, which were long parts of the Swedish and Danish kingdoms, respectively, and thus share the same social structure.
- <sup>3</sup> See: *Stråth B.* Nordic Modernity: Origin, Trajectories, Perspectives // Jóhann Páll Árnason ja Björn Wittrock (eds.) *Nordic Paths to Modernity*. New York: Bergham Books, 2012. P. 25–46, on the determinism of the Scandinavian model, and on Finland as its weakest link, and Alapuro’s answer in: *Alapuro R.* Nordic and Finnish Modernity. P. 191–205, based on structural similarities between Finnish and Scandinavian societies.
- <sup>4</sup> *Sironen M.* Vapaussodan perintö: Valkoisuus paikallisyhteisössä – sisältö, ylläpitäjät ja rapautuminen Iisalmessa 1918–1933. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2011. P. 23–24, 182–183, on ‘whiteness’, as a group psychological, hegemonic phenomenon in Finland during the inter-war period.
- <sup>5</sup> *Alapuro R.* Nordic and Finnish Modernity. P. 198.
- <sup>6</sup> This argument in detail, see: *Alapuro R.* Valta ja valtio – miksi vallasta tuli ongelma 1900-luvun vaihteessa? // *Pertti Haapala (ed.) Talous, valta ja valtio: Tutkimuksia 1800-luvun Suomesta*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 1990. P. 249–251.
- <sup>7</sup> *Roselius A.* Memory in the Interwar Period // *Tuomas Tepora ja Aapo Roselius (eds.) The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy*. Leiden: Brill, 2014. P. 297–301, 315; *Saarela T.* To Commemorate or Not: The Finnish Labour Movement and the Memory of the Civil War in the Interwar Period // *Tuomas Tepora ja Aapo Roselius (eds.) The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy*. Leiden: Brill, 2014. P. 331–335, 345–348.

- <sup>8</sup> Activism as the core of Finnish radical nationalism was based on violent resistance against the unification or russification policy of the Russian Empire during the late period of Finnish autonomy and receiving military training for this in the German army (Jägers) during the First World War. The Activists supported expansionist foreign policy, mainly at the expense of the Soviet Union. *Ahti M.* Salaliiton ääriviivat: Oikeistoradikalismi ja hyökkäävä idänpolitiikka 1918–1919. Espoo: Weilin + Göös, 1987. P. 10–19 on radical right, compare with *Silvennoinen O., Tikka M., Roselius A.* Suomalaiset fasistit. Mustan sarastuksen airuet. Helsinki: WSOY, 2016. P. 444–453 on similarities between Finnish extreme right-wing activism, radical nationalism and European fascism. In this article, the main terms used to describe subversive right-wing activity are radical nationalism and extreme right.
- <sup>9</sup> *Haapala P.* Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920. Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995. P. 250–254, *Haapala P.* Yhteiskunnallinen kompromissi // Pertti Haapala ja Tuomas Hoppu (eds.) Siisällissodan pikkujättiläinen. Porvoo: WSOY, 2009. P. 402–404.
- <sup>10</sup> *Polvinen T.* Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi, osa 2. Porvoo: WSOY, 1971. P. 112–118 especially on British and French conditions for recognizing Finnish independence, Zetterberg S. Itse-naisen Suomen historia. Helsinki: Otava, 1995. P. 30, 42 as well on United States' viewpoints.
- <sup>11</sup> *Kettunen P.* Suojeluskunnat ja suomalainen kansanvalta // Risto Alapuro (ed.) Raja railona: Näkökulmia suojeluskuntiin. Porvoo: WSOY, 1998. P. 281–283.
- <sup>12</sup> *Saarela T.* To Commemorate or Not. P. 331–339.
- <sup>13</sup> *Siltala J.* Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930. Keuruu: Otava, 1985. P. 16. According to Juha Siltala, the concept of 'White Finland' can be understood in three ways: 1) the post-civil war Finland after 1918, 2) an ideal through which the relation to the legacy of the 'War of Liberation' is evaluated, 3) the name of a group that aims to preserve the legacy of the 'War of Liberation'. This article uses the concept in the first two senses.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ahti M.* Salaliiton ääriviivat. P. 165–174, 187–192.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* P. 174–178, 196–200.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ahti M.* Suojeluskunta-asetuksen 27. pykälä // Risto Alapuro (ed.) Raja railona: Nakokulmia suojeluskuntiin. Porvoo: WSOY, 1998. P. 256.
- <sup>17</sup> *Kettunen P.* Suojeluskunnat ja suomalainen kansanvalta. P. 280, 283.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ahti M.* Suojeluskunta-asetuksen 27. pykälä 239–240.
- <sup>19</sup> *Tikko M.* Valkoisen hämärän maa: Suojeluskunnat, virkavalta ja kansa 1918–1921. Helsinki: SKS, 2006. P. 7–11, *Saarela* 2008, 484, and *Kettunen P.* Suojeluskunnat ja suomalainen kansanvalta. P. 284–285.
- <sup>20</sup> *Saarela T.* To Commemorate or Not. P. 338.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ahti M.* Suojeluskunta-asetuksen 27. pykälä. P. 247–250, 254–255, 258–259.
- <sup>22</sup> *Siltala J.* Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930. P. 32–35, 38–39.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* P. 498.
- <sup>24</sup> *Siironen M.* Vapaussodan perintö. P. 193–196.
- <sup>25</sup> *Mylly J.* The Emergence of the Finnish Multi-Party system: A comparison with developments in Scandinavia, 1870–1920 // Juhani Mylly ja R. Michael Berry (eds.) Political Parties in Finland: Essays in History and Politics, University of Turku, Political History. Turku, 1984. P. 47–53; *Ahti M.* Suojeluskunta-asetuksen 27. pykälä. P. 267–270.
- <sup>26</sup> *Alapuro R.* The Legacy of the Civil War of 1918 in Finland // Bill Kissane (ed.) After Civil War: Division, Reconstruction, and Reciliation in Contemporary Europe. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015. P. 26–27.
- <sup>27</sup> *Stråth B.* Nordic Modernity. P. 35–36.
- <sup>28</sup> *Mylly J.* The Emergence of the Finnish Multi-Party system: A comparison with developments in Scandinavia, 1870–1920 // Juhani Mylly ja R. Michael Berry (eds.) Political Parties in Finland: Essays in History and Politics, University of Turku, Political History. Turku, 1984. P. 9–10.
- <sup>29</sup> *Alapuro R.* State and Revolution in Finland. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. P. 266–269, 223–231.
- <sup>30</sup> *Köll A.-M.* Peasants on the World Market. *Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia*. Vol. 14. Stockholm: Centre for Baltic Studies, 1994. P. 24–27, 26, 31–32, 34–35 on the formation of Estonian peasantry.

- <sup>31</sup> *Eelend J.* *Cultivating the Rural Citizen: Modernity, Agrarianism and Citizenship in the Late Tsarist Estonia.* Stocholm: Intellecta, 2007. P. 223–232, especially on the significance of the cooperative movement: *Kasekamp A.* *A History of the Baltic States.* Chippenham and Eastbourne: CPI Anthony Rowe, 2010. P. 101–112.
- <sup>32</sup> *Haapala P.* *Yhteiskunnallinen kompromissi.* P. 397–398.
- <sup>33</sup> *Siltala J.* *Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930.* 498.
- <sup>34</sup> *Kotkin S.* *Stalin.* Vol. 2: *Waiting for Hitler.* New York: Penguin Press, 2017. P. 35–36.

the conspiracy: right-wing radicalism and aggressive Eastern politics 1918–1919. In Finnish] Espoo: Weilin + Göös, 1987.

AHTI M. *Suojeluskunta-asetuksen 27. pykälä.* [27 paragraph of the law on schutzkor. In Finnish] // in Risto Alapuro (ed.) *Raja railona: Näkökulmia suojeluskuntiin.* Porvoo: WSOY, 1998.

ALAPURO R. *State and Revolution in Finland.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

ALAPURO R. *Valta ja valtio – miksi vallasta tuli ongelma 1900-luvun vaihteessa?* [Power and state – why did Power become a problem at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century? In Finnish] // Pertti Haapala (ed.) *Talous, valta ja valtio: Tutkimuksia 1800-luvun Suomesta.* Tampere: Vastapaino, 1990.

ALAPURO R. *Nordic and Finnish Modernity: A Comparison* // Jóhann Páll Árnason ja Björn Wittrock (eds.) *Nordic Paths to Modernity.* New York: Bergham Books, 2012.

ALAPURO R. *The Legacy of the Civil War of 1918 in Finland* // Bill Kissane (ed.) *After Civil War: Division, Reconstruction, and Recociliation in Contemporary Europe.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

EELLEND J. *Cultivating the Rural Citizen: Modernity, Agrarianism and Citizenship in the Late Tsarist Estonia.* Stocholm: Intellecta, 2007.

HAAPALA P. *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920.* [When society broke up: Finland 1914–1920. In Finnish] Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995.

HAAPALA P. *Yhteiskunnallinen kompromissi.* [Social compromise. In Finnish] // Pertti Haapala ja Tuomas Hoppu (eds.) *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen.* Porvoo: WSOY, 2009.

KASEKAMP A. *A History of the Baltic States.* Chippenham and Eastbourne: CPI Anthony Rowe, 2010.

KETTUNEN P. *Suojeluskunnat ja suomalainen kansanvalta.* [Schutskors and Finland's democracy. In Finnish] // Risto Alapuro (ed.) *Raja railona: Näkökulmia suojeluskuntiin.* Porvoo: WSOY, 1998.

KOTKIN S. *Stalin.* Vol. 2: *Waiting for Hitler.* New York: Penguin Press, 2017.

KÖLL A-M. *Peasants on the World Market.* Studia Baltica Stockholmiensia. Vol. 14. Stocholm: Centre for Baltic Studies, 1994.

MYLLY J. *The Emergence of the Finnish Multi-Party system: A comparison with developments in Scandinavia, 1870–1920* // Juhani Mylly ja R. Michael Berry (eds.) *Political Parties in Finland: Essays in History and Politics,* University of Turku, Political History. Turku, 1984.

MYLLY J. *Porvarilliset puolueet ja suojeluskunnat.* [Bourgeois parties and Schutskors. In Finnish] // Risto Alapuro (ed.) *Raja railona: Näkökulmia suojeluskuntiin.* Porvoo: WSOY, 1998.

POLVINEN T. *Venäjäin vallankumous ja Suomi* [Russian Revolution and Finland. In Finnish]. Osa 2. Porvoo: WSOY, 1971.

ROSELIUS A. *The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards and the Veterans' Union: Public Memory in the Interwar Period* // Tuomas Tepora ja Aapo Roselius (eds.) *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy.* Leiden: Brill, 2014.

SAARELA T. *To Commemorate or Not: The Finnish Labour Movement and the Memory of the Civil War in the Interwar Period* // Tuomas Tepora ja Aapo Roselius (eds.) *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy.* Leiden: Brill, 2014.

SENGHAAS D. *The European Experience: A Historical Critique of Development Theory.* Berg: Leamington Spa, 1985.

SEWELL W. H. Jr. *Historical events as transformations of structures: Inventing revolution at the Bastille* // *Theory and Society.* 1996. No. 25.

SIIRONEN M. *Vapaussodan perintö: Valkoisuus paikallisyhteisössä – sisältö, ylläpitäjät ja rapautuminen Iisalmessa 1918–1933*. [The legacy of the Liberation War: whiteness in the local community-content, maintainers and erosion in Iisalmi 1918–1933. In Finnish] Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2011.

SILTALA J. *Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930*. [Lapua traffic and transfers across the border. In Finnish] Keuruu: Otava, 1985.

SILVENNOINEN O., TIKKA M., ROSELIUS A. *Suomalaiset fasistit. Mustan sarastuksen airuet*. [Finnish fascists. Harbingers of black Dawn. In Finnish] Helsinki: WSOY, 2016.

STRÁTH B. *Nordic Modernity: Origin, Trajectories, Perspectives* // Teoksessa Jóhann Páll Árnason ja Björn Wittrock (eds.) *Nordic Paths to Modernity*. New York: Bergham Books, 2012.

TIKKA M. *Valkoisen hämärän maa: Suojeluskunnat, virkavalta ja kansa 1918–1921*. [The land of the White Twilight: The Civil Service, the Civil Service and the people 1918–1921. In Finnish] Helsinki: SKS, 2006.

ZETTERBERG S. *Itsenäisen Suomen historia*. [History of independent Finland. In Finnish] Helsinki: Otava, 1995.

#### FOR CITATION

**Aappo Kähönen. Activity in Finland and Limits of the Possible, 1919–1932 // Petersburg historical journal, no. 4, 2021, pp. 193–206**

*Abstract:* The main focus of this article is to study the prerequisites of radical nationalist or even fascist activity in the Finnish political system from independence to the early 1930's. Radical nationalist activity is observed from two vantage points. First, by relating the role of civil war and the radical nationalist or fascist Lapua movement in Finland to the concepts of structure and event. Second, by comparing Finland during the years 1919–1932 to Scandinavian and Baltic, especially Estonian developments. The hypothesis of the article is that on a structural level, there was a greater probability that Finnish society and political system would develop along the Scandinavian model. However, the level of events includes several elements, e.g. civil war, that distinguish Finland from the Scandinavian countries. The results show, first that in Finland the radical nationalists attempted to hijack the more generally shared anti-communist hegemony of the bourgeois winners of Finnish civil war. Secondly, because of structural differences between Finland and Estonia, it was not possible in Estonia in 1934 to restrain the radical nationalist activity in the same way as it finally proved possible in Finland in 1932.

**Key words:** Finland, Estonia, political system, civil war, radical nationalist, Lapua movement.

*Author:* **Kähönen, Aappo** – Doctor of Social Sciences, Associate Professor in political history, National Archives of Finland.

**E-mail:** aappo.kahonen@arkisto.fi