

[December 9, 1917:]

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As ordered by the "Foreign Affairs Committee" of the Parliamentary group of the [Finnish] Social Democratic Party [Comrades] E.Salin, E.Huttunen and K.Manner travelled to Petrograd to negotiate with members of the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars about the Finnish matter and to find out the opinion of the Soviet about the Finnish question right now.

The delegation had an opportunity to discuss about the matter with Lenin, the chairman of the Soviet, and Stalin, Commissar for nationality matters.

First, the Russian comrades were asked if they knew the decision of the Finnish Parliament concerning the principle in the matter of independence, as well as the counter-proposition presented by the socialists.

Lenin answered that they did not know it beforehand, and Huttunen presented it as translation.

It was then asked, how the Soc.-Democratic Commissars in the Soviet and the Bolshevik party now take this declaration.

Lenin answered that they recognize Finland's full right to full independence. Furthermore he asked how the socialists have thought to decisively find out the popular opinion about this, through the parliament or by plebiscite. Huttunen answered that on this particular question our party has not made any decision but he assumed that the opinion of the majority of the people is anyway decided: independence. Stalin asked if people in Finland now see that this decision of the Parliament means also that the newspapers no more subject themselves into any censorship in military matters and does the decision of the Parliament mean in practise the separation of Finland and Russia.

Manner answered that maybe at least a part of the bourgeoisie already sees the separation as a fait accompli but the socialists may represent rather an opinion that, at least formally, the matter is not yet finally decided. The socialists aim at a mutually agreed settlement of relations, and Manner even added that presumably neither the bourgeoisie would oppose this. Manner also stated that we have no knowledge about the standing concerning the military censorship. He assumed having noticed that also after the Parliament's decision clearly military information was submitted to the censorship control.

Stalin added that from Helsinki Smilga had reported on matters concerning censorship and on efforts to circumvent it. Now it was asked from the Finnish side, how the Russian comrades see that the relations between Finland and Russia should be settled, is there a need for some specific measures to be pointed out and what such measures might be.

Lenin answered something like this: Right now they can't answer in detail. They want to get the Parliament's decision in official translation, and also the proposition showing the Social Democrats' stand on it, as well as, other material used in grounding the stand or shedding light on. You can discuss about this in Helsinki with Smilga. You Finns can

sketch a draft for the declaration of the Russian Bolshevik Party or the Government. It is up to you to decide, which one you wish to give the declaration. They accept and declare according to your wish. They do not want to leave the matter of the Finnish independence to be decided by the Constituent Assembly. Their own declaration would be the final one. The time for the Constituent Assembly is not yet fixed. It will begin, when half of the representatives have arrived. The Bolsheviks will not voluntarily give the state power to the bourgeoisie. A bitter fight can be expected as well as a new revolution. The peasantry's stand will decide. The army is on the Bolsheviks' side. If the Constitutional Assembly will not recognize the measures and decisions taken by the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars, soldiers will send the assembly packing. So, no trust can yet be put in that assembly. Otherwise, Lenin hoped that in future questions put to them are given before-hand formulated.

It was then asked that is there, however, a need for a specific agreement defining relations between Finland and Russia.

Lenin noted that his answer depends on whether the Finnish Social Democrats are able to make the Finnish bourgeoisie join the Social Democrats' point of view. The best approach were, if the workers in Finland would take the power. He still added that they are ready to make an agreement but it should be negotiated beforehand by a committee. Lenin also asked if he Finnish socialdemocracy will continue with the revolution or even accomplish it.

Manner stated that the Party is certainly prepared for any event coming up; no actual decisions are made; but he saw that such an alternative exists that the conditions will drive the workers into revolution and it is hardly believable that the socialdemocracy will just remain as a bystander.

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[Source: The Archives of Labour Movement, K.H.Wiik's papers]

Translation: Pauli Kruhse