

THE TRANSITION OF THE FINNISH WORKERS' PAPERS TO THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PRESS

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In a study of the emergence of the Finnish workers' press in the last decade of the nineteenth and the first of the twentieth century, three background factors should be borne in mind: the political conditions of the time, the development and maturity of the party system and the general structure of the press. These interrelated factors all played a part in determining the nature of the Labour press and the position this new group of papers assumed.

As a result of the war of 1808–09 Finland, till then part of the Swedish kingdom, was annexed to Russia but retained an autonomous position within it. The Czar was Grand Duke of Finland, and was empowered to call together the legislative organ, the Diet of the four estates. He was represented in this country by the Governor General, the supreme administrative authority, the accretion of whose powers became towards the turn of the century an increasingly problematic issue. In the transfer from one state to the other Finland had preserved her original constitution, but the political activities this implied did not in fact emerge until the 1860s, when the Diet began its regular function. As the end of the century approached, however, this relatively peaceful process of development was disturbed. The 1880s had already seen the appearance in Russian literature and in the Russian press of pan-Slavic attacks on the special position Finland occupied, and in the 1890s systematic efforts were made to remove this privilege. The symbol of the campaign to Russianize the country was Nicolai Bobrikov, appointed Governor General in 1898, and its climax was the publication in February 1899 of the so-called February Manifesto, the decrees of which meant an end to Finnish autonomy. Bobrikov received unlimited powers to remove the differences between Finland and the Russian State, and he applied himself to the task until, in 1904, he was shot by a young Finnish patriot.

The unrest which grew in Russia after her unsuccessful war with Japan was reflected in Finland. In 1905 there was a general strike, as a result of which the ruler published a decree rescinding the majority of the unconstitutional regulations of the February manifesto. The administration was given the task of drafting a new representative body, based on general and uniform suffrage, to replace the oligarchical system hitherto prevailing, and guarantee was given of the freedom of speech and assembly. In 1907 the country's first unicameral parliament was elected. The

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year 1909 brought a renewal of the pressure for Russianization, and the subsequent decade up to the achievement of independence was lived in continual struggle to preserve Finland's existence as a separate entity. Indeed this very struggle is the dominant feature throughout the history of Finland's autonomy.

Political party activity in Finland begins in the 1860s, the period of political awakening.¹ The first issues at stake were matters of language policy: the division between pro-Finnish and pro-Swedish elements dominated the field, and left no room for compromise between the two groups. The Liberal party in fact disintegrated in the 1880s in its attempts at reconciliation. Within the Finnish faction, however, a schism was revealed over the attitude to certain prominent social problems. The main issue was the extension of the vote. Since such a development would have meant a strengthening of the Finnish front, the Swedish group violently opposed it. In pro-Finnish circles the official leadership decided that a partial reform to restrict the number of tenable votes would suffice to carry a Finnish victory, but the increasingly prominent younger element, in favour of social reform outright, adopted the view that the suffrage should be general and uniform. Social problems thus were ever more clearly emerging along with the language question.

With the increasingly intense campaign for Russianization towards the turn of the century the pattern changed. The outstanding problem came to be seen in the need to resist this threat, and the consideration of social issues must yield precedence. However, this shift in the centre of gravity came at a time when the rapidly growing proletariat in Finland was showing marked signs of radicalism. The leaders now emerging from the ranks of the workers themselves insisted upon the urgency of dealing with the social problem regardless of the threat from outside.

The Finnish workers' movement had emerged in the 1880s in organized activities for the promotion of social reform, led by intellectuals representing mainly the various standpoints of the pro-Finnish faction. During its initial years the movement had no party-political character; as a factor clearly reinforcing the Finnish front it was seen above all as part of the Finnish movement. From the middle of the 1890s, however, there arose within the Labour movement an element of opposition which by 1899 had acquired sufficient power to displace the prevailing bourgeois leadership and establish an independent Labour party. The opposition was impelled mainly by discontent with social conditions but influenced also to some extent by the socialist movement abroad. As yet the party did not openly adopt socialistic slogans, although its programme gave abundant evidence of influences from social democrat activities in other countries. The new party was founded at a time when resistance to the threat of Russianization had become vital to the nation's existence. Though it acknowledged allegiance to the improvement of internal conditions, it was regarded as a breach in the national front. This drove the young party into a position of ostracisation and defence against practically all other political groupings. Dissatisfaction at the delay in social reforms provided the party's agitators with abundant ammunition, and the group rapidly assumed the character of class-conscious socialism.

The party maintained few contacts with international socialism, so that the ex-

position of ideological principles was confined to tub-thumping on simple basic themes. Central to the movement was the conception of it as a freedom campaign. When eventually the disputes over measures to be adopted in face of the interference from Russia caused a reshuffle in the old party pattern, the concentrated pressure upon the new grouping abated. The field was left clear for social criticism, which was to become the increasingly dominant theme in the socialist gospel. In 1903 the party openly adopted socialist slogans and in the 1907 elections, from a position of practically no political influence whatever, it emerged in one step as the most powerful party in the country. Some million people who had hitherto been entirely without suffrage received a voice in political affairs. The Social Democrats gained 80 seats in the new parliament while the remaining 120 were distributed among five other parties.

Without doubt this success was due in part at least to the close-knit party organisation of the social democrats from the outset. The older parties had long remained without a systematic group structure. The Swedish faction did not set up a party delegation until 1896, the Finnish not until 1899, while the 1907 elections were at hand before the middle class groupings were in a position to create a fully developed party machine. The Labour party machinery had inherited its basic elements, the local workers' associations, from back in the period of bourgeois leadership. In its inaugural assembly in 1899 it was able to create a statutory party organisation, based as yet, however, on the central and local administration principle without intermediate regional organs. These latter were established in 1906, prior to the parliamentary elections. Most notable, however, is the fundamental difference in the emergence of the party machinery of bourgeois and Labour respectively: the former arose as a cadre unit for election purposes, whereas the Social Democrat group had a clearly mass party structure.²

The Growth of the Press

Conditions favouring the emergence of a press in Finland were closely related to the political development of the country. Throughout the entire period of autonomy the press was subject to a rigid system of permit and censorship. With the aggravation of the political situation those in power sought to *intensify* their control, and the consecutive phases of political life are reflected in the press. The birth of the Finnish press dates from the period of political awakening in the 1860s. At this time the press began to assume the function not only of a news vehicle but also of an interpreter and mirror of political opinion. The political grouping which ensued along the lines of the emerging parties had by the 1890s divided the press into three camps – pro-Swedish, pro-Finnish, and Young Finland. The journalism of the time was clearly a political activity, although the vaguely defined structure of the parties and the voluntary basis of the support afforded them by the press left room for differences of opinion. The conceptions of the papers in the capital received particular emphasis for the specific reason that there the views of party leaders could best find voice. Especially the main organ of the pro-Finnish faction, *Uusi Suometar*,

assumed the character of a vehicle for the opinions of the party leaders who in fact also had financial interests in it.

During the period in which Finland was not subject to disturbance from Russia the press shows a steady increase numerically. In 1860 there were only 13 papers in the country, in 1890 already 55. At the end of the '90s, however, the process of evolution was threatened when the campaign for Russianization was inevitably focused on a press which reflected public opinion. The powers of the Governor General were increased at such a rate that at the turn of the century the press was entirely at his mercy. Papers already in existence were abolished and efforts to establish new ones met with the difficulty of obtaining permits. This meant a break in the numerical growth of the press right down to the lifting of oppression, after which the development was explosive. In 1905 the number of papers appearing from two to seven times a week was 75, in 1910 it was 127.³

The Finnish Labour Press achieved its emergence within the space of a decade. The first Labour paper,⁴ the *Työmies*, was founded in Helsinki in 1895, but for the first years it appeared as the organization publication of the workers' associations for the promotion of social reform, and came out only once a week. The change of this Helsinki paper to a six-daily publication and the establishment of local Labour papers in the other big industrial centres, Turku and Tampere, meant the actual establishment of the first Labour press group. All this took place prior to the stringent control of publication, which of course had its effect on the establishment of Labour papers as on that of others. True, after a number of attempts to obtain a permit a paper was established in Kotka in 1900, but it survived only some six months. In fact the small Swedish-language Helsinki weekly founded at the beginning of 1901 was the only newcomer in this early phase of the Labour press which survived into the present century. The Labour party had thus little journalistic support in these first years. The breakthrough came only after the general strike, when the lifting of all restrictions on the establishment of papers brought a whole chain of regional Labour papers across the country. At the close of 1906 the number of publications approved as party papers was 16 – some of them, however, were of the nature of periodicals – and by 1913 the total exceeded 20. The peak had been reached, and the problem was now conceived as that of controlling further expansion in order to guarantee the survival of the papers already established. The increase in the influence of this group of papers is also manifest in their circulation. In 1899 their total circulation – according to even the boldest estimations – can have been but 7,000 or so, whereas in 1908 the 120,000 level was reached.⁵

It may well be understood that a party like the Social Democrat, a mass party seeking power and seeking to spread an ideology hitherto little known and condemned in public discussion, was obliged to devote particular attention to cooperation among its various channels of communication. According to socialist principles the press was a political weapon, an important link in the party chain. Since, however, the guiding principle of the party was the conception of socialism as a freedom movement, attempts to subject the press to party policy could of course be interpreted as a violation of that principle. The Labour paper was to be a *mirror* of

opinion, not a *director*, and as such the existing papers regarded themselves. Further, the political conditions of the day had given rise to a violent antipathy to all manner of supervision, and this constituted another preventive factor. It was possible for the party to organise propaganda speeches in its own name and systematically regulate such activity to serve the purposes of the leadership, but in the case of papers financially independent of the party control was not so easy. One way, of course, was to acquire ownership of the papers, but here the party's own financial straits were the obstacle. The other extreme, to leave the ideological support of the press entirely to the discretion of the respective papers, involved the danger that no uniform line could be struck even in the bigger questions of the day. A third possibility, a compromise between these two, rested on ideological solidarity: the voluntary acceptance on the part of the press of party guidance in the presentation of main party lines. The search for this solution was in fact facilitated by the situation typical of the young proletariat: the same gifted leaders found themselves acting in a number of different capacities. The fact that reporter and member of the board of directors of a paper, party leader and agitator, and later even member of Parliament were one and the same person opened the way to the third of these possibilities as the most likely and in practice the only acceptable solution.

Problems of Constructing the Control System

The problems of setting up relations between the party and its supporting press crystallized rather quickly in the early years, and by the party conference of 1901 there was sufficient practical experience to provide a basis for a uniform project. Prior to the foundation of an independent Labour party there had been no notable exchanges between the political leadership of the party and the workers' papers. It is true, the bourgeois-led workers' committee made several feeble attempts to interfere with the writing of the only existing workers' paper, but these approaches were rejected on the grounds that the paper had been established without the assistance of the committee – indeed in face of its disapproval – so that there was no debt outstanding. The situation altered fundamentally, however, when the movement passed into the hands of “its own men”, and in all three big Labour centres publications had been founded as Labour papers and strictly on the basis of “one man one vote” – doubtless a reflection of the ideal of suffrage the movement envisaged. In contrast to other Scandinavian countries, where workers' papers had passed into party ownership at an early stage, the financial basis of the Finnish press was established by selling cheap shares to all who wished to buy and by emphasising the democratic nature of the ownership in a regulation whereby each shareholder had only one vote in the company meetings regardless of the number of shares he owned. This exaggerated form of equality gave rise to a type of owner hitherto unknown on such a scale. Every man who held a ten-mark share – the sum represented 3–4 days' wages at the time – had as much say in the paper's affairs as, for example, a company owning several score. The party's chances of influencing the policies of the paper were thus entirely dependent upon the willingness of the shareholder to relinquish his powers to the party leadership. However, since the Labour papers

were unprofitable as business enterprises – all of them tottered on the brink of bankruptcy at the turn of the century – the buying of shares had been largely ideological support and consequently the majority of shares had gone to those who supported the main objectives of the party.

A problem arose, however, in the internal conflicts in the group, above all between the Turku-dominated party leadership and the heads of the Helsinki paper. It had been decided in the inaugural meeting of the party to set up headquarters in Turku, mainly because the party's only theorist with a wide knowledge of the principles of socialism, N. R. af Ursin, resided in that city and was needed as its chairman. This drove the Helsinki paper into opposition, as a result of which sharp disputes arose in the party on matters of procedure. The question of bringing the press into line thus became urgent.

When the question of relations between the Labour press and the party came up for its first detailed consideration at the party conference of 1901 the introductory speaker appointed by the party administration took as his point of departure the fact that the workers' papers had come into mutual conflict and were forgetting their common enemy without. The core of the problem, according to the speaker, was the matter of ownership: the papers, which ought to be the organs of the party, were in the hands of "a few private individuals". This allegation, in view of the principles on which the shares were sold, must be regarded as an exaggeration. Although the absence of documents on the proceedings of the companies makes it impossible to construct any detailed picture of the distribution of shares, we can say, for example, of the Tampere paper *Kansan Lehti* that the holdings registered in its first year were distributed in such a way that the organizations concerned – some twenty in number – owned about 300 shares, while private persons, most of them holding a single share, a few two or three, accounted for about 200. On the "one man one vote" basis, then, the paper's affairs were subject to the decisions of a considerably wide section of the people. Similarly in the company meetings of the Helsinki publication *Työmies* during this period of disputes at the turn of the century there were several hundred participants, so that here too there was little justification for the speaker's charges. The fact does remain, however, that in spite of the considerable numbers of shares they owned the organizations, owing to the papers' administrative principles, were underrepresented.

The party speaker addressed the meeting with one clear objective: the party must own the papers. At least it must be ensured that the privately owned shares be acquired by the workers' organizations, who would leave decisions on main policies to the party administration. The aim then was to create a system of group ownership such as prevailed in the other Scandinavian countries.

In discussions both in the press prior to this party meeting and in the conference itself two diametrically opposed lines of thought emerge. On the one hand was the demand that the workers' papers be subjected to party jurisdiction and freed from the grip of the "ten mark capitalists". On the other, the character of the socialist movement as a freedom movement was stressed, and it was pointed out that the individual supporter must not be subjected to the decisions of some central organ,

otherwise the papers would become too uniform and stereotyped. And in the circles which opposed control it was further pointed out that in actual fact there was no conflict: the papers were owned by members of the organizations, the same people were responsible for electing both the governing boards of the papers and the representatives for the party conference, and hence also the party administration.

The key question in any case was eventually the ownership of the newspapers and the awkward problem of applying ideological control. In the most outspoken addresses at the party assembly the demand was for the voluntary relinquishment of privately owned shares to the party. But although the recommendation of the committee entrusted with the problem of the press was indeed to the effect that the press should be brought under party ownership in the near future, the fact remained that, being entirely without funds, the party was not in a position to buy up these shares. Their transfer remained a matter of ideological enthusiasm and yielded little fruit. Indeed the few shares that were transferred on the voluntary basis by the time of the 1903 party conference must be regarded as having more symbolic significance than practical use. After that conference the flow petered out altogether, and the party seems to have given up hope of acquiring control of the papers by this particular means. On the other hand, it was 1913 before the decision of the 1901 conference was officially retracted. While recommendations continued to be made for the ideological control of the party papers, the clause concerning the transfer of shares to the party was reinterpreted in such a way that "the party" could mean all workers' organizations and cooperatives working for the promotion of the party's objectives. This constituted a recognition of the status quo. And in the case of papers established after the general strike, ownership was in fact much more in the hands of the organizations than previously.

It seems clear that in the prolonged dispute over the control of the press which began at the turn of the century a powerful background factor throughout was the fear in Helsinki Labour circles of the party papers' becoming "provincials" and puppets of the party administration.⁶ The need, however, was recognized of putting an end to these mutual conflicts. The solution lay already in the principle of "moral guidance" proposed at the 1901 conference. According to this each company should accord the party a say in decisions affecting the paper's attitudes, as, for instance, in the election of the chief editor. Also, the party should be given the right to instruct the editorial staff on matters of political procedure. At the same time the conference approved a motion on the acceptance of papers as party supporters: decisions were to take place in the party conference. The position of the party paper gave a paper the right to representation at the conference, as will be explained in more detail later in connection with the position of the editors of these papers.

Such ideological control, without the possibility of financial pressure, was naturally dependent to a decisive extent upon the willingness of the company to subject itself to the decisions of the party organs. A concrete guarantee of these decisions, however, lay in the fact already mentioned that company members and party members were often the same persons. Party decisions were in many cases taken by men

who in other capacities, as members of the editorial staff or governing boards of newspapers, were responsible for the activities of the press. However, with the continued violent disagreement within the party on matters of procedure no uniform line could be achieved. Nor do the party's documents give any indication of its leaders having taken active measures to exert political control over the press. At the height of the dispute the decision taken by the 1904 extraordinary meeting of the party to call for a reconciliation remained void of practical significance. Since it was once more stressed on the same occasion that each party member should be entitled to free expression of his opinion in the party press, the result amounted to two conflicting directives hardly suited to promote agreement on basic policies among the party papers.

The Press as Part of the Party Machine

Through the decisions of the party conferences in the first decade of this century the Social Democratic press was thus incorporated as part of the party mechanism, its flexible functioning, however, remaining dependent upon the degree of ideological solidarity shown by the papers themselves. In the early years, namely, when the party and its various organizations were still financially weak, acceptance as a party paper constituted more of an ideological recognition than a material advantage. Nevertheless it was not without its own significance that in this way the ideological support of the party membership was mobilised behind the papers. The support was, it is true, no more than ideological at the time. The proposal made at the party conference of 1909 to levy a party tax on behalf of the papers as was the custom in the Swedish Social Democrat camp met with such strong opposition from the very outset that the idea was abandoned and was never brought up again at any time during the period of autonomy. As to requests from the papers for financial assistance the party attitude was at first completely negative. Only after 1906, when the party grew and prospered, did the situation change, so that loans and direct assistance could be arranged.

On the whole, however, the support the papers received from the central party organs remained negligible. Of much greater significance was the activity undertaken on behalf of the press by the organizations in the constituencies. This activity assumed a variety of forms: paying off the debts of the papers, the establishment of funds to buy up shares, evening functions for the benefit of the papers as well as support for the agents of the press. In particular the redeeming of debts gave the organizations an increasing hold on the papers. This activity received its initial impulse from the recommendation of the party conference of 1913 that shares of party papers should no longer be sold to non-members and that existing holdings should where possible be redeemed from persons not belonging to the party. Advertisements of shares on this basis then appeared in the reports of many constituency circles in the following years: the constituencies might impose upon the organizations within them the obligation of buying a certain number of shares in the papers, and in some districts it was even sought to extend this obligation to private members. In practice there was great diversity. In some districts it was sought to

interpret the party decision so narrowly that paper shares were not to be sold even to private members. Although in fact it is clear that such proposals could have no more than recommendational effect on the organizations, this activity meant a concrete increase in the influence the party organizations could exert over the party press, while at the same time these groups came to the assistance of the papers in their financial affairs.

The most concrete advantage to be derived from the title of party paper was, according to the 1901 resolution, the right of the paper to representation on certain party organs. According to approved organization regulations the editors of such papers were *ex officio* representatives at party conferences, having the right of both address and vote. In this they were on a par with members of the party administration. When this right of representation was confirmed in 1906 the voting right for the party conference was retained, but in the newly created party council the press representatives had only the right of address. In 1909 these privileges were further limited, the press representatives having now only the right to speak at the party congress, and no longer to vote. By this restrictive process the system thus arose which remains more or less unchanged today.

Actually these reductions in the rights of the press representatives were not so significant. The position of editor on a party newspaper was one which gave fairly ready access to a political career. The rolls for the party congresses over the first two decades of this century show that the editors of party papers generally participated in the meetings in the capacity of elected representatives of the local organizations and as such were elected into other organs. The appointment of political editor on a party paper became an important springboard in political life. The 80-member parliamentary group elected by the Social Democrats for the 1907 Parliament included as many as 25 party paper editors. Attention was drawn to the political aspirations of pressmen in the following congress (1909) where it was proposed that editors should decline election to Parliament since it was so easy for them in their strategic position to "campaign" on their own behalf. The motion was not, however, approved. As for the editors themselves their attitude was clear: in a meeting held in conjunction with this congress they concluded that there was no justification for such a bar so long as adequate replacements could be found for them in their absence from work.

Most notable and from the point of view of freedom of speech a most interesting development was the desire of the party to place restrictions on editors as to their choice of appointments. In the fifth party conference in 1906 a strong resolution was passed to the effect that members of the Social Democrat party were not entitled to take up service on a Right Wing paper or participate in any way in the actual production of such a paper. Attempts were made in the very next congress to introduce modifications in this particularly severe measure. The editorial profession in the Finnish press had been traditionally regarded as a free profession, and although the crystallization of the party differences from the end of the century had entailed the adoption of certain party ideological attitudes on the part of editors, the greater proportion of this group had remained free within the framework of their

own work contracts. And indeed those who called for amendments drew attention to the aspiration of the whole movement to liberty, in the light of which such interference in the professional life of its members could not be countenanced. At the same time the professional aspect of journalism itself was stressed. The resolution was not altered, however; in fact it was further extended to prohibit any kind of assistance to Right Wing papers except in the form of articles not calling in question the party's principles.⁷

In this way the regulations of the Social Democrat party concerning the press came to constitute a situation hitherto unheard of in the Finnish press: the editor of a paper became a party worker whose basic ideological attitudes could be dictated from the party organs and whose appointment was subject to influence at least at the party administration level. Although the party membership regulation governing the appointment of editors seems at the official level at least to have remained more or less a passive rule, the increased control at the local constituency level over the election and the activities of editors was sometimes particularly far-reaching, while the ban on transfers to other papers created a wall between the Left Wing press and the rest as far as the mobility of editorial staff was concerned. This had the effect of emphasizing in the press as elsewhere the increasingly class-conscious attitude which by the 1920s emerged as the main party line.

Organs of Control

Already in the early stages of this establishment of terms between the workers' press and the Social Democratic party attention was drawn to the fact that a system based solely upon recommendations would not suffice to ensure uniformity in the policies of the press. The resolutions of the 1901 congress to promote agreement already proved insufficient in the subsequent years of conflict over policy and led to attempts in the first decade to create controlling organs. In the extraordinary meeting of the party in 1905 the establishment was proposed of a special committee for the purpose of bringing about a unification of policy in the party press. The exchange of opinions on the matter was reminiscent of that which had taken place four years previously over the proposed regulations regarding the relationship of the press to the party. Opponents of the proposal saw in it an attempt to set up a dictatorial committee which would be in conflict with the party's principle of freedom and which could easily fall into the hands of a few individuals. However, the party administration was entrusted with the drafting of the proposed system, and in 1906 the committee appointed made its proposal prior to the regular party conference for the establishment of a supervisory committee. It was to have a central board as well as a representative from every constituency. Every constituency was to set up its own control committee and the whole machine was to function in close cooperation both mutually and with the party administration.

This proposal, however, got no further than the party administration, because it was interpreted there as an impractical attempt to set up a censorship. The fear of any form of censorship is a feature which comes out very strongly in all discussions concerning control of the press in the early years of the party's existence. The

powerful opposition derives on the one hand from the freedom slogan of the whole movement, on the other from prevailing conditions. At the turn of the century the Labour press, along with all other papers in this country, had felt the grip of the censorship and indeed on account of its particular nature been subject to further special regulations. Hence party circles felt strong antipathy for anything resembling censorship. The 1906 party congress thus concluded its discussion on the subject by adopting the recommendation of the Social Democratic press representatives' meeting to accord the party leadership only general ideological supervisory powers, which amounted in fact to a repetition of the proposals made five years previously.

The idea of supervisory boards was revived, however, in the following decade, now largely as the problem of the control of local constituency papers. A proposal was made to the 1911 congress, which after intermediate discussions was approved in its main points in the congress of 1913. According to this motion inspection boards were to be set up to exercise ideological control over the papers of the various constituencies, dealing with complaints about the stand taken by papers and issuing cautions to them. In the matter of the appointment of editorial staff, cooperation was sought between this political organ and the governing boards of the papers involved which would make the election of permanent editors the common task of them both. The chief editor of a paper was nevertheless to have the right of veto in the appointment and dismissal of editorial personnel, so that the final decision here rested with the company.

Such supervisory boards were set up in the following years in the various constituency organizations, and district committees were granted powers of supervision. When we consider that the recommendation was intended to bind independent companies in the matter of appointments, it is clear that the possibilities of enforcement depended decisively upon the willingness of the directorship of the district papers to cooperate with the party. It was found, for example in the east constituency in Vaasa, that the district paper was an independent financial enterprise which could not be forced to follow orders from the party. Since, on the other hand, the paper was a "party institution" it was expected to give consideration to the recommendations of the constituency meetings. In this particular case the paper did not accept the proposal of the district organization and – as indeed occurred elsewhere – the activities of the district control committee remained no more than formalities.⁸

Thus again it was found that political control over the press by the party and its local organizations could be exercised only if the independent newspaper company voluntarily submitted to it. Decisive as ever was the degree of ideological solidarity. There was marked diversity in the party press, while a factor influencing all and sundry was the suspicion of any form of control over journalistic activity.

The Position of the Main Party Organ

The most prolonged, complicated, and at the same time the most interesting problem in the process of settlement between the party and its supporting press was the interpretation of the position of the main party organ. The first of the Labour

papers, the Helsinki *Työmies*, had in the initial years of its existence, when the bourgeois element had lost its hold on the movement, acquired the status of main directive organ in the faction. When the establishment of the party proper in 1899 created a new leadership composed of Labour men, the *Työmies* had to share this position with this new body. The strong stand taken at the 1901 congress by the chief editor in opposition to the proposed control by the party administration is to be seen above all against this background. The division initially proposed between a party-controlled main organ and local papers under political supervision from the local party groups was not in fact realized. Nevertheless, the Helsinki paper, as the oldest and most frequently appearing, had in practice acquired the status of chief organ, which was further strengthened by the widely distributed basis of its proprietorship. Through the medium of the workers' associations, shares had been sold in every part of the country.

When after 1903 the party centre was moved to Helsinki and the *Työmies* had among other things for practical purposes become the first paper publishing information for the party committee, the decision of 1906 to make it the official organ of the party was no more than a confirmation of the situation already prevailing in practice. Of the publications working for the party the *Työmies* was the only one with a national circulation, even if the coverage was somewhat thin and the centre of gravity continued to be in the capital and the province of Uusimaa. By 1914 there remained only 58 out of the country's 492 communes where not a single copy of this paper was sold.

The position of the Helsinki paper was thus extraordinary in that while it was in practice regarded as the party's chief organ and was quoted as such in the reports of the international socialist bureau, its proprietors and political control group (the constituent organization of Uusimaa) firmly insisted that in the supervisory sense the paper should not be singled out from the rest of the party papers and that the party leadership should have no more say in its affairs than elsewhere in the press. Over the years there subsequently emerged a conflict on the question of political line: the Uusimaa constituency was uncompromisingly committed to the class conflict policy and sought to guarantee also in the Helsinki Labour paper the maintenance of this line in face of revisionist elements now appearing within the party lead. This being the case the attempts of the leadership to establish the status of the *Työmies* as the real organ of the party met with no success at any time in the existence of the paper (1895–1918). Even though the party congresses of 1911 and 1913 came out in favour of the official and real acquisition of the paper as chief organ, the opposition of both the proprietary company and the controlling constituency proved too powerful. From the Helsinki side came a completely new interpretation of the concept "chief organ". The *Työmies* could not be regarded as chief organ for those areas which produced their own papers – here these papers themselves were the chief organs. In meetings of the Uusimaa constituency anti-supervision motives were clearly brought out: the *Työmies* had been obliged on many occasions to oppose the line taken by the party administration, and it could not be placed under the control of party representatives in matters of policy. As a result

of this strong negative attitude the party congress of 1913 gave up the effort to gain control of the paper for the party lead, and the matter was shelved.

Thus throughout the entire period of autonomy there prevailed in the largest party in the country a situation in which that party had no chief organ whatever over which it had any real jurisdiction. In practice, however, the Helsinki paper was regarded as the main party publication, and as regards circulation and coverage it in fact was. Its independence of the party lead, however, was significant from the point of view of the future party line. The chief editor of the paper, Edvard Valpas-Hänninen, who emerged as the leading ideologist of the class struggle conception, was required by the 1906 party congress to join the party committee by reason of his very position, and he was indeed elected its chairman by an overwhelming majority. Not three months later, however, and without giving his reasons, he relinquished this position and never sought to participate in the leadership again. And although other leading political figures in the editorship of the *Työmies* continued to hold key positions in the party, the Helsinki paper retained its independence of the lead and its line was subject only to the free decisions of the editors. It was not until after Finland gained her independence that the successor to the *Työmies*, the *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, was brought, and this too only after heated disputes on policy, under the direct control – also financial – of the party lead.

General Lines of Development

On the basis of the above descriptions of the relations between the Finnish Social Democratic party and its supporting press it is perhaps possible to draw some general conclusions about the problems which assume importance in such a situation.

In the first place it should be noted that only where the financial control of a paper coincides with the political is it possible to create a uniform direction of the press. Where financial control has not been acquired or is weak the decisive factor will be ideological solidarity. In this respect it proved possible in the case of the Finnish Social Democratic party, in the period when relations were being built up between the party and its press, to establish the main lines of ideological supervision which could not be significantly ensured by financial control of the newspaper company.

The significance of historical background factors and ideological influences for such an arrangement is obviously great. The dispute over the chief party organ and the ultimate failure of the element in favour of party control is to be explained on the basis of the situation prior to the foundation of the party, during which the paper and its editors gained a position as leaders of opinion which they were reluctant to relinquish to the new, more powerful party core which sought to acquire ideological control of the group.

In the establishment of the supervisory mechanism for the press anything reminiscent of censorship met with particularly powerful opposition. This attitude derived on the one hand from the conception of the Social Democratic movement prominent in the somewhat heterogeneous ideology of the early years, namely that

it represented above all freedom, and on the other from the direct experience of a harsh censorship imposed upon the press from without. Together these two factors created a powerful opposition to the party even in the projection of its more general lines.

On the other hand, however, there was in the background the group consciousness, the awareness of common objectives. This cleared the way for the gradual emergence of uniformity in the press group on the larger political issues and rendered possible the political cooperation which rested on voluntary ideological support.

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NOTES

¹ The account of party political conditions here is mainly according to the conclusions drawn by Rommi, 1964.

² Rommi, op. cit., p. 128.

³ Numerical Tables 1860-1965: Salmelin, 1967; and Viranko, 1966, p. 12. Accounts of the development of the press given in this article are based, unless otherwise stated, on two studies by the writer. The above-mentioned work throws light on the background and development of the press up to 1901, while the further development of the Social Democratic party and its press is described in an unpublished thesis (Salmelin 1962).

In connection with the political development of the Finnish social democratic movement three works may be mentioned which in addition to the party documents have contributed background material to the above-mentioned studies: Soikkanen, 1961; von Schoultz, 1924; and Paasivirta, 1949.

⁴ For the purposes of this article a Labour paper is such as has announced in its programme that it addresses mainly the workers, and which has been under the control of the workers or of groups promoting their interests.

⁵ The information available on the circulation of Finnish papers during the period under consideration, is very vague throughout. The basis for figures given are the estimations of Salmelin, 1967, p. 177; and Soikkanen, op. cit., p. 322.

⁶ This name was used in his address to the congress by the chief editor of the *Työmies*, Edvard Valpas. The term was in itself provocative, for it alluded to the current plans of the

Governor General Bobrikov, to establish "provincial papers", controlled by the administration, in such cities where his numerous abolitions had thinned the ranks of communications media too rigorously.

⁷ This principle was reiterated as a party resolution as late as 1930. Today it has little practical significance, nor apparently have any attempts been made to ensure its enforcement. There is, however, some significance in the clause preserved in the agreements of the party editors' association and the publishers, to the effect that the papers shall have only union workers in their pay and that membership in the editorial organization is to be bound to party membership. In practice, however, even this requirement is applied with a large measure of flexibility.

⁸ After 1918, with the rearranging of the Social Democratic party and the "new beginning", as it were, even of the paper companies, the supervisory committee system described here was replaced throughout with the so-called editorial council system which still today in practice directs political lines within the party press group.

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