
Tauno Saarela

Yrjö Mäkelin's Choice

ABSTRACT

The division of the Finnish labour movement is studied in this article through the choice of Yrjö Mäkelin, one of the prominent members of the Finnish labour movement since its foundation. Yrjö Mäkelin made his choice in the beginning of 1922, when he was released from the prison where he had spent almost four years. During that time the Finnish labour movement had been divided, and Mäkelin had to ponder on which party to choose. Mäkelin's earlier career, especially his wish to get the labour movement to work together with the bourgeois parties in order to achieve independence for Finland, would have suggested that he join the Social Democratic Party; but he decided to enter the ranks of the Socialist Workers' Party which had contacts with the underground Communist Party. Although Mäkelin was not a very active participant in the abortive revolution and in the civil war in the winter and spring of 1918, it was an important factor in his decision. The stance of his family and the whole labour movement in the northern Finland also had an influence on Mäkelin's choice. He, however, emphasised that he would join the Socialist Workers' Party while following his own programme, which expressed doubts about the ideas of centralisation and strict discipline the communist movement had launched. He stayed within the party, although the leaders of the Communist Party wanted to expel him.

Keywords: *communism, Finland, Soviet Russia, civil war*

Introduction

The division of the Finnish labour movement is studied in this article through the choice of Yrjö Mäkelin, one of the prominent members of the Finnish labour movement since its foundation. Yrjö Mäkelin made his choice in the beginning of 1922, when he was released from prison where he had spent almost four years. During that time the Finnish labour movement had been divided and Mäkelin had to ponder on which party to choose. Mäkelin's earlier career, especially his wish to get the labour movement to work together with the bourgeois parties in order to achieve independence for Finland, would have suggested that he would join the Social Democratic Party, but he decided to enter the ranks of the Socialist Workers' Party which had contacts with the underground Communist Party. Although Mäkelin was not a very active participant in the abortive

revolution and in the civil war in the winter and spring of 1918, it was an important factor in his decision. The stance of his family and the whole labour movement in northern Finland also had an influence on Mäkelin's choice. He, however, emphasised that he would join the Socialist Workers' Party while following his own programme, which expressed doubts about the ideas of centralisation and strict discipline the communist movement had launched. He stayed within the party, although the leaders of the Communist Party wanted to expel him.

Yrjö Esaias Emanuel Mäkelin was released on the 30 January 1922 after having been imprisoned since the end of March 1918. Mäkelin's release was part of the process where the Finnish parliament pardoned those with long sentences which were passed immediately after the civil war. They affected all those who were suspected of having been involved in the Red activities in 1917–18.¹

Yrjö Mäkelin, who was born in 1875, had been one of the most prominent members of the Finnish labour movement since its beginning; he had participated in the founding congress of the labour party in 1899 and since 1900 been an active newspaperman, first in *Kansan Lehti* in Tampere and from 1907 onwards in *Kansan Tahto* in Oulu. Besides newspaper articles Mäkelin had become famous among the Finnish working people as the author of the declaration of suffrage at the party congress in Forssa in 1903 and as the writer of the so called Red Declaration in Tampere in 1905. He had also declared his ideas from the platform of the parliament since 1908. And it was this career in the labour movement which caused his sentence in 1918 – first to death and then to imprisonment for 15 years – although participation in the activities of the Reds in 1917–1918 was given as the formal reason for his imprisonment.²

Although the tough sentences were undoubtedly passed in order to discourage participation in the activities of the labour movement, Yrjö Mäkelin hardly felt any hesitation in that respect. The return to the ranks of the labour movement did, however, need some thinking. The situation had changed since Mäkelin's imprisonment: the labour movement was divided, and there were now two parties – the Social Democratic Party of Finland (*Suomen sosialidemokraattinen puolue*, SDP) and the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland (*Suomen sosialistinen työväenpuolue*, SSTP). Besides these the Communist Party of Finland (*Suomen kommunistinen puolue*, SKP) had its headquarters in Petrograd, Soviet Russia but it also worked underground in Finland. Its leadership even claimed that it guided the activities of the SSTP.

- 1 About 67,000 persons were convicted by special courts. On the civil war in Finland, see, for example, Anthony F. Upton: *The Finnish Revolution 1917–1918*, Minneapolis 1980; Risto Alapuro: *State and Revolution in Finland*: Berkeley/Los Angeles/London 1988, pp. 150–196.
- 2 On Mäkelin's life and career, Marja-Leena Salkola: *Julistaja ja poliitikko: Yrjö Mäkelinin elämä ja toiminta*, Helsinki 1967; Ossi Hedman/Yrjö Mäkelin: *Sanantaitaja ja saarnamies*, in: Hannu Soikkanen (ed.): *Tiennäyttäjät 1*. Helsinki 1967, pp. 237–275.

SDP, SSTP and SKP

There had not been any major splits in the Finnish labour movement before 1917, although there were different kinds of emphasis regarding the political line of the Social Democratic Party towards Finland's position in the Russian Empire.³ The division of the labour movement was in many ways connected with the results of the abortive revolution and the civil war in the winter and spring of 1918. The three parties formulated their political line in relation to these significant events but also to the political line of the pre-civil war labour movement and to each other.

Although the labour movement secured its formal legitimacy in Finland in the parliamentary election in February 1919, its position in the Finnish society was much weaker than before 1918.

The SKP was founded by the leaders and functionaries of the red government who had escaped to Soviet Russia after the defeat in the revolution in the spring of 1918. In Soviet Russia these refugees came to the conclusion that the Finnish revolution had failed because the labour movement had stayed within the boundaries of Finnish nation and bourgeois democracy. Therefore they founded the Finnish Communist Party (from 1920 onwards the Communist Party of Finland) in Moscow in August 1918. The new party wanted to entirely abandon the previous working methods of the Finnish labour movement – working in parliament, trade unions and cooperative movement – and propagate armed revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of proletariat. These slogans reflected strong support for the Russian revolution and Bolshevik ideas. They were also in line with the practical situation in Soviet Russia – the Finns participated in the defence of Bolshevik power with arms in hand. But these slogans were not a solid ground for activities in Finland. That was something SKP would see in the near future, and by the summer of 1920 it had realised that its policy had to be more flexible.⁴

The Social Democratic Party was re-founded in the spring of 1918 by those who had not participated in the revolution. The re-founders of the SDP also wanted distance to the pre-civil war labour movement. According to them, the leadership of the party had made mistakes such as forsaking the reform politics and cooperation with the progressive bourgeois parties in 1917, allowing the spread of Bolshevik ideas among the party's ranks, propagating class hatred and starting an armed revolution. Those re-founding the party wanted to give priority to work in parliament and municipal councils and to get the masses to understand the significance of reform policies and cooperation with the parties of the bourgeois centre. They regarded the spontaneous activities of the labouring masses

3 Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapolitiikkaa: Sosiaalidemokratit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, Helsinki 1993.

4 On the foundation of the SKP, Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, Helsinki 1996, pp. 36–100.

with suspicion and had a tendency to reject extra-parliamentary activities or to maintain strict control over them. The fact that many of the party's re-founders had been active in the co-operational movement gave a background to their political line.⁵

The process of founding the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland started during the summer of 1919 as those dissatisfied with the politics of the re-founded SDP began to unite. Many of those who had participated in the activities in 1917 and 1918 had difficulties understanding the condemnation of their attempt to take the power. These groups also felt that the new leaders of the SDP had forsaken the strict line of the class struggle of the pre-civil war labour movement, as they had rejected extra-parliamentary actions and given priority to the work in parliament and municipal councils and as they wanted to co-operate with centre parties. Some regarded the new line as accommodation to the views of the victors of the civil war. Neither did they like the attempts of the SDP leadership to increase the party's centralisation and change the system of the pre-1918 labour movement in which the districts had enjoyed their own independence – although the introduction of parliamentary election in 1907 had increased the guidance of the party leadership. After the failed attempt to win over the majority at the SDP party congress in December 1919, these groups founded the SSTP in May 1920.⁶

The conclusions drawn from the civil war indicated that the SKP and the SDP planned to distance themselves from the pre-civil war Finnish labour movement; but the SSTP rather wanted to continue its independent political line. The politics of the SSTP was on one hand characterised by expressions of solidarity towards the new communist movement, but on the other hand by attempts to secure workers' civil rights and their associations in Finland, including the attempts to get all the imprisoned workers released. The party was also active in challenging the victor's views regarding the events in 1917–18.

Though the birth of the SKP and the SSTP demonstrated different ideas of the character and tasks of the revolutionary labour movement, the representatives of the SKP and those in Finland came in contact in summer of 1919. By the autumn of 1920 a model had been created that some of the SSTP leaders belonged to the Finnish Bureau, the main body of the SKP in Finland. Some of the Finnish activists participated in the party courses organised by the SKP from the autumn of 1920 onwards and in the congresses of the Communist International and the SKP in Soviet Russia in the summer of 1921. The SKP supported the SSTP's newspapers financially, although the main sum was received

5 Hannu Soikkanen: *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta*, Helsinki 1975, pp. 309–344; Pauli Kettunen: *Poliittinen liike ja sosiaalinen kollektiivisuus: Tutkimus sosialidemokratiasta ja ammattiyhdistysliikkeestä Suomessa 1918–1944*, Helsinki 1986, pp. 94–102.

6 On the background and the character of the SSTP, Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 120–192.

from the Finnish labour organisations in the United States. The connection with the SSTP indicated that the SKP had changed its political line, but it was very difficult for the SKP leadership to realise that the political lines formulated by the SKP and the SSTP reflected different situations in Soviet Russia and in Finland. In the former, where the communists had conquered power, it was easy to follow their instructions while in the latter the working class and its organisations had suffered a fundamental defeat in the civil war and the communist movement had to fight for its existence. So, the SKP leadership had a tendency to forget those differences and see its relation to the SSTP as a relation of command. Working in different conditions made the SKP party congress decision that the SSTP would act according to the instructions of the SKP in many respects a dead letter.⁷ That became evident during the winter of 1922.

Why not the SDP?

Mäkelin had to choose his side in a very practical manner. Taavi Tainio, the party secretary of the SDP, had offered him a post of chief editor in *Kansan Työ*, the daily newspaper published in Viipuri in south-eastern Finland.⁸ Even in Oulu the journalist Mäkelin had two options: *Pohjan Kansa*, which had been founded after the civil war and had become a SSTP newspaper in 1920, and *Kansan Tahto*, founded by the social democrats at the end of 1921 and keeping the pre-civil war newspaper's name.⁹

It did not take very long for Mäkelin to choose his side. In February he, or rather his pen name Riitahuhdan Esa, published his words of welcome in *Pohjan Kansa*, the SSTP newspaper. The very same day Mäkelin accepted the offer from the publishing company Pohjan Kansa to become an editor of *Pohjan Kansa*.¹⁰

Why did Mäkelin choose the SSTP? Did not his past rather suggest that his choice should have been the SDP? Namely, Mäkelin had previously spoken for cooperation with the constitutional bourgeoisie in order to get representatives of the working people in the estates-based diet. Even after the parliamentary reform brought about the formation of a one-chamber parliament in 1907, which enabled the labour movement to present their own candidates, he had proposed cooperation with the representatives of the bourgeois in order to protect Finland's autonomy from the threat of the russification policy pur-

7 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 195–242.

8 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, Oulu 2006, p. 101.

9 Risto Kenttä: *Oma apu, paras apu: Oulun Sosialidemokraattinen Työväenyhdistys r.y. 100 vuotta 1886–1986*, Oulu 1986, pp. 68–69, 105–107, 169–170; Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, p. 105.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

sued by Tsar Nicholas II and his government.¹¹ Besides that, when the war broke out in 1914 he had supported the participation of workers in the Jäger movement in order to help Finland to achieve independence.¹² Mäkelin had not been the only social democrat to advocate cooperation in the name of national interests, but the majority within the party, however, gave priority to independent class struggle.¹³

Cooperation with the progressive bourgeois groups was also the demand of those who re-founded the SDP after the civil war in the spring and summer of 1918. Mäkelin had, however, not been in close cooperation with Väinö Tanner, the most significant representative of those re-founding the party, although their political lines had been similar in questions concerning cooperation with the bourgeois parties before 1917.¹⁴ Besides, Mäkelin differed from them in a constitutive way – he had not been a bystander in 1917–1918. After the February revolution Mäkelin had worked very actively for the independence of Finland.¹⁵ His enthusiasm declined towards the end of the year, but as a member of the SDP party council he accepted the takeover of power as a historical necessity in February 1918.¹⁶ Mäkelin did not, however, want to work as a person in charge of internal affairs in the People's Deputation, the red government, although he was proposed for that post. Instead he chose to work as an editor in Pori, but rather soon found his way into hospital in Tampere where he was operated on and then arrested at the end of March 1918 when the Whites conquered the city.¹⁷

Thus, Mäkelin did not participate in the meetings of those social democrats who opposed the attempts to take power and who sought peaceful solutions for the civil

- 11 See, for example, Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapoliitiikkaa: Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, pp. 32–38, 163–166, 174–177, 184–187.
- 12 Marja-Leena Salkola: *Julistaja ja poliitikko: Yrjö Mäkelinin elämä ja toiminta*, pp. 72–75; Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapoliitiikkaa: Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, pp. 319–323, 336–337.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 57–69, 82–86, 126–131, 177–183, 227–241.
- 14 Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapoliitiikkaa: Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, pp. 85, 155–160; Jaakko Paavolainen: *Nuori Tanner – menestyvä sosialisti: Elämäkerta vuoteen 1911*, Helsinki 1977.
- 15 Eino Ketola: *Kansalliseen kansanvaltaan: Suomen itsenäisyys, sosialidemokraatit ja Venäjän vallankumous 1917*, Helsinki 1987, pp. 95–102, 116–120, 237–239, 401–402, 434–437; Hannu Soikkanen: *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta*, pp. 214–215, 218–220, 232–243.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 270; Osmo Rinta-Tassi: *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena*, Helsinki 1986, pp. 123–124.
- 17 Marja-Leena Salkola: *Julistaja ja poliitikko: Yrjö Mäkelinin elämä ja toiminta*, p. 88; Osmo Rinta-Tassi: *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena*, pp. 130–131.

war.¹⁸ Mäkelin did not subsequently condemn the attempt to take the power, as the greatest number of those who re-founded the SDP did. Neither did he want to petition for a pardon for his activities in 1917–18, although that could have helped him out of prison earlier.¹⁹ Mäkelin probably had doubts about whether the attempt to take the power had been reasonable, as it led to such a bloodshed and sufferings; but he did not talk or write about this. He did not take a stand for the SDP in prison as Eetu Salin, his fellow prisoner, did.²⁰

Mäkelin's wish to cooperate with bourgeois parties had concerned above all achieving Finland's independence. Thus, the situation in independent Finland was entirely different; there was no longer the common enemy against which the labour movement and bourgeois parties could have grouped together. The questions concerning the character of independent Finland rather created disagreement between bourgeois parties and the labour movement. Furthermore, Mäkelin was very disappointed with the unwillingness of the bourgeois parties to implement Finland's independence immediately after the February revolution and their cooperation with the Russian provisional government in order to dissolve parliament which had a socialist majority in the summer of 1917. The aftermath of the civil war – the imprisonment of those who had been on the Red side and other kind of persecution of the losing side – confirmed this dissatisfaction.²¹ It was not changed by the willingness of some bourgeois parliamentarians to try to get him out of prison.²²

The re-founders of the SDP regarded it necessary that it succeeded in preventing the unity of the bourgeois parties. In their opinion it was the only way to guarantee the continuation of social democratic activities.²³ Mäkelin probably had doubts about the validity of this assessment, but more important was the fact that the re-founders took a defensive position which was obviously reasonable immediately after the civil war. But that was not Mäkelin's attitude – he had proposed cooperation with the bourgeois parties in order to create opportunities for the labour movement to exert influence. The cautiousness of the SDP leadership, the attempt not to provoke the bourgeois parties, could not rouse enthusiasm in Mäkelin who was used to demonstrating the moral superiority

18 Hannu Soikkanen: *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta*, pp. 309–310; Osmo Rinta-Tassi: *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallitukseksi*, pp. 134–135.

19 Ossi Hedman: *Yrjö Mäkelin: Sanantaitaja ja saarnamies*, p. 273.

20 Hannu Soikkanen: *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta*, p. 336.

21 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 85–90, 101–102.

22 Ossi Hedman: *Yrjö Mäkelin: Sanantaitaja ja saarnamies*, p. 273.

23 Pauli Kettunen: *Poliittinen liike ja sosiaalinen kollektiivisuus: Tutkimus sosialidemokratiasta ja ammattiyhdistysliikkeestä Suomessa 1918–1944*, pp. 288–300.

of the labour movement. He was an agitator who wanted to speak – or rather to write – to the masses and make them become active. That was what he had done in *Kansan Lehti* and *Kansan Tahto* despite the threat of being censored by the Russian authorities.²⁴

The re-founders of the SDP wanted to channel the activities of the labour movement in representational organs, in parliament and municipal councils. Their attitude towards extra-parliamentary activities was negative. Parliament was an important forum for Mäkelin before 1918 and there were occasions when he had demanded the party concentration only on parliamentary activities.²⁵ He had not, however, wanted to limit the operations of the labour movement one-sidedly and his attitude towards the extra-parliamentary activities was permissive; he had for instance supported general strike as a means to achieve suffrage and had been involved in organising young men to boycott the conscription that was implemented under the Russian legislation.²⁶

In spite of his wish to cooperate with bourgeois parties, Mäkelin was also used to challenging their attitudes. It was obviously difficult for him to regard the defensive attitude of the SDP leadership as an active struggle for the patterns of thought, behaviour and organisation of the society which was important for Mäkelin. The SDP leadership rather seemed to accept the models presented by the victors of the civil war. Besides their attitude towards extra-parliamentary activities that was evident in their interpretation of the civil war; although the SDP was active in the pursuit of an amnesty for those imprisoned in 1918, it was reluctant to accept the experiences of the participants in the events in 1918 as part of its political line. On the other hand, their experiences were an integral part of the SSTP identity. And that was obviously one of the reasons Mäkelin chose the SSTP.

Mäkelin, the SSTP and the SKP

Although Mäkelin joined the SSTP and was attracted to its way of actively challenging the views of the bourgeois, his relationship with it and to the SKP was not without problems. Mäkelin's statement that he wanted to belong to them but to follow his own programme was a proof that he did not entirely accept or know the politics of the SSTP, to say nothing of the SKP.

Mäkelin's quick appointment by *Pohjan Kansa* after his release from prison indicated the need for experienced and able journalists and politicians in the SSTP. The party felt

24 Antti Kujala: Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905. Helsinki 1995, pp. 53–54; Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 47–49.

25 Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapoliitiikkaa: Sosiaalidemokratit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, pp. 60–63.

26 Antti Kujala: *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905*, pp. 46, 198–200, 210–211, 222–223.

the loss of experienced members of the labour movement in Finland in 1918 more badly than the SDP. At the moment Mäkelin was released, the SSTOP was on the brink of losing its leaders and journalists; at the end of January the entire party committee of the SSTOP had been arrested on suspicion of preparing acts of treason. As the so called people's rising in Karelia had threatened to expand into a conflict between Finland and Soviet Russia the party had published a declaration which urged the working class to fight against the war. The Finnish authorities interpreted that stand as fighting arms in hand, and besides the leaders of the SSTOP, arrested the chief editors of all those newspapers which had published the declaration of the party. There was a fear of other arrests, perhaps the dissolution of the party, among the members of the SSTOP.²⁷

The situation put the relationship between the SSTOP and the SKP to the test and this was, unintentionally, spurred on by the Finnish bureau of the SKP. The underground members of the bureau tried to encourage working people by giving instructions to the underground organisation in a secret circular letter in the beginning of February. Besides that, the authors of the letter wanted to express solidarity with Soviet Russia and presented giving aid to those suffering from hunger in Soviet Russia as one of the tasks of the communists. According to the letter, one way for Finnish workers to help Russians was to steal pieces of metal or wood from their working places in order to produce something out of that material and send it to Soviet Russia. This letter ended up in the hands of the social democrats, and *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, the main organ of the SDP, published the letter in a highly public manner at the beginning of March.²⁸ The publication of the letter enlivened the discussion on the character of the party within the SSTOP. And this discussion revealed that Mäkelin's interpretations regarding the assessment of the existing situation and the character of the revolutionary labour movement were not similar to those of the SKP and SSTOP leaderships.

The Immediacy of the Revolution

The birth of the international communist movement was characterised by hopes for immediate world revolution. The Russian revolutions, especially the October revolution, had given new grounds for considering revolution. In the communist movement the October revolution was regarded as an event in which the Bolsheviks had conquered the executive power of the state by armed force and held it by establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. This made the coercive power of the proletariat a model to follow. Thus the preconditions for revolution were little discussed in the international communist

27 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 250–252; on the “people's rising” in Karelia, e.g. Keijo Korhonen: *Naapurit vastoin tahtiaan: Suomi neuvostodiplomaatiassa Tartosta talvisotaan I 1920–1932*, Helsinki 1966, pp. 54–62.

28 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, p. 264.

movement. It was enough to say that the world was living in a period of revolutions, to explain the incapacity of the capitalist system to solve its own problems, to emphasise the importance of the communist party in the revolution process, and to give advice on how socialist society should be organised after the takeover of the power.²⁹ The International had a tendency to forget that for a successful revolution it was also important that the existing society was losing or had lost its legitimacy and there was a certain power vacuum, though these were significant factors in the overthrow of Tsarist autocracy in Russia in 1917.³⁰

The Russian revolutions and the abortive revolution in Finland had a significant impact on the SKP's concept of revolution. In the SKP, the conquest of power was mainly reduced to conquering the coercive apparatus of the state – that is army and police. Some of the SSTP representatives were of the same opinion. But many in the SSTP thought that achieving power, or at least creating the preconditions for it by means of a struggle for hegemony in the society, was much more necessary.³¹

The third congress of the Communist International, however, stated that the world was not at the brink of the immediate revolution. According to the congress, the most important task of the communist parties would be to win the support of the majority of the working class by means of questions concerning workers' daily lives.³² The same tasks were expressed in the party congress of the SKP held immediately after the congress of the Communist International. SKP was, however, enthralled to revolutionary slogans and it had difficulty giving them up. That was also reflected in the declaration of the SSTP; although rather ambiguous, it articulated the idea that armed conflict between Finland and the Soviet Russia would be the basis of the revolution in Finland.³³

Mäkelin was not fettered by the idea of an immediate revolution. In his words of greeting Mäkelin took a stand to the closeness of the workers' victory by using very biblical language, stating that "we will reach the top of the mountain with the lord and we will be shown the promised land, as it was shown to Moses anciently, and we will be told that we do not get in that land, as it was told to him, too."³⁴

This assessment did not differ from the stance of the provisional party committee of the SSTP, which concluded all statements about fighting and agitation for the revolution

29 The Communist International 1919–1943: Documents, volume 1, 1919–1922 (selected and edited by Jane Degras), London/New York/Toronto 1956, pp. 18–21, 43–45, 117–135.

30 See, for example, Orlando Figes/Boris Kolonitskii: *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917*, New Haven/London 1999.

31 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 169–179.

32 Kevin McDermott/Jeremy Agnew: *The Comintern: A History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin*, Basingstoke/London 1996, pp. 28–32.

33 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 240–246, 250–252.

34 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, p. 102.

with calls to defend civil rights and to prepare work for the parliamentary elections, which were to be held in the summer of 1922. The same kind of cautiousness was characteristic of the congress of the Socialist Youth Union; the congress had decided to give up all the unnecessary inflexibility in agitation. Instead of the immediacy of the revolution the new programme of the union spoke for the education of working youth and the struggle against the ideology of the bourgeoisie.³⁵

In spite of the same kind of assessments the leaderships of the SKP and the SSTP accused Mäkelin and those who supported him of not following the correct political line. And talking about the correct political line reflected a fundamental change in the politics and organisational behaviour of the labour movement after the war. In the communist movement this was more conspicuous than in the social democratic movement.

The Principles of Centralisation and Discipline

The communist movement had discovered discipline as a key to solve all the problems in the labour movement. It placed strong emphasis on centralisation, and did not tolerate pluralism as the pre-war labour movement had done. The Communist International, founded in March 1919, was considered a world party, and according to the conditions of admission to the Communist International, the so called 21 conditions, all the national communist parties had to follow its instructions in their activities but also to remove “reformists” and “centrists” from all the positions of the labour movement and replace them by communists. Thus, the 21 conditions were also formulated in order to get rid of the persons who wanted to preserve their independence.³⁶

The adaptation of the SKP to the ideas of discipline and centralisation was very strong due to the abortive revolution in Finland; the exiled leaders looked at their defeat through the success of the Russians and committed themselves very strongly to the ideas of centralisation and discipline and interpreted them very rigidly. Through this commitment they also tried to compensate for the fact that they were not in the middle of the actual events in Finland.

In Finland the question concerning the relations with the Communist International was more complicated.³⁷ The founding congress of the SSTP was dissolved by the police as it made a decision to join the Third International. The participants expressed view that affiliation would take place by following SSTP's own programme did not hinder the police. Although the international connections were dangerous for the SSTP and the

35 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 266–268.

36 Kevin McDermott/Jeremy Agnew: *The Comintern: A history History of International Communism From Lenin to Stalin*, pp. 17–18.

37 On the relations, Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 161–163, 187–192.

conditions for admission tightened, the party leadership, however, decided in December 1920 to arrange a vote regarding the 21 conditions and suggested their acceptance. In order to make them known, the 21 conditions were published in a booklet – which was confiscated almost immediately by the authorities – and in the party newspapers in January and February 1921. Publication did not arouse a wide discussion of their significance. The articles published on the international orientation, though, rejected the *Internationale Arbeitsgemeinschaft Sozialistischer Parteien* (International Working Union of Socialist Parties), the so called 2 ½ International, which was founded in February 1921.

The silence concerning the international orientation was partly due to reasons of safety; at the beginning of February 1921 the Court of Appeal regarded the decision of the SSTP's founding congress to join the Third International as a crime and sentenced the party's founders to imprisonment. Afraid that the whole party would be dissolved, the party leadership decided to postpone the vote concerning the International. The newspapers too returned to formulations about joining the Third International in terms of following the party's own programme. Fear about the fate of the party did not, however, prevent the district congresses of the SSTP in the spring deciding that they would make the 21 conditions known and arrange a vote on them in the future. For their own part, the district congresses decided to accept the conditions. The party did not, however, try to arrange any vote on them later.

For the SSTP members joining the Communist International was an expression of solidarity with the workers' power in Soviet Russia. But in the difficult conditions pertaining in Finland, it was also very important for the SSTP people to be able to say that the world proletariat would support their existence and activities. This is why they were so eager to accept the conditions. But scant discussion about them was obviously also due to the fact that rank-and-file members could not see that accepting the 21 conditions would affect their participation in the labour movement. It is also possible that they believed that it would not be necessary to follow the conditions strictly. Anyhow, the acceptance of the 21 conditions did not cause any further division of the labour movement in Finland as in Sweden or Norway.³⁸

The decisions and discussions within the SSTP were not necessarily known by Yrjö Mäkelin who was not able to read labour newspapers in prison. His presentations in the beginning of February 1922 can be regarded as a belated comment on 21 conditions, although he did not mention them by name. Yrjö Mäkelin had never been accustomed to following others' instructions unswervingly. During his career as a journalist he had

38 See, Erland F. Josephson: *SKP och Komintern 1921–1924: Motsättningarna inom Sveriges Kommunistiska Parti och dess relationer till den Kommunistiska Internationalen*, Uppsala 1976; Per Maurseth: *Fra Moskva-teser till Kristiania-forslag: Det norske arbeiderparti og Komintern fra 1921 til februar 1923*, Oslo 1972; Åsmund Egge: *Komintern og krisen i Det norske Arbeiderparti*, Oslo 1995.

constantly proved his independence and in many occasions taken a different stance in political questions as compared with Edvard Valpas, the leader of the so-called Siltasaari group in Helsinki, or Otto Ville Kuusinen, Yrjö Sirola and Kullervo Manner, its younger members, that is, the core of the SDP leadership.³⁹ At the moment Mäkelin returned to Oulu, Manner, Sirola and Kuusinen were leading persons of the SKP, and Kuusinen was also a secretary in the Communist International. And they wanted those in Finland to adhere to strictly to the principle of centralisation. That was manifest, for instance, in their stand to the SSTP newspapers.

According to the communist party concept, all newspapers were under the control of the party leadership. That was contrary to the traditions of the Finnish labour movement; the local publishing companies and the local labour associations had preserved their control over the newspapers, although the SDP leadership had occasionally tried to change the system. That practice continued in the SSTP, although the party leadership tried to get the newspapers under its control. The SKP leadership was also eager to extend its power over the SSTP newspapers. At the beginning of 1922 it demanded that the editors-in-chief of the newspapers had to be trusted communists and the other editors had to be unflinchingly under the control of the party. At that time the central committee of the SKP thought that hiring Mäkelin in *Pohjan Kansa* was a mistake. On that basis the underground members of the SKP's Finnish bureau wanted to expel Mäkelin from *Pohjan Kansa* in the spring of 1922, but their demands did not meet a positive response in Northern Finland. In June, the central committee was still of the opinion that Mäkelin had continued agitation which was harmful to the party. If he would not change his attitude, he would have to be kicked out without mercy.⁴⁰

The attitude of the SKP leadership was undoubtedly influenced by Mäkelin's opinions which vigorously questioned the party concept of the communists and the location of the leadership.⁴¹ The circular letter of the Finnish bureau of the SKP served as proof for Mäkelin that those working underground were alienated from the Finnish reality. He extended his verdict to the SKP leadership by claiming that the sense of responsibility and judgement of those who lived elsewhere were easily paralysed. Therefore the emigrants often made plans which did not have anything to do with reality. The advice of the circular letter to steal pieces of wood or iron from the workplace was a good example of that, and Mäkelin could not accept that advice. By accepting stealing the labour move-

39 Hannu Soikkanen: *Sosialismin tulo Suomeen: Ensimmäisen yksikamarisen eduskunnan vaaleihin asti*, Porvoo 1961, pp. 274–280, 325–326; Antti Kujala: *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905*, pp. 304–320; Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 44–46, 49–50.

40 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 126–128, 334–338, 342.

41 On Mäkelin's attitude in the winter of 1922, Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 102–103.

ment would lower itself to same kind of procedures as the bourgeoisie and lose its high moral standards which, however, were a presupposition for a better society. Thus, living in exile with the Bolsheviks and adopting their values as the SKP leadership promoted was not, according to Mäkelin, an advantage for making assessments of the situation in Finland or of the modes of actions it demanded.

Mäkelin also challenged the significance of the underground work. First he denounced the underground activities completely, but very quickly turned his accusing finger towards the authorities arguing that the oppression by the state was the reason behind underground activities. He also softened his attitude towards underground work by admitting that it was not possible to denounce it absolutely because then you had to succumb to oppression. In a way this was more in line with his earlier views. Mäkelin had opposed the involvement of the Finnish labour movement in underground and armed activities very strongly during the summer of 1906 when Russian sailors were rebelling in Sveaborg, the naval base near Helsinki. In his opinion the involvement would jeopardise the prospects of the parliamentary reform in Finland. His attitude towards underground activities had, however, not been a matter of principle; he had been involved in recruiting – illegally – young men in the Jäger movement during the war.⁴² In 1922 Mäkelin, however, wondered, whether underground activities would have positive influence on huge social questions, and wanted to emphasise that the underground work corrupted the mass movement.

The questions Mäkelin raised were central to the character and work of the revolutionary movement. The success of the Bolsheviks in Russia had given underground work a very strong significance in the principles of the international communist movement. That was also a strong basis for the SKP leadership to create an underground organisation in Finland without thinking of its possible harm for public organisation or its real significance or costs in a country where there was a public labour movement, too.

The question of the importance of the underground work was also significant for the relation between the SSTP and the SKP. Mäkelin's way of bringing underground work into the public discussion did not, however, get support from the SSTP leadership and its members did not express their opinions on the value of the underground activities. Niilo Välläri, the chairman of the provisional party committee, denied the participation of the SSTP in underground activities, but also forbade the party council which met at the end of March to touch the topic in its discussions. Välläri's unwillingness to touch the issue understandably reflected the fear that the authorities would intervene in the matters. But relations between the SSTP and the SKP were also a question that SSTP leadership wanted to preserve in the hands of a few persons.⁴³

42 Jouko Heikkilä: *Kansallista luokkapoliittikkaa: Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917*, pp. 60–63.

43 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 267–268.

In a way the dispute reflected the division between Helsinki and other parts of the country but also that of the generations. Mäkelin's views got support from country towns and from members whose experience covered the pre-1918 labour movement. The other section of the party consisted of the young leadership of the SSTP and the representatives of the Socialist Youth Union. Both parties agreed on cautious politics and ending the daydream of an immediate revolution and shared the idea of the importance of challenging bourgeois opinion. In spite of similarities in the political orientation, those in Helsinki obviously felt their position challenged and resorted to slandering Mäkelin. Väinö Vuorio, the chairman of the youth union and the chief editor of *Suomen Työmies*, the main organ of the SSTP, regarded Mäkelin's ideas as "centrist", and prophesied that the whole Oulu district would end in "a centrist party". Thus, he resorted to methods, which, though not unusual in the labour movement before 1918, became more common along the communist movement.⁴⁴

The Traditions of the Finnish Labour Movement Accepted?

Mäkelin was not used to denial of discussion in the pre-1918 labour movement. He did not, however, end up in a centrist party. During the summer of 1922 the attitude of the SKP and SSTP leadership towards Mäkelin changed; neither of them tried to get Mäkelin expelled but rather to integrate him. At the beginning of July 1922, after discussions in the central committee, Kullervo Manner, the chairman of the SKP, wrote Yrjö Mäkelin a letter in which he still scolded Mäkelin for talking of his own programme and tried to convince him that it was easier to form an assessment of the situation and the activities needed from far away, from St. Petersburg. Besides that Manner tried to persuade Mäkelin to come to Soviet Russia in order to meet the leadership of the Communist International and to see how the new world was being created in the country.⁴⁵

The attempt to integrate Mäkelin was also obvious after the parliamentary elections in which the SSTP achieved 27 seats out of the 200. The SSTP leadership was worried of the inexperience of the parliamentary group and wanted a person who knew the work in parliament properly as an adviser. The leadership regarded Yrjö Mäkelin as such an experienced person, and tried to recruit him as a secretary of the parliamentary group. On the other hand both the SKP and the SSTP leadership were worried that parliamentary work would push other forms of class struggle aside and the parliamentary group would fall into reformism. From that perspective the attempt to recruit a man who had been called reformist and whom the SKP leaders had wanted to expel was a little risky. Mäkelin, however, turned both offers down.⁴⁶

44 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, p. 104.

45 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, p. 342.

46 *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Although Mäkelin may have felt that the SSTP and the SKP were more narrow-minded than the pre-1918 labour movement, he had no intention of leaving the SSTP. But he decided to accommodate some criticism: from the summer of 1922 onwards he was no longer active in questions concerning underground work, SKP activities and party discipline. Thus, Mäkelin did not react when the SSTP party committee decided to expel Yrjö Valkama from the party and parliamentary group in the winter of 1923, although Valkama was elected to parliament from the Oulu district, his expulsion concerned underground work and the circular letter of the Finnish bureau and the evidence for Valkama's refusal to help those who were imprisoned because of underground activities were weak and hearsay.⁴⁷

From the spring of 1922 Mäkelin focussed on challenging the ideas of the bourgeoisie – an essential part of his career as a journalist. In his articles and causeries Mäkelin criticised the authorities for persecuting the members and newspapers of the SSTP – libel actions and terminable prohibitions of publication had been a great problem for the SSTP newspapers, especially in 1921. He also tried to teach the Finnish bourgeoisie a sense of proportion. The security of Finland was not threatened by the participation of some Finns in the congresses of the Communist International. Mäkelin opposed the bourgeois opinions that Moscow's instructions were the basis for strikes in the Northern Finland – the poor working conditions and salaries were according to him the real reason for striking.⁴⁸

Although Mäkelin took a conciliatory attitude, he maintained his view that the political line should be based on local conditions. That created disagreement with the SSTP leadership especially in questions concerning relation with social democrats. Before the parliamentary elections in the beginning of July 1922 the party leadership did not want to pay much attention to them. In the districts where the SSTP dominated the labour movement, which included Oulu district, the SSTP members, however, presented their disapproval of social democrats fielding candidates in the elections and thus splitting the labour votes. They did not welcome the “united front” slogan, which the SSTP leadership talked of enthusiastically at the beginning of 1923, but instead considered it to be awkward. That was partly due to the fact that many social democrats had opposed the demands and activities of the local trade union associations the previous spring. Besides that, there were so few social democrats in Northern Finland that a united front with them did little to add to the strength of the movement. Rather they seemed to disappear entirely, as was the case with the death of *Kansan Tahto* in February 1923. No wonder then that Yrjö Mäkelin thought the united front merely kept social democrats alive in the district strongholds of the SSTP. Instead of cooperation with social democrats he wanted

47 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 104–105.

48 *Ibid.*, pp. 111–112.

to give priority to the education of the rural poor, who, he considered to have become proletarianised.⁴⁹

The disputes in the 1910s had revealed that theoretical orthodoxy was, for Mäkelin, not as relevant as for the Siltasaari group. The same was evident in the dispute in 1922. It also made manifest that Mäkelin was not content with only applying a political line determined elsewhere, as the communist doctrine indicated, but wanted to take actively part in its formation. The young leadership of the SSTP would also soon realise that the assessments made by the Communist International and the SKP leadership did not always fit the Finnish conditions. In a couple of years Väinö Vuorio would argue with the SKP leadership over the appropriate political line in Finland and, in the second half of the decade, Niilo Välläri would be the first person to demand that those in Finland have the power to decide over their politics.⁵⁰

Mäkelin and Northern Finland

The political lines of the three parties were not the only reason for Yrjö Mäkelin to choose his side. It is obvious that the division of the labour movement in Oulu and in northern Finland in general as well as the attitude of his family had an influence on his choice. The division of the labour movement occurred geographically so that (roughly) southern, south-eastern and central parts of Finland became social democratic areas, while northern and north-eastern parts became dominated by the SSTP. The division was rather total, although the Helsinki and Turku areas in southern Finland were exceptions. This division followed the division of Red and White Finland in the winter of 1918. The SDP dominated in those areas which had been part of Red Finland and where the labour movement had been involved in severe battles and suffered the greatest losses, while the SSTP was strong in those areas which had been under the White government from the very beginning or where the whites had taken the control after small skirmishes. There were some exceptions, notably the SSTP was strong in the Helsinki and Turku areas even though they had been part of Red Finland.⁵¹

49 Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, p. 305.

50 See, Tauno Saarela: *Finnish Communism, Bolshevization and Stalinization*, in: Norman LaPorte/Kevin Morgan/Matthew Worley (eds.): *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization, 1917–53*, Basingstoke/New York 2008, pp. 188–205; Tauno Saarela: *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous 1923–1930*, Helsinki 2008, pp. 29–58, 110–118, 735–761.

51 On the division of the labour movement in Finland, Pertti Laulajainen: *Sosialidemokraatti vai kommunisti: Vaaliekologinen tutkimus Suomen poliittisen työväenliikkeen jakautumisesta kansalaissodan jälkeen*, Mikkeli 1979, pp. 23–155; Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kom-*

Although working people all over the country considered the actions of the winners in the civil war brutal and excessive, the intensity of it created the basis for those feelings. In those areas where the battles had been few and the war less brutal, but where punishment of the labour organisations and working people had been severe, it was easier to regard the punishments as unfair and out of proposition. In those areas the enthusiasm and ability for action was also better preserved than in the areas which had suffered heavy losses. In the areas which had largely remained out of the civil war criticism of the leadership of the SDP turned more easily into separation from the party. That is what happened in northern Finland.⁵²

The division of the labour movement was also connected with how the workers in different industries responded to the proposed political lines of the three parties. The willingness to support extra-parliamentary activism was in harmony with the thoughts and experiences of the workers in those industries where it was necessary for the workers to defend their interests by means of strikes or other extra-parliamentary activities. Thus the tendency to support the SSTP was obvious among the workers in those industries which were vulnerable to seasonal variations and which were used to quick local strikes. The SDP's more reserved attitude towards extra-parliamentary activities found support among those who worked in industries where the workers had no need for such actions, such as among printers, or where they had poor opportunities, such as weavers, to defend their interests by means of strikes. The first group – saw mills, harbours, forest and construction works, and metal, leather, rubber or food factories – provided employment for the main part of the labour force in Finland, and the workers in those industries formed the majority of the SSTP membership and created the basis for its domination in the Finnish trade union movement.⁵³ In northern Finland their substantial share in the SSTP membership was manifest.

Also the response of members in the countryside to the division of the labour movement varied throughout the country. The crofters (*torpparit*) of southern and central Finland, who achieved their long-standing goal of independence in the land reform of 1918, were satisfied with the politics of the re-founded SDP; the members in the countryside in Uusimaa, Kymi, Häme and Satakunta stayed within the ranks of the SDP. In northern and eastern Finland the small-holders were more prone to join the SSTP. The small size of the farms and necessity to earn a living partly in logging sites connected the small-holders of the area with the seasonal variations and strikes of the forest industry on

munismin synty 1918–1923, pp. 309–318; of the executions and casualties, e.g. F. Upton: The Finnish Revolution 1917–1918, pp. 519–523.

52 Tauno Saarela: Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923, pp. 310–311.

53 Pauli Kettunen: Poliittinen liike ja sosiaalinen kollektiivisuus: Tutkimus sosialidemokratiasta ja ammattiyhdistysliikkeestä Suomessa 1918–1944, pp. 163–188.

a larger scale than their southern counterparts and perhaps contributed to their willingness to join the SSTP.⁵⁴

Although the experiences during the civil war were significant for the division of the labour movement, their past experiences could also play a role. In the pre-1918 labour movement the Oulu district was regarded as moderate, sometimes even blamed for revisionism because of its support for cooperation with the constitutional bourgeoisie. The district, however, demonstrated independence from the party leadership and proved its initiative. It was obviously easier for those districts which had emphasised their independence to leave the SDP than those which had been loyal. Activism in 1917–18 increased this tendency. In northern and eastern parts of the country it was also raised by the traditional doubting attitude towards the masters of the south.⁵⁵

All these factors contributed to the fact that almost all of the labour associations in northern Finland decided to support the SSTP.⁵⁶ At the moment Mäkelin was released, the support of the parties had not yet been measured in parliamentary elections, but only two of the 80 members in the social democratic parliamentary group elected in February 1919 were in favour of the SSTP. Stronger support for the SDP was also indicated by the fact that a larger number of districts had decided to stay in the SDP. On the other hand a great number of trade union associations had decided to join the SSTP. The supporters of the SSTP had also achieved a distinct majority in *Suomen ammattijärjestö*, the Finnish trade union movement, and in most of the important unions. When joining the SSTP Mäkelin could at least feel that he entered the service of all of the working people in northern Finland and that the prospects for the forward march of the SSTP were good.

Mäkelin, who was a shoemaker by trade before starting his career as a journalist, had not worked in saw mills, forest-work sites or small farms, but during his years in Oulu he had become familiar with the problems of the lives of the workers in northern Finland. Mäkelin had, however, not been a great supporter of the spontaneous local activities of the northern forest work-sites and saw mills but had rather advocated the creation of strong national trade unions before starting the strikes.⁵⁷ But he undoubtedly shared their feelings that the behaviour of the victors of the civil war was unfair and out of proportion. Mäkelin was also an embodiment of the criticism of the peripheral north toward

54 Ibid., pp. 228–229; David Kirby: *New Wine in Old Vessels?: The Finnish Socialist Workers' Party, 1919–1923*, in: *The Slavonic and East European Review* 66:3 (1988), pp. 426–445, 439–442.

55 On the Oulu district in the labour movement, Hannu Soikkanen: *Kohti kansanvaltaa 1: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta*, pp. 135–136, 156–157, 189–190; Risto Kenttä: *Oma apu, paras apu: Oulun Sosialidemokraattinen Työväenyhdistys r.y. 100 vuotta 1886–1986*, pp. 117–119.

56 Ibid., pp. 170–171.

57 Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 58–64.

the centres of the south; his solutions in the labour movement before and after the civil war demonstrated a stand against the gentlemen in Helsinki – whoever those were – but also the attitude of a self-educated worker towards those labour leaders who had received an education at the university.⁵⁸

In the division of the labour movement the stance of the well-known and respected persons at the regional or local level could be influential when the associations were deciding which side to take.⁵⁹ In prison Yrjö Mäkelin could not set an example in that respect, but his reputation did perhaps contribute indirectly to the choices of the labour associations in northern Finland. His wife Ellen Mäkelin had been a member of the left group at the SDP party congress in December 1919. After the congress she had supported the separation of the Oulu district organisation from the SDP and participated in the founding congress of the SSTP in May 1920. Her opinion had a great impact on the orientation of the labour associations in Oulu, and in a way Ellen Mäkelin took advantage of her husband's reputation in Oulu and northern Finland but also paved the way for Yrjö's choice.⁶⁰

Leo Mäkelin, the eldest of the children, had participated in the Jäger training in Germany but refused to enter the White army in the winter of 1918. After his return to Finland Leo Mäkelin had tried to create a secret communist soldier's organisation in Finland in the spring and summer of 1919, but had not been successful.⁶¹ Yrjö Mäkelin did not, however, have a proper occasion to hear the views of his family. Leo Mäkelin had moved via Sweden to Soviet Russia as early as 1920, Ellen had been arrested for "preparation of a new rebellion" in October 1921 and he was sentenced to prison in March 1922, even though the evidence was paltry.⁶²

58 This concerns the SKP leadership and the refounders of the SDP, the SSTP leaders did not have university education.

59 Pertti Laulajainen: *Sosialidemokraatti vai kommunisti: Vaaliekologinen tutkimus Suomen poliittisen työväenliikkeen jakautumisesta kansalaissodan jälkeen*, pp. 80–85; Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, p. 312.

60 Marja-Leena Salkola: *Julistaja ja poliitikko: Yrjö Mäkelinin elämä ja toiminta*, pp. 135–138; Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, pp. 98–99; Risto Kenttä: *Oma apu, paras apu: Oulun Sosialidemokraattinen Työväenyhdistys r.y. 100 vuotta 1886–1986*, pp. 159–163.

61 Matti Lackman: *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta?: Jääkäriliikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka*, Helsinki 2000, pp. 611, 665–678; Tauno Saarela: *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923*, pp. 113–114.

62 Matti Lackman: *Kommunistien salainen toiminta Tornionlaaksossa 1918–1939*, Oulu 1991, p. 41; Tauno Saarela: *Kansan Tahto: Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti*, p. 112.

Yrjö Mäkelin and Another Choice

The division of the Finnish labour movement was not unequivocal – there was plenty of variation and no rules without exceptions.⁶³ The division of the labour movement did not take place in an instant. Especially in the countryside the process unfolded over the entire decade. These decisions did not become clear at once; the associations could ponder their views for a long time – and they could also change them.

Yrjö Mäkelin's choice was, however, final. As he chose his side in a situation where the division of the labour movement had mainly taken place, it was probably a result of a more conscious pondering than by those who had been involved from the very beginning. The process which led to the imprisonment of the national and local leaderships of the SSTP in August 1923 and to the proscription of the SSTP by court in 1924 gave some SSTP members ground to rethink their choices and after their imprisonment change to the SDP.⁶⁴ Mäkelin, who also was imprisoned in August 1923, did not join them but made another choice; he obviously wanted to protest against the unjust imprisonments or considered the life in prison as impossible, took too much sleeping pills and died in September 1923.

Although the SSTP and SKP leaderships had expressed doubts about Mäkelin's suitability in a revolutionary labour movement, they did not remember those doubts after his death but wanted to take advantage of it in order to promote their politics and to reveal the injustices of the Finnish political system. Without the activism of the northern labour associations the commemoration of Mäkelin would, however, have remained short-lived.⁶⁵ But that commemoration contributed to the division of the Finnish labour movement, which, geographically, remained practically unchanged up to the 1980s.

Tauno Saarela is Senior Lecturer in Political History at the University of Helsinki. His research interest is the history of the labor movement, especially the history of the communist movement both nationally and internationally. He is the author of *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923* (1996), *Kansan Tahto. Pohjolan työtätekevien lehti* (2006), *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous 1923–1930* (2008), and the co-author of *Communism: National and International* (1998), *'Kallis toveri Stalin!'. Komintern ja Suomi* (2002), *Коминтерн и Финляндия 1919–1943* (2003).

63 On the complicated nature of the division, Hannu Soikkanen: Kohti kansanvaltaa I: 1899–1937: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta, pp. 415–417.

64 Tauno Saarela: Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923, pp. 157–158.

65 Tauno Saarela: Dead Martyrs and Living Leaders: The Cult of the Individual Within Finnish Communism, in: Twentieth Century Communism 1(2009) [Communism and the Leader Cult], pp. 30–49, 32–33.