### Abstract

Why did Finland not become a people’s democracy after the Second World War? The question belongs to the essential themes in Finnish political history, and it is also internationally interesting in the comparative research on early Cold War years. Mikko Majander provides new insights and answers to the Finnish case by integrating ideological perspectives, ideas and identities with more traditional high politics.

The Cold War frontlines split the labour movement both in Finland as elsewhere in Europe, but this division did not arise from nowhere. The end of the world war marked no ‘year zero’ in this sense. Majander analyses the long rivalry between Social Democrats and Communists and connects it firmly to Finnish–Soviet relations. The question is concretised, for example, by a closer look at the ‘hatred’ that Moscow showed towards Väinö Tanner, the Social Democratic leader, as well as by studying the international relations of the Finnish trade union movement.

Based on post-Cold War research on international history Finland is placed in the Soviet worldview that considered western Social Democracy as a major block for realising the interests of Communism and the Soviet Union. The expanding contacts between the British Labour Party and the Scandinavian countries, both on governmental and party level, were monitored with great suspicions. Moscow regarded such a process as an emerging western bloc into which the Finnish Social Democrats tried to bind their country under the banner of Nordic co-operation.

In high politics Finland yielded under Soviet pressure and refrained from participating in the Marshall Plan as well as concluding a Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. To counterbalance these decisions it was necessary to demonstrate to the world that the Finnish political system was based on western principles of democracy and freedom. Concrete evidence was given first by securing the Ministry of Interior and police forces to reliable hands, then leaving the Communist out of government. The viability of these decisions was proven in the summer of 1949 when a nationwide strike wave was crushed by determinate actions under a Social Democratic government and President J. K. Paasikivi.

Finland’s geopolitical position out of the way of the direct war road between Moscow and Berlin was a prerequisite for the Finnish ‘Sonderweg’. The country was not broken down by foreign armies. Despite some shortcomings the Finnish society had developed mainly along the Scandinavian lines, and important continuities survived over the war years. When the Cold War divided the world into two hostile camps, the Finns avoided the choice between East and West by choosing North.

Basically it was a question of identity, what the Finns profoundly thought of their society and their place in the world. With the flourishing Swedish ‘folkhemmet’ as the western neighbour, the East European model had no genuine appeal, not even amongst the Communist rank and file. Finland did not become a people’s democracy, because Finland was a Nordic country.

### Keywords
- Social democracy - Political history - Finland
- Communism - Political history - Finland
- Foreign policy - History - Finland
- International affairs - Finland
- Cold war

### Additional Information

Muita tietoja - Övriga uppgifter