

# Lenin Lives in Finland

JONI KREKOLA

During the Cold War era, Finland's foreign policy was based on friendly neighbour relations with the Soviet Union. Officially, the state relations were defined in the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (the YYA Treaty, 1948). Culturally, the Finns had to create and maintain a more positive image of their former enemy. The politicians and historians had to, among others things, reconsider their relation to Vladimir Lenin, who had become the canonized symbol of the Soviet system.

The legacy of Lenin in Finland, especially since the late Cold War era of the 1960s, is the subject of this article. Lenin's grip on Finland is explained by his personal contribution to the history of Finland, an issue that has been debated since the gaining of independence in 1917. After the first demonizing decades and the Second World War, Lenin's public representations became more positive in Finland. A museum was dedicated to him in 1946, and later Lenin started to appear in names and statues that still exist in Finland. In this respect, but to a far lesser extent, Finland resembles the Eastern European countries that became People's Democracies:

In Eastern Europe not Leninism, not Lenin but the external trappings of the Lenin cult – the monuments, the posters, the renamed streets, squares, and cities – composes what today might be called the “material culture” of the Soviet empire abroad.<sup>1</sup>

In the Eastern European countries, the end of the Cold War era resulted in attacks on the statues and street names that were connected to the

<sup>1</sup> N. Tumarkina, *Lenin Lives! The Lenin Cult in Soviet Russia*. Enlarged edition. Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press 1997, 270.

former Soviet occupier.<sup>2</sup> Nowadays museums displaying the horrors of Soviet crimes, terror, GULAG and deportations have been opened. The material culture of the Soviet era is collected in statue parks that could be called, ironically, concentrations camps for the historical symbols of Soviet oppression.<sup>3</sup>

During the 1990s, Russians themselves gradually purged the most striking Soviet monuments from their towns. However, the Lenin mausoleum still dominates the most central place in Moscow's Red Square, and thousands of monuments to the great leader remain in the countryside, obviously because no one has bothered to remove them. The Lenin cult has ceased to exist; instead there are signs of nostalgia for the good old Soviet times, and on the other hand, the commercial trivialization of the former sacred figure.<sup>4</sup>

Public artefacts, like statues that are connected to the political past, are always signs of conscious history politics, which attempts to influence people's consciousness of history. The founding of a monument activates certain images of the past. The destruction of statues of fallen heroes means an active aspiration to forget.<sup>5</sup> The Finns have remained relatively indifferent to their own surroundings. The few monuments and places that were dedicated to Lenin have mostly been allowed to rest in peace.

Are the Finns not sensitive to the sufferings of their neighbours, who became victims of the Second World War? If anything, should we analysed why Lenin still has a foothold in Finland?

2 Tumarkina, *Lenin Lives!*, 278–279.

3 H. Kuusi, 'Prison Experiences and Socialist Sculptures – Tourism and the Soviet Past in the Baltic States, in A. Kostainen and T. Syrjämaa (eds), *The Uses of History in Tourist Development*. Finnish University Network of Tourist Studies, forthcoming 2008. A description of mixed feelings of a Finnish visitor ('spoiled by democracy') of *Gruto Parkas* in Lithuania, see C. Nynäs, 'Statyparken – Lenin ner på jorden', *Finsk Tidskrift* (2003: 8–9), 643–645.

4 T. J. Smith, 'The Collapse of the Lenin Personality Cult in Soviet Russia, 1985–1995', *Historian* 60 (1998: 2), 325–343; T. Vihavainen, 'Vladimir Iljitšin toinen elämä eli de-leninisoinnin kysymyksiä', *Kanava* (2001: 6), 347–353.

5 H. Salmi, 'Menneisyyskokemuksesta hyödykkeisiin – historiakulttuurin muodot', in J. Kalela and I. Lindroos (eds), *Jokapäiväinen historia*. Helsinki: SKS 2001, 146.

## SILENCED TRAUMA OF 1918

It is a historical fact that Lenin spent one and a half years of his life, in short periods, in Finland that was a suitable hiding place for the Bolshevik leaders of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Finland was near enough to St. Petersburg, and revolutionaries were not under as close surveillance as in Russia. Lenin paid his first visit to Tampere Workers' Hall in 1905, which was later honoured by a bronze relief (1965).<sup>6</sup> The longest period that Lenin hid in the Grand Duchy was between 1906 and 1907, but the most famous of these sojourns, surely, was on the eve of the October Revolution of 1917 when he wrote his *State and Revolution* in Helsinki. Before 1917, Lenin was a relatively unknown figure in Finland. After seizing power, however, Lenin and his Bolshevik government signed Finland's declaration of independence on the last day of 1917. The recognition of the other states soon followed.

Lenin's stays in Finland and his personal contribution to the recognition of Finland's independence are the basis of the positive Lenin image. His true motive behind this recognition has been debated ever since. During the first decades of Finnish independence, Lenin symbolized the Bolshevik power that was the main enemy for the majority of Finns.<sup>7</sup> The Finnish revolutionaries, the 'Reds', had been beaten in the Civil War of spring 1918. The Finnish publicity was filled with the 'White truth', which regarded Lenin's support of Finnish independence as tactical. The voice of the beaten working class could not be heard for a more balanced picture. Professional history writers did not touch the delicate subject.

After the Second World War the legacy of Lenin became the cornerstone of the friendly neighbour relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. The members of the Finnish government set an example for the citizens by joining the Finnish–Soviet Friendship Society, and the first Lenin museum outside the USSR was founded in Tampere in 1946. However, the image of Lenin was overshadowed by Stalin,

<sup>6</sup> The text on the relief: 'V.I. Lenin has expressed his sympathy towards our people's independent will in the historical meetings of 1905 and 1906 held in this building.'

<sup>7</sup> K. Immonen, *Ryssästä saa puhua... Neuvostoliitto suomalaisessa julkisuudessa ja kirjat julkisuuden muotona 1918–1939*. Helsinki: Otava 1987, 151–155.

who proclaimed himself as the continuator of Lenin's legacy. In any case Lenin's and Stalin's Finnish supporters now had the legal right to participate in Finnish politics for the first time. The Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), including communist party members, had a post-war electoral support of 20 per cent. There was little further analysis of the controversial question of Lenin and independence; the first scientific historical study on Finnish independence by Juhani Paasivirta (*Suomen itsenäisyyskysymys 1917* vol. I–II, 1947–1949) recognised that Lenin's role had been neglected earlier.<sup>8</sup>

In processing their historical traumas, the Finns had to start from the year 1918, which had divided the newborn nation. The memory of the hard experiences suffered by the Reds had been maintained quietly as oral tradition and communal folklore. The history debate among the public was not initiated by the conservative historians, but by novelists like Väinö Linna (*Täällä Pohjantähden alla* I–III, 1959–1962), who challenged the 'White truth', as well as the academic historians who had, except for one relatively unbiased study, conformed to it. The viewpoint of the Reds was acknowledged by historians some years later. It would have been done without Linna, but his criticism undoubtedly forced the historians to react faster.<sup>9</sup> The political integration of the Finnish labour movement led to the left-agrarian coalition in 1966. In the field of history writing, the government further supported the healing of the wounds of 1918 by appointing a state financed history committee to investigate the Red Guards.<sup>10</sup>

The general reassessment of the history of 1918 in the 1960s was perhaps a prerequisite for reawakening the discussion of Lenin's role in Finnish history. In addition to the novelists, history writing was now challenged by the highest quarter, President Urho Kekkonen.

8 T. Vihavainen, 'Suomalaisten arvioita Leninistä', in *Lenin ja Suomi*. Vol. III. Helsinki: Opetusministeriö 1990, 46–48.

9 *Suomi vuonna 1918* by Juhani Paasivirta (1957) had taken the Reds seriously. P. Haapala, 'Väinö Linnan historiasota', *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* (2001: 1), 25–34.

10 P. Kettunen 'Politiikan menneisyys ja poliittinen historia', in P. Ahtiainen et al. (eds) *Historia nyt*. Helsinki: WSOY 1990, 185–186, 191. In the 1980s, the committee published four massive studies, which resulted in three dissertations, under the common title *History of Red Finland 1918*. O. Jussila, *Suomen historian suuret myytit*. Helsinki: WSOY 2007, 285–288.

LENIN, KEKKONEN AND HISTORY

It is really startling that the bourgeois politicians of the 1970s and the 1980s refer to Lenin with the same ease that was characteristic of their predecessors, before 1944, who considered the Bolsheviks' Russia as the one and only, but even more dangerous enemy of Finland's independence. When seen from the 'Western' viewpoint, the current Finnish attitude to Lenin raises the question whether this kind of approach would be 'Finlandization' which means that the Finns have resorted to distorting the historical reality in order to preserve good relations with their Eastern neighbour.<sup>11</sup>

The most favourable era for public Lenin memorials in Finland began at the end of the 1950s. Nikita Khrushchev had denounced the Stalin cult, stressed the original founder of Soviet socialism, and created instead his own personal cult. For the Finns, it was Stalin who had persecuted ethnic Finns in Red Karelia, started the Winter War, and claimed the harsh war indemnities after the Second World War. During a short wave of openness in 1956–1958, the Finns published shocking memoirs of Soviet experiences during the Stalin era.<sup>12</sup> Their main enemy was no longer Lenin, whose relations with Finland were favourably documented by Sylvi-Kyllikki Kilpi (*Lenin ja suomalaiset*, 1957).

However, enough time had passed since the war for the Finns to get used to Soviet influence on Finnish politics. Urho Kekkonen, who had become a master at fostering friendly Finnish–Soviet relations since the war, was elected president in 1956 after having been prime minister for five years almost uninterruptedly. Kekkonen used his prerogatives to the extreme in negotiating personally with the Soviet leaders. Despite some setbacks, he was able to increase Finland's room for manoeuvre with the Soviets and strengthen the Western integration of his country. One of his trumps in this game was Lenin himself. After the resolution of the famous 'Night Frost Crisis' in January 1959, Kekkonen for the first time connected Finnish independence with the strongest Soviet authority,

11 J. Kalela and J. Turtola, *Lenin ja Suomen työväenliike*. Unpublished manuscript, 1980, 3.

12 For an overview of the Finnish gulag memoirs, see E. Vettenniemi, *Surviving the Soviet Meat Grinder: The Politics of Finnish Gulag Memoirs*. Helsinki: Kikumora Series A6, 2001.

Lenin. As a present from the grateful Finnish people, Kekkonen donated a commemorative plate to Lenin's workroom in Leningrad. From then on, Lenin was institutionalized and publicly honored in Finland.<sup>13</sup>

In the 1960s, memorial plates of Lenin started to appear in the various places of Finland where he had visited. They grew to statues in two towns, Turku and Kotka, in the late 1970s.<sup>14</sup> The unveiling ceremonies of the memorials were honoured by local and national leaders, and liturgical speeches to the Soviet guests: 'This plate will remain a visible reminder of the bonds to Finland and to its capital of the great leader of the Soviet Union, its founder and friend of Finland, Lenin. It symbolizes the fortunate, close and confidential relations of friendship and neighbourly spirit between Finland and the Soviet Union.'<sup>15</sup>

President Kekkonen fostered an image of Lenin as the decisive force in the recognition of Finnish independence and the friendly relations between the neighbouring countries. Kekkonen did not hesitate to use a freer interpretation of history for increasing Soviets' confidence. He even challenged the professional history writing that had eventually produced a solid version of Lenin's role in Finnish independence. Lenin's value for the Finns increased especially after 1968 when the Soviets had questioned the earlier formulations of Finnish neutrality. The calculations based on the current political realism, however, led to unnecessary concessions; Kekkonen stated, for instance, that it would have been better for the Finns if Lenin had lived longer. Kekkonen's history interpretations appealed to Moscow so much that he was twice awarded the Lenin prize (1964, 1980).<sup>16</sup>

13 O. Apunen, *Tilinteko Kekkonen aikaan: Ulkopoliittinen valta ja vallankäyttö Suomessa*. Helsinki, Kirjayhtymä 1984, 141. O. Jussila, *Suomen historian suuret myytit*, 205.

14 Sites of the Lenin plates in Finland and their unveiling year: Kotka 1957, Lahti 1962, Turku 1964, Tampere 1965, Helsinki 1965; 1970, Tornio 1967, Parainen 1970. Lenin statues: Turku 1977, Kotka 1979. People's Archives, Helsinki, Vladimir Iljitsh Lenin, Lenin-muiston vaaliminen.

15 The chair of the city council Teuvo Aura at the unveiling ceremony of the Lenin plate in Helsinki, 1965. L. Kolbe, *Unelmien Helsinki. Kadut ja korttelit kertovat*. Helsinki, Jyväskylä: Minerva 2007, 148–149.

16 V. Pernaa, 'Lenin, Kekkonen ja Suomen itsenäisyys – malli 1970', in V. Vares (ed.), *Vuorovaikutuksia: Timo Soikkasen juhlaKirja*. Turku: Turun historiallinen yhdistys 2007, 241–242; K. Rentola, *Vallankumouksen aave. Vasemmisto*,

Tuomo Polvinen's *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi, 1917–1920* (vol. I 1967) was the first academic study that placed the question of Finnish independence into a wider historical and international context. Polvinen presented the Bolsheviks as the one and only Russian party that accepted the secession of the Finns. They acted according to Lenin's national politics, but simultaneously believed in the world revolution that would have solved the Finnish problem too. Behind the myth of a benevolent Lenin was a realistic statesman that had chosen the most advantageous alternative at a certain historical moment. He never hoped for a bourgeois national state Finland to emerge. Despite 'painful cuts' into the mythical Lenin image, Polvinen represented history writing that supported friendly neighbour relations built on the 'common interests' between the countries.<sup>17</sup>

President Kekkonen gave a speech on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Lenin in 1970. Despite Polvinen's explanatory study on Lenin's role, Kekkonen preferred his political version in which Lenin had defended Finnish autonomy and crowned this intention by recognizing its independence. According to Kekkonen, as a realist Lenin accepted the result of the turbulent phase of 1918. 'White' Finland was good enough for the formation of decent state relationships. Kekkonen wanted to equate Lenin's policy with Khrushchev's peaceful coexistence, a favourable slogan for the Finns since 1956.<sup>18</sup>

The national climax of the Lenin celebrations was surely Lenin Park (*Lenin-puisto*), which appeared on the map of Helsinki in 1970 and was located behind the headquarters of the Communist Party of Finland. There were over one thousand different Lenin festivities in the whole country. They included symposiums, exhibitions, Lenin quizzes for the schoolchildren, a Lenin stamp, and various Lenin publications. The main event for the international audience was the symposium 'Lenin and the development of science, culture and education', which was organised in Helsinki with the support of UNESCO. Polvinen, the original chair of the symposium, was replaced by Professor Lauri Posti, who echoed

---

*Beljakov ja Kekkonen 1970*. Helsinki: Otava 2005, 164.

17 P. Kettunen 'Politiikan menneisyys ja poliittinen historia', 189–191.

18 T. Vihavainen, 'Suomalaisten arvioita Leninistä', 57–60. O. Jussila, *Suomen historian suuret myytit*, 205–206.

Kekkonen's interpretations of Lenin's role.<sup>19</sup> Actually, events similar to the Lenin year had already been arranged in 1967 when the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Finnish independence was connected with the festivities of the October Revolution.

Did Finnish politicians have to go this far in flattering the Soviets? The political motif of highlighting Lenin on the state level, especially in 1970, was the guaranteeing of Finnish independence in the future by invoking the Soviets' most sacred leader. What Lenin had given could not be denied by Brezhnev. The balance of the Soviet block had been shaken by 1968 and the occupation of Prague in particular. Moscow was worried about anti-Soviet opinions in Finland as well. Official Finland used the legacy of Lenin in its foreign policy to strengthen Finnish neutrality. It satisfied the Soviet leaders although they must have been aware of the tactical motives behind the liturgical surface.

The praises for Lenin may have been a low price for Finland's neutrality in the 1970s, but there surely were excesses that are irritating to recall afterwards. The political left was genuinely in favour of the celebrations, as were the radicalized youth and student movement. The Finnish student protest of the 1960s had evolved from value radicalism through the New Left ideas towards the bureaucratic party politics of the 1970s. Part of the protest had been the younger generation's uprising that challenged their parents' War Generations. The fathers had defended Finland against the Soviet aggressor and offered their lives for the nation. What could be more insulting, then, than youth proclaiming to follow the path paved by Lenin? The relatively strong Moscow orientation of the Finnish student movement of the 1970s differs from most of the European and Scandinavian countries where the Maoists and Trotskyites were more popular.<sup>20</sup>

The Lenin hype influenced the adversaries. It was almost impossible to criticize Lenin or the Soviet system without being labelled an anti-Soviet. Tendencies of self-censorship in the press and in some publishing houses prevented the publications of some Soviet-critical books. Consequently, the average person could not necessarily distinguish between tactical Lenin rhetoric and the true expressions of a friendly neighbour. I myself, for example, grew up in this context of doublespeak.

19 Rentola, *Vallankumouksen aave*, 142–173; Perna, 'Lenin, Kekkonen ja Suomen itsenäisyys – malli 1970', 242–245.

20 Rentola, *Vallankumouksen aave*, 163–164.

HISTORY PROJECTS: *LENIN AND FINLAND*

The Finnish communists were usually defenders of Lenin's glory in Finland. The Communist Party of Finland had good reasons for celebrating Lenin in 1970. One of the preparatory projects that its educational section started in late 1968 was dedicated to Lenin and his sojourns in Finland. The historians of the party were gathered into a committee that was ordered to study Lenin's visits in Finland and his connections to the early Finnish labour movement.<sup>21</sup> A research plan that included four chapters was established:

1. Lenin's sojourns in Finland
2. Lenin and the Finns
3. Cooperation between the Finnish and Russian revolutionary movement
4. Detailed questions<sup>22</sup>

A complete bibliography of Lenin's texts in Finnish

The controversial question of Lenin's contribution to Finnish independence was hardly mentioned. Had this plan been carried out, the result would have been a reconstruction of Lenin's routes and his contacts in Finland. The sacred figure was not planned to mess with politics. As a modest result, a collection of Lenin memoirs, edited by a committee member, was published. In addition, a symposium organized by the Soviet Peace Committee and *Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat* was held in Leningrad.<sup>23</sup>

The professional historians could not keep silent about Lenin and Finland either. It was the main theme of the 2<sup>nd</sup> joint seminar of Finnish-Soviet historians held in Moscow in May 1969. According to the Finnish

21 People's Archives, Vladimir Iljitsh Lenin, vuosijuhlat, 100-vuotissyntymäpäivään liittyviä tutkimusaineistoja 1969, Aarne Vuori to Veikko Sippola, 7 Nov. 1968.

22 Clarification was needed, for example, to the burning question of whether the persons that made up Lenin as a barber were really members of the drama club of the Helsinki Workers Theatre. People's Archives, Helsinki, Vladimir Iljitsh Lenin, vuosijuhlat, Leninin syntymän 100-vuotispäivän johdosta suoritettavat tutkimukset.

23 T. Lehén, *Lenin suomalaisten muistelmissa*. Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri 1969. 'Lenin ja Suomi. Symposium Leningradissa 1.11.1969', *Ihminen ja yhteiskunta*, APN:n kirjasarja 1969: 16. *Suomen Rauhanpuolustajat* was a member organisation of the Soviet-dominated World Peace Council.

report, the seminar included lively debates that were more than just polite. The interpretations of Lenin's role naturally differed between the Finns and the Soviets, but bringing together the most prominent researchers was valuable as such.<sup>24</sup>

The great Lenin year 1970 produced an idea of a state financed history project, *Lenin and Finland*. It was inaugurated by the Ministry of Education in 1977. The initiative was taken by the Finnish–Soviet Friendship Society, obviously again in order to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Finnish independence / the October Revolution.<sup>25</sup> The goal was similar to the project of the communist party ten years earlier, but the historians chosen for the project were young professionals with academic degrees. It was obvious that the subject chosen would not harm friendly relations with the USSR. In the forefront of the experienced historians was Professor Tuomo Polvinen, whose highly respected research could not be passed by. In order to balance the interpretations, two Finnish writers who had done their doctoral degrees in Moscow were hired.<sup>26</sup> The Soviets themselves were not cooperative; the visiting Finnish scholar was very restricted in the use of the archives in Moscow and Leningrad.<sup>27</sup> A state financed history project indicates that at least Lenin's role in the history of Finland was worth a detailed examination.

The working group of *Lenin and Finland* was led by Permanent Under-Secretary of State Jaakko Numminen. Its members represented different political opinions. The guidelines for the research were planned by Professor Osmo Apunen.<sup>28</sup> Preliminary studies were made by Antti Kujala, whose contribution to the final book was the biggest; roughly a fifth of the 1,045 pages. The other contributors were hired as writers

24 O. Jussila, 'Seminaari Moskovassa', *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* (1969: 4), 302–308. See also the seminar papers: *ibid*, appendixes, 3–71.

25 Archive of the Ministry of Education (AME), Helsinki, 1977–1991 Lenin ja Suomi -teoksen valmistelutyöryhmä, kansio 1, ryhmä 1. Suomi–Neuvostoliitto-seuran johtokunta opetusministeriölle 3 Mar. 1977.

26 Timo Karvonen who has worked in the Finnish–Soviet Friendship Society since the 1970s withdrew from the project in 1982. Aimo Minkkinen has worked at the Lenin Museum in Tampere since 1982.

27 Interview with Antti Kujala, 15 Jun. 2007.

28 The working group: Numminen, Apunen, Professor Sune Jungar, Professor Toivo J. Paloposki, Sectary General Christina von Gerich-Porkkala.

that got paid for the manuscripts.<sup>29</sup> The drafts were evaluated by senior researchers who were the most prominent historians of the time.<sup>30</sup> Their comments forced a couple of contributors to rewrite their drafts. Some writers had difficulties with qualifying a scientific historical text for a wider audience, some with the style of their text.<sup>31</sup> After the final corrections, only one of the manuscripts was dropped by the working group.<sup>32</sup>

What was the outcome of the project? The first volume of *Lenin and Finland* came out opportunely to highlight the important anniversaries of 1987. In the foreword, Jaakko Numminen justified the project, which the press had been sceptical about, by presenting historical facts about Lenin and his contribution to the friendly relations that developed later. However, mutual gratitude had to be expressed: the Finns were grateful for Lenin's view on Finnish independence and the Soviets, for their part, acknowledged the Finns that had helped Lenin in preparations for the Russian Revolution.<sup>33</sup> Lenin's footprints in Finland were painstakingly documented in the first two volumes covering the period from the turn of the century to the death of the protagonist. Fortunately, the third volume was published in 1990 before the final collapse of the Soviet block.

Professor Osmo Jussila titled his sarcastic but appreciative review of the project: 'A gift to Uncle Lenin'. Jussila suggested that the three

29 The final contributors: Jyrki Iivonen, Eino Ketola, Aimo Klemetilä, Antti Kujala, Aimo Minkkinen, Juhani Piilonen, Tuomo Polvinen, Osmo Rinta-Tassi, Timo Vihavainen.

30 Professors Jaakko Paavolainen, Hannu Soikkanen, Osmo Jussila, Osmo Apunen, Toivo J. Paloposki, Ohto Manninen, Pekka Suvanto.

31 'In too detailed presentations there might be a danger of a slight comical side-effect or even a shade of personal cult that would have been sharply disapproved by Lenin himself.' AME, 1977–1991 *Lenin ja Suomi* -teoksen valmistelutyöryhmä, kansio 1, ryhmä 1, Osmo Jussila's expert opinion on Eino Ketola's manuscript, 23 Aug. 1982.

32 The reason was not the scientific quality of the chapter, but it was considered too theoretical and difficult for a wider audience. It was not in line with the other manuscripts. AME, 1977–1991 *Lenin ja Suomi* -teoksen valmistelutyöryhmä, kansio 1, ryhmä 2. *Lenin ja Suomi* valmistelutyöryhmän pöytäkirja 2 Jun. 1986. Resolution of publishing the manuscript by Jorma Kalela and Jussi Turtola.

33 J. Numminen, 'Lenin ja Suomi' (foreword), in *Lenin ja Suomi*. Vol. I. Helsinki: Opetusministeriö 1987, 10–11.

volumes should be translated into Russian and published in the Soviet Union (still roughly half a year of lifetime left) – as an example of critical historical study. He admitted that a full picture of Lenin’s cruelty could not be drawn. There was no chapter on Lenin and terror, and even some descriptions of him by certain Finnish politicians were not put as bluntly as the originals were: cynical, fanatical. However, Jussila concluded that *Lenin and Finland* made one thing clear: ‘... the original intention was that Finland, too, should eventually join the great Soviet family.’<sup>34</sup> According to Jussila’s latest view, the Lenin myth in Finland was finally dissolved with *Lenin and Finland*.

The third volume of *Lenin and Finland* was perhaps the most interesting since it included three unrelated articles from different viewpoints. Professor Polvinen expanded on his previous studies in *Lenin and the national question. About Lenin’s views on foreign policy* by Aimo Minkkinen presented a theoretical analysis solely based on the hero’s own texts. The third main article, *The Finns’ evaluations of Lenin* by Timo Vihavainen, deserves closer attention. It described the image of Lenin in Finnish newspapers, school books, and other public representations as of 1917. The ultimate self-reflective comments were from the late 1980s when the first volume of *Lenin and Finland* had already been put out: ‘The first volume, published in late 1987, was considered successful practically everywhere.’<sup>35</sup>

Vihavainen described the most embarrassing Lenin-happenings of the Kekkonen era, as well as the famous Finno-Soviet cooperation film *The Confidence* (1976).<sup>36</sup> The subject was challenging since Vihavainen had to find a balance between criticism and the traditional friendship liturgy during an era of accelerating change in the socialist block. The solution in approach was political objectivity; the author gave room for different Lenin images without commenting on them too harshly. The evaluators of the original manuscript had considered the Lenin representations in

34 O. Jussila, ‘Suomen lahja Leninille’. *Helsingin Sanomat (HS)* 6 Apr. 1991. English translation: ‘A gift to Uncle Lenin’. *Books of Finland* (1991: 4), 228–230.

35 T. Vihavainen, ‘Suomalaisten arvioita Leninistä’, 69.

36 It reconstructed the historical events of late 1917 and managed to end the film with a scene of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which took place in Helsinki in 1975.

the era of 'White Finland' too crude and they had suggested a more 'discreet' style.<sup>37</sup> The colourful early Lenin descriptions have been left in the published version. However, as later comments reveal, the Lenin image of the Kekkonen era was characterized too uncritically, without Vihavainen's typical sarcastic comments.<sup>38</sup>

Vihavainen's most famous book, however, is *Kansakunta rähmällään* (*Nation on its knees. The short history of Finlandization*, 1991), a critical release of the repressed shame felt in regard to Finnish–Soviet relations. The style of the text and timing of the publication was perfect. There was only one obvious weakness; the author did not comment on the project *Lenin and Finland* and his recent participation in it. Nor did he reflect on it later in his confessional article *When I was Finlandicized*. In the same collection of popular essays (2001) Professor Seppo Hentilä asked whether Finnish history writing was Finlandicized. When hypothetically accused, Finnish historians would, according to him, muddle through. The historians used to explain that there was no reason for studying Russian or Soviet history as long as the Moscow archives remained closed. Since most of them belonged to the quiet ones that kept silent in order to avoid problems, the 'crimes' of Finlandization were at most minor. On the other hand, Hentilä admits that the theme remains unstudied.<sup>39</sup>

Finnish professional historians shared the burden of maintaining friendly relations with the Soviets during the later Cold War era. This was in line with the earlier favours that the historians had done for the Finnish state. What strikes the eye, however, is what was not explored. In Finland, neither Russia nor the Soviet Union had been studied academically after Finnish independence. There was not a single professorship in Russian / Soviet history. In the mid-1960s, a small research group started to concentrate on Soviet studies at the Finnish Institute of Foreign Affairs.

37 AME, 1977–1991 Lenin ja Suomi -teoksen valmistelutyöryhmä, kansio 1, ryhmä 1, Osmo Apunen's expert opinion on Timo Vihavainen's manuscript 12 Dec. 1983.

38 O. Jussila, 'Timo Vihavainen – vaitelias filosofi', in K. Kalleinen (ed.), *Venäjä ja Suomi: Juhlakirja professori Timo Vihavaiselle 9.5.2007*. Helsinki: Aleksanteri Series 1:2007, 15.

39 S. Hentilä, 'Kun historiankirjoitus kohtaa suomettumisen' and T. Vihavainen, 'Silloin kun minä suometuin', in J. Bäckman (ed.), *Entäs kun tulee se yhdes-toista? Suomettumisen uusi historia*. Helsinki: WSOY 2001, 57–70, 649–659.

*Joni Krekola*

Despite the academic aspirations of the group, its work was politicized and labelled anti-Soviet, especially after 1968. Very few individual researchers dared take the risk of engaging Soviet studies in the 1970s. Little by little, this low point was passed in the 1980s with increasing Scandinavian research contacts.<sup>40</sup> The Finns might have known something about their Eastern neighbour and the Soviet mentality because of their practical cooperation with the Russians in trade relations and tourism. During the Cold War era, however, Finnish knowledge on history of the Soviet Union was not based on scientific research.

#### THE LENIN MUSEUM AND STATUES

The egocentric Finnish culture doesn't include empathy for other nationalities by turning over the statues. Why to bother, if the statue is expensive and it remains in good condition.<sup>41</sup>

The Lenin museum in Tampere, the first of the Lenin museums established outside the USSR, was opened in January 1946. Originally, it collected and preserved Finnish *Leniniana*, memories and items that were connected to Lenin. The museum was maintained by the Finnish–Soviet Friendship Society with a representative from the city of Tampere. Despite 'modest' financial support and exhibition materials from the Soviet Union, the first ten years of the museum were burdened with financial problems. For the majority of the Finns, Lenin's legacy raised suspicions, and the Lenin museum was considered a propaganda institution.<sup>42</sup> Until 1956, Lenin's legacy in the museum was accompanied by his successor, Stalin, even so much that a joint statue of the heroes was planned. Despite the failure of the daring enterprise, the Central Lenin museum in Moscow tried for

40 V. Perna, *Tehtävänä Neuvostoliitto: Opetusministeriön Neuvostoliittoinstituutin roolit suomalaisessa politiikassa*. Helsinki: Venäjän ja Itä-Euroopan instituutti 2002, 150–152, 304–326.

41 E. Heino, 'Eurooppalaisia Lenin-museoita', *Suomi* (1991: 4–5), 23.

42 For the general history of the museum, see <http://www.lenin.fi/uusi/uk/index.htm>

years to donate a huge Lenin statue to be located in front of the Tampere museum. It never happened.<sup>43</sup>

The first Soviet tourists reached the official place of pilgrimage in 1955. Until the 1960s, however, the Lenin museum kept a low profile. The Soviet visitors were from the top: Brezhnev, Podgorny, Kosygin (with Kekkonen) and cosmonaut Gagarin. During and after the Great Lenin Year of 1970, the museum became more popular among the leftist youth. Simultaneously, financial support from Moscow diminished and the exhibitions could be organized more independently. The Finnish Ministry of Education started to finance the museum, whose prosperity reached its peak during the 1980s. The state's financial support indicated that Lenin's ambiguous legacy was officially accepted in Finland during the 1970s. Protests against the Lenin museum were few. In 1977 there was a failed attempt by an extreme right wing organisation to blow up the Tampere museum building.

The tourist attractions for the Soviets were complemented by the Lenin museum room in Helsinki (1976–1995). In the autumn of 1917, Lenin had hid in a flat that belonged to Helsinki's chief of police, Kustaa Rovio. Near the museum room was the headquarters of the Finnish–Soviet Friendship Society, which used to open the doors of the museum room for high-ranking Soviet guests. Everything changed in the early 1990s; the Russian guests of the Finnish-Russian Friendship Society, whose headquarters was moved further away, could not have cared less of the room. The prevailing pressure against Finland's Lenin museums was relieved by closing down the museum room in 1995. According to the head of the Tampere museum it was the price to be paid for preserving the main museum.<sup>44</sup>

The decline of the Tampere Lenin museum was caused by the collapse of the Soviet block and the subsequent deep economic recession in Finland. The Russian tourists that had formed the majority of annual visitors disappeared. When the network of Lenin museums in Russia and abroad quickly diminished, a public debate started on whether it was acceptable to maintain the Finnish Lenin museum. On the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Lenin museum of Tampere

43 K. Kinnunen, *Suomi–Neuvostoliitto-Seuran historia 1944–1974*. Helsinki: Suomi–Venäjä-seura 1998, 279–281.

44 Interview with the head of the museum Aimo Minkkinen 9 July 2007.

*Joni Krekola*

received international publicity because of rumours that Lenin's embalmed body was planned to be transferred to Tampere.<sup>45</sup> The news was too good to be true.

However, the Lenin museum in Tampere survived and remained the only one kept open regularly through the transition years. A change in the museum's strategy was a necessity for its survival. The exhibitions could now treat subjects that had been taboo during the Soviet years. A museum shop that commercialized the formerly sacred Lenin tradition was opened in 1993, a crisis year for the museum. The updating of the museum's image was skilfully done in cooperation with artists and journalists that understood its uniqueness. The political antagonists of the museum, both local and national, were too few to seriously threaten its future.<sup>46</sup>

What actually happened on a more general level? The Finnish Lenin museum did not deny its history as the leading advocate of a positive Lenin image in Finland. Instead it started to produce exhibitions that could be critical towards the consequences of Lenin's achievements in the USSR. Moreover, a mixture of irony and nostalgia in approach kept the most tragic years of Soviet history at arm's length. The museum invested in digitalisation and history products such as the CD-rom *Soviet Dada – the Rise and fall of the Lenin Cult* (1999). It was marketed as edutainment that was supposed to enlighten the younger generations about the absurd Soviet years. In the Lenin museum shop, visitors could buy reprints of the socialist cult figures and Soviet posters. The museum has become trendy for the leftist youth, who process history as retro by recycling the revolutionary symbols.<sup>47</sup>

The survival strategy of the Finnish Lenin museum has been successful. Today demands for closing it are not often heard (except in

45 In total, the number of all professionally managed Lenin museums had been about 50. In 1991 the Lenin museums of Prague, Leipzig, Warsaw, Krakow, and Riga had been closed down. Of the former ten European museums, only one Lenin-room in Paris was then partly open for special guests. Heino, 'Eurooppalaisia Lenin-museoita', 22–26.

46 There was an anti-museum demonstration that did not interest people. The Lenin relief was stolen and maltreated. Interview with the head of the museum Aimo Minkkinen 9 Jul. 2007.

47 O. Pajamäki, 'Vasemmistoretro on vapauttavaa', *HS* 28 Feb. 2007.

some internet discussions). The resources for maintaining the museum are scarce, but it can manage. The cultural and historical value of its collections grows the more the items of the former Soviet culture abroad are rejected and destroyed. Its current role was rather accurately foreseen in 1991 by a journalist who suggested consulting tasks for the museum in the future when mourning for communism would have proceeded towards a more ruminative phase.<sup>48</sup>

The same can be said of the Finnish statues and memorials that are connected to the Soviet period. The most impressive of the statues of socialist realism, *World Peace* in Helsinki, was a present from the city of Moscow. When it was unveiled in January 1990, the lord mayor of Helsinki still described it with liturgical expressions. Later he has claimed that actually getting of *World Peace* was a relief, since the Soviets had first offered a Lenin statue. Except for one single incident, the monument has rested in peace since then. A group of students covered the grotesque statue with tar and feathers in October 1991.<sup>49</sup>

In 1992 there were attempts to change the names of Lenin Park in Helsinki (to apolitical *Vesilinnanpuisto*) and *Leningradinkatu* in Turku (to *Pietarinkatu*, St. Petersburg Street), and to move the Lenin statue in Turku into the art museum. The local city governments decided to resist these suggestions. The conservative decisions had a predecessor; after the first decade of Finnish independence, there was a gradual reform of Helsinki's street names that indicated the Russian past, and over 100 years as a Grand Duchy. Despite obvious national romanticism in the new street names of the era, many old street names with a Russian flavour, like *Aleksanterinkatu*, were preserved.<sup>50</sup>

48 Heino, 'Eurooppalaisia Lenin-museoita', 23.

49 H. Kaarto, Helsingissäkin ollut patsaskiistoja. *HS* 20 May 2007. As an ironic initiation to the subject, the new students of political history wash *World Peace* once a year at the beginning of the first term.

50 A committee of Helsinki city had already decided, with a one-vote majority, to remove Lenin from the city map. In 1928, streets for Nikolai, Andreas, Wladimir, Galitz and Kulneff were dedicated to nation builders like J. V. Snellman and E. Lönnrot, to the national epic Kalevala, writer J. Aho and J. Z. Duncker, a character of the national poet J.L. Runeberg. K. Palonen, 'Reading street names politically', in K. Palonen and T. Parvikko (eds), *Reading the Political. Exploring the Margins of Politics*. Helsinki: The Finnish Political Science Association 1993, 116–118.

Lenin Park in Helsinki became international news in the turn of 1999–2000 when a local city activist suggested that the park without a memorial should be honoured with a Lenin statue. Although the city of Tartu in Estonia kindly offered four Lenin statues for free, the initiative failed. Debate over this project, both serious and malicious in nature, has continued ever since, but without results.<sup>51</sup> In late 2007 the suggestion was renewed by a group of leftist artists, trade union leaders and a couple of university professors. The timing of the initiative coincides with the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Finland. Laura Kolbe, a professor of European history, explained that with her support she wanted to activate a dialog between different stratifications of the past in Helsinki. The arguments of the scholars that acknowledge the diversity of historical experiences were ridiculed by the press to whom Lenin simply symbolizes the dark history of communism. It was claimed that the raising of a new Lenin statue would insult the casualties of the communist system, for example in the Baltic States.<sup>52</sup> A liberal newspaper, published only on the internet, was even ready to censure its own columnist for his pro-statue opinions.<sup>53</sup>

Generally, dispute over statues in Finland is still concentrated on the historical monuments that symbolize the trauma of the 1918 Civil War. There are no memorials in Finland such as the Estonian Bronze Soldier, which arouse strong and polarising national sentiments.<sup>54</sup> Compared with these controversies, few Finns feel strongly about the statues of socialist realism and other symbols of the Soviet empire abroad. They can rest in peace as relics and curiosities that symbolize, more than Soviet power, the years of friendship liturgy and the Finlandization of Finnish politicians.

It is very doubtful that the plan for a Lenin monument will ever be carried out in the future. The history conscious arguments of the statue activists may be accepted when the existing Lenin trappings in Finland

51 Kolbe, *Unelmien Helsinki*, 148–149. *HS* 20 May 2007.

52 *Ilta-Sanomat* 28 and 30 Nov. 2007; L. Kolbe, 'Lenin ansaitsee patsaansa', *Iltalehti* 1 Dec. 2007; S. Snellman, 'Opi perusasiat', *HS* 4 Dec. 2007.

53 'Uusisuomi.fi sensuroi Venäjä-kirjoittajansa', *Kansan Uutiset Viikkolehti* 5 Dec. 2007. Pentti Stranius' column 'Lenin-patsas paikallaan' was published in *Tiedonantaja* 26 Nov. 2007.

54 M. Lappalainen, 'Maailmanrauha ja valkoinen kenraali', *HS* 26 Jun. 2007. U. Peltonen, *Muistin paikat. Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta*. Helsinki: SKS 2003, 187–243.

are defended. Much stronger statements, however, are needed in order to convince people of the necessity for the raising of a new Lenin.<sup>55</sup> Finns can afford to preserve the historical stratification of the street names and the statues, as well as of the Russian tsars<sup>56</sup> and the products of socialist realism. Statues are not overturned nor names changed although interpretations of their meanings alter both temporally and locally. It may be a sense of history, an understanding of the value of different historical epochs, but the prerequisite for tolerance has been Finland's good fortune in the cruel game of the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

55 S. Snellman, 'Opi perusasiat', *HS* 4 Dec. 2007.

56 In the middle of the Senate Square, the most central place in Helsinki, stands an impressive statue of Tsar Alexander the 2<sup>nd</sup>, the Grand Duke of Finland (1855–1881).