

Summary

A LAW NAILED DOWN WITH FORCE

The Shutting Down of Labour Halls in 1929–1932

Purpose of the Study

The first two decades of the independent Finnish state present an interesting line of development. The civil war that broke out in 1918, immediately after the declaration of independence in 1917, divided the nation in two – the winning “Whites” and the defeated “Reds”. This division was reflected for a long time in all societal activities. The labour movement was also split into the anti-revolutionary Social Democrats and the pro-revolution Communists. However, when the Soviet Union launched its attack on Finland and the Finnish winter war broke out in 1939, a unified nation stood up to defend its independence. Faced with the questions and problems regarding this phenomenon of national unification, historical research has provided many different explanations. What happened during those 20 years to make the so-called “Winter war miracle” possible? One significant turning point in this development was marked by the year 1929 and the beginning of the operation of the right-wing popular movement, the Lapua movement, and other contemporary activities.

This study focuses on the acts of nailing down of labour halls which took place during the period during which the Lapua movement was active. In addition, the focus is also on the decisions taken by the authorities to shut down labour halls and on the violent acts against both the buildings and the events organised in them between 1929–1932. All these acts are referred to by the global term “closing down”. The closing down of the labour halls has here been used as a tool to study the crisis in the Finnish social system and democracy in the inter-war years, as well as the attempts to solve that crisis. What were the limits of acceptable civic activities and how were those limits defined? It is important to discuss the definition of these limits in a situation in which the civic activities, which became increasingly violent, were trying to change the social status quo. Why did the attempts of the citizens to exercise influence turn into violence, what was the attitude towards these acts and how were they treated?

By focusing on the events related to the labour halls, the acts of closing down are here analysed as a political phenomenon: how was the phenomenon perceived in different situations, what was the aim pursued through the closing down acts and how did these aims change? The objective of this study is to use the acts of closing down and associated events to shed light on the problems

related to the formation of civic society and to the development of democratic modes of operation in a situation in which society was marked with profound tensions between the various civic groups, the means of civic influence were still undeveloped and the democratic tradition was still very immature. Just as the various civic circles, each with their own particular objectives, were trying to define their mutual relationships, free civic activities were also looking for their own democratic limits and their relationship to the power structure which was maintaining the social system and to the operation of this system. This development can be studied by looking at the notion of law and order held by the nailing-down movement and the Lapua movement. The Finnish constitution, adopted in 1919, was quite liberal and guaranteed extensive civil rights; freedom of association, assembly and speech. The labour movement, especially its extreme left, tested the limits of legally acceptable activities throughout the 1920s. The leaders of the defeated side of the civil war had escaped to Russia, founding in exile the Finnish Communist Party (SKP) in 1918. The operation of this revolutionary party was prohibited in Finland, thus it operated underground and within a public party founded by the extreme left. The right-wing circles considered that the publicly operating party was also a Communist party.

The Associations Act, adopted in 1919, prohibited operations associated with high treason, planning of treasonous activities, operations which were against public decency or were in contempt of public authorities. This legislation gave the public order authorities the administrative means of preventing communist action. The most frequently used methods included lawsuits initiated due to an alleged offence by the press and the consequent closing down of newspapers or temporary publication bans, the closing of organisations which were considered to be illegal, as well as actions brought against individuals who had participated in the operations of illegal organisations.

The relationship between the nailing-down movement and the labour movement assumes some special significance due to the fact that the Labour movement was divided into Social Democrats and Communists. It is therefore relevant to ask whether the Lapua movement or the nailing-down movement viewed the Labour movement as one monolithic whole or whether they made a distinction between the Social Democratic and Communistic labour movements.

The beginning of the period focused on in this study is the autumn of 1929 when the Lapua movement started, with the dispersal of a festival of Communist youth organised at the labour hall in Lapua, with the ensuing closing down of the labour hall. The other time limit of this study is marked by the spring of 1932 when the popular movement, now organised and registered as the Lapua movement, was suppressed. However, some isolated cases of violence against the labour halls took place even after that.

The First Phase of the Lapua Movement – from Autumn 1929 to Spring 1930

The movement, the first steps towards the formation of which were taken in the autumn of 1929 at the Lapua Communist youth festival, started to take shape during the spring of 1930. Right from the start, its methods included direct violence, popular meetings and pressure exercised in the name of the movement. These actions brought to the surface the fear felt by “White Finland” against a revolutionary, unknown and thus threatening Communist movement and brought it to the core of political decision-making. At the same time, the action against the labour halls also took shape.

The first method which the movement came up with was to shut the labour halls by nailing shut the windows and doors with boards and planks. Examples of these operations are the incidents at the labour halls in Lapua and Ylihärmä. The local right-wing circles in Lapua disrupted the festival of working class youth that had gathered from the surrounding province at the Lapua labour hall, finally closing the hall itself. Following the example of Lapua, the masses also nailed down the Ylihärmä labour hall. The event turned into a popular celebration. The activists of the Working Men’s Association were forced to nail planks across the windows and doors of their own labour hall. They were also invited to stop those operations which were considered to be communist. After the nailing ceremony, a speech was held in the courtyard, accompanied by patriotic songs. In addition to the incidents in Lapua and Ylihärmä, acts of violence also took place at other labour halls. After the Lapua festival, a large-scale province-level popular meeting was organised in Lapua, demanding that the government ban all forms of activities by the Communists. In the wake of this meeting, similar meetings were organised in various parts of Finland, all adopting the demands presented in Lapua. At this first stage, the demands of the popular movement were oriented against Communist action only. The authorities started to take a closer interest in the operation of the Workingmen’s Associations, with the objective of preventing any further unrest. The most significant event in the spring of 1930 was the destruction of the printing works of the Vaasa-based newspaper “Työn Ääni” (Voice of Work) in March, considered to propagate communistic ideas. A group of men from the southern Pohjanmaa province forced their way into the premises of the printing works at night, destroying their printing machine.

The public attention gained by the popular movement gave a new boost to the legislative reform that had been postponed for various reasons. The first sign of this was the adoption of a stricter Associations Act as early as in December 1929. The amendments made it easier to suppress associations which had been established to continue the operations of their predecessors which had previously been banned. They also made it possible to enforce collective bans on large associations and their branch organisation and member organisations. The law gave distinct new tools to the authorities and intensified the work of both the Etsivä keskuspoliisi, EK, (Detective Central Police), responsible for

internal security issues, and the courts of law. The Communists called the new law the “Strangle Act”. The right bestowed upon provincial governors to temporarily interrupt the operation of associations that were suspected of crimes had a similar impact. The legislative reform was a clear victory for EK which had made demands for a stricter Associations Act for at least five years. The rise of the popular movement gave new impetus to the demands of the security police.

The speaker’s stands and stages of the Communist-minded labour halls became empty and the buildings closed down one after another, either as a result of direct intimidation or due to the general climate that was felt to be oppressive. One reason contributing to the silence was the fact that the people were truly perplexed. They either lacked clear advice from above, i.e., from the party leaders, or they were unable to follow such advice. For example, the order coming from the party leaders to strike back – from the labour halls to the street – was quite impossible to follow. In the tactics of the party leaders, the labour halls had only one role, that associated with democratic action. But they proved to be inefficient in crisis conditions. In real combat, the forces had to be taken to the streets, they needed a more direct command, against their opponents. The local agents at the grass-root level did not follow this line of thought. In fact, that spring’s most intense Communist action was the organisation of the protection of labour halls in the form of self-defence troops. The distress of the extreme left also grew in another manner: the co-operation among the leftist movement decreased, and the Social Democrats, who insisted on their difference from the Communists, no longer admitted outside users to their own labour halls.

The Lapua movement justified their actions by saying that their purpose was to prevent revolutionary activities and put an end to blasphemy. These pursuits won further support during the spring. However, the seed of disagreement was planted among the supporters of the popular movement, leading to the exit of the centre-minded right-wing supporters from the movement. The incident at the Työn Ääni printing works was also a clear milestone in this sense. The first serious and violent terrorist action at Työn Ääni divided opinions.

Radicalisation of the Popular Movement during the Summer of 1930

During the summer of 1930, the popular movement became increasingly radical. The destruction at Työn Ääni led to a court hearing in early 1930 in Vaasa. The court hearings turned into a riot as the supporters of the movement, gathered from the surrounding province, tore Mr. Asser Salo, counsel for the printing works, from the hands of the Governor of the Vaasa Province, Mr. Bruno Sarlin. Mr. Salo was taken by car to Lapua where he was released. The popular movement demanded that all newspapers and printing works that were considered to be communistic be closed down. Prime Minister Kyösti Kallio,

premier of the minority cabinet of the political centre, considered the demand illegal. In order to put pressure on the government, the popular movement threatened new violence. This was the beginning of the acts of violent forcible ejection of people thought to be Communists. During that summer, even some Social Democratic politicians fell into the hands of the those organising these ejection-type removals. Some people were taken to the eastern border of Finland where they were forced to cross into Soviet Russia.

That summer also marked a more intensive period of nailing-down labour halls. The action was mainly concentrated in the area of most fervent support for the Lapua movement, in southern Pohjanmaa. However, some actions also took place in the Häme province and in northern Finland. The march to Helsinki organised on 7 July 1930 by the Lapua movement inspired a new wave of nailing-down actions. The march of the rural men was a replica of the triumphal march organised by the White Finns in the spring of 1918. During the march, the popular movement forced the government to accept their demands. Prior to the march, the continuing violence had caused a change of government. On 4 July 1930, Mr. Kallio was replaced by the new Prime Minister P.E. Svinhufvud, a former regent who was seen by the popular movement as their man. The new government tried to contain the actions of the popular movement and started negotiations for legislative reform. However, the exponents of the popular movement were not included in the new cabinet. To prevent further violence, the major Helsinki-based labour halls were closed prior to the march.

As the nailing-down of the labour halls continued, the governors of the provinces were, on 9 July 1930, given the authority to close labour halls if violence was anticipated in a particular locality. As a result of this authorisation, labour halls started to be closed down by the authorities – mostly at the request of the popular movement. Some of the local heads of police also took independent initiative, demanding that the governor close a particular hall. In this manner, all such labour halls as were thought to be in the hands of the Communists were closed in every part of Finland by the autumn of 1930. During that summer, the process of banning Communist Workingmen's Associations by court order started. This meant that almost all communist activities were suppressed during that summer. Only the work of dispersed underground groups continued.

The Svinhufvud Cabinet introduced a legislative package to Parliament, known as the communist laws, with the objective of preventing communist action in Finland. The legislative package adopted some of the demands of the popular movement. However, the major amendments proposed to the constitutional laws were not adopted by Parliament in the form of urgent bills. This led to a situation in which President Lauri Relander (1925–1931) dissolved Parliament and called a new election. The parliamentary elections in October were shadowed by political terror and pressure. The Communists were prevented from participating, even the operations of Social Democratic organisations were disturbed. As a result, the right-wing parties obtained a slight majority of two thirds in the new Parliament, and the bills left in abeyance were adopted.

However, the increasingly strict reform of the Associations Act, seconded by the popular movement and the security police EK, was not adopted which was a clear setback to both of the above-mentioned supporters of stricter action.

The events of the summer 1930 divided the supporters of the popular movement. The central-minded right wing, already suspicious of the movement, distanced itself from the movement during the summer. The forcible ejection of Mr. K.J. Ståhlberg, the country's first president (1919–1925) marked a final turning point. In fact, it seems an exaggeration to refer to the Lapua movement as a popular movement after the summer of 1930.

The Battle over the Control of Labour Halls in 1931–1932

Following the closure of the Communist labour halls during the summer of 1930, the disputes about the future use of the buildings began. The Social Democrats, who had lost the halls to the Communist occupants during the division of the labour movement, now wanted to regain control of the halls. The Lapua movement, in turn, did not think the Social Democrats were reliable masters of the premises. In fact, the Lapua movement and EK insisted that the closed-up property should be confiscated by the State. A special legislative decree was also under consideration. This was to ensure that the Communists would not be able to operate in the labour halls, infiltrated within the Social Democratic organisations. The Lapua movement and, partly, also EK, feared that in those areas with strong Communist support, the Social Democrats would not be able to control the Communists which would then take over the organisations.

As the Lapua movement lost support, its manners and ideas became increasingly radical. It organised itself under the Lapua Movement Registered Association, demanding that the labour halls be closed by the State, thereby nominating the Social Democratic movement as its new opponent. At the same time, the authorities started to bend and allow those closed labour halls which had ended up in the hands of the Social Democrats in a variety of ways to be reopened. The first and most significant decisions to open individual labour halls regarded the buildings in Helsinki and in Turku. It should be noted that the decisions were taken by the Svinhufvud Cabinet, considered by the popular movement to be one of "theirs". The objectives of the popular movement and the actions of the Government were at this stage already in clear juxtaposition. According to Prime Minister Svinhufvud, the Social Democrats were entitled to exist in Finnish society. In his mind, they had to be fought with political and democratic tools, without resorting to illegal action and violence. The diverging views of the State authorities and the popular movement led to a new outburst of violence from the autumn of 1931. The focus was now clearly on the Social Democratic labour halls which were nailed down, burnt down and even blown up, not to mention other types of destruction. However, what is relevant is the fact that the actions no longer enjoyed popular support. The perpetrators were

clearly right-wing radicals whose actions were not acceptable to the majority of the non-left.

During 1931–1932, the violence against the Social Democratic labour halls concentrated in the Etelä-Häme region and the Uusimaa province in southern Finland. The epicentre of the violence was the Mäntsälä region in the northern part of the Uusimaa province. The radical actions culminated in the violent interruption of the entertainment evening organised at the “Ohkola” labour hall in Mäntsälä, marking the beginning of the movement called “the Mäntsälä rebellion”: the approximately 400 civil guard members, who had interrupted the evening, refused to disperse. The men gathered in Mäntsälä declared their own ultimatums and invited civil guard members from all over the country to join their ranks. In fact, their appeal aroused some support which lasted for a couple of weeks. In the end, the rebellion was suppressed without violence. The incidents in Mäntsälä mark the final chapter of the Lapua movement operations. The association was banned by virtue of the stricter security legislation which it had itself advocated.

The violence against the labour halls gradually died out after the Mäntsälä rebellion. More and more halls were opened and given over to the Social Democrats, although some of the authorities dragged their feet over this. The process of banning the Communist organisations through court action also took time. When the decisions to re-open the halls were made, the respective decrees contained strict terms of not allowing the buildings to be used for communist activities. Should the owner of the labour hall permit communist operations, the building would be closed down again.

A great number of Communist labour halls were never returned to the hands of the labour organisations. Those named as receivers by the courts had the right to sell the buildings by auction. In many cases, the building was thus taken over by right-wing organisations, the civil guards or the women’s auxiliary voluntary guards. Some halls were taken over by the municipalities, the state or private persons. In most cases, the Social Democratic halls could continue to operate undisturbed after the nailing-down episodes; the planks at the doors and windows were removed and activities continued. In certain cases, however, the local authorities brought action against the Social Democratic organisations, thought to be communistic, in order to close the halls; in fact, some of them were closed.

The Internal Differences within the Closing-Down Movement

The movement to close the labour halls passed through two distinct phases. From the autumn of 1929 to the autumn of 1930, the activities were clearly oriented against the Communist labour halls. Gradually, as the Communist halls were closed, the activities were directed against the Social Democratic buildings, which particularly became under attack after the autumn of 1931. The two phases of the closing-down movement are quite distinct from one another.

Although critical of illegal action, the state authorities and political decision-makers approved of the closing down of the Communist labour halls. The right-wing parties, in particular, even considered that the suppression of Communist activities was necessary, and they were in favour of the demands made by the closing movement. The violent actions were mostly associated with the early phases of the movement between the autumn of 1929 and the spring-summer of 1930, the period preceding the authority conferred upon the provincial governors to officially close the Communist labour halls. As an official means of closing the halls was now available, direct action became less marked and was used only in cases in which the popular movement considered that the government did not act rapidly or efficiently enough.

The direct action of the popular movement became accentuated as the closing movement turned against the Social Democrats. This was mainly due to the fact that the state no longer supported the objectives of the movement, nor considered it justified, let alone necessary, to close the Social Democratic labour halls. Therefore direct action was the only operative channel for the popular movement. The diminishing support enjoyed by the movement, along with the expansion of its objectives, also radicalised its operations. As all the moderate elements had abandoned the movement, there was nothing to contain the actions of the most radical elements.

From the autumn of 1929 onwards, the movement to close down the labour halls involved almost 400 individual labour halls. Taking all separate incidents into consideration, the exact number is 399. This number includes all incidents that are judged to be either clearly proven or less certain on the basis of the sources. The figure also includes incidents directed against villas, summer resorts, outside dancing halls, wrestling halls and theatres owned by the labour organisations, which otherwise meet the criteria of an incident comparable to the closing of a labour hall. The statistics refer to 12 cases of incidents against buildings other than the labour halls. When the second and third actions against individual labour halls are taken into account, the number of incidents rises to 417. The number of all Social Democratic labour halls in 1916 gives a perspective for the impact of this phenomenon: prior to the division of the labour movement, there were a total of 940 labour halls quoted in the statistics. Thus the movement to close down the labour halls touched at least one in every three Finnish labour halls. The uncertain cases in the statistics include incidents which are based on incomplete sources or those containing vague expressions. Twenty-three cases have been classified as uncertain.

It has been possible to identify 384 sufficiently reliable cases involving the movement to close-down the labour halls, 316 of which were directed against Communist and 78 against Social Democratic labour halls. This ratio alone shows how the support of the movement was divided: when the operations were directed against communism, they encompassed the whole country and all labour halls that were considered to be communistic. After the rupture of the labour movement, there was a fairly established number of Social Democratic labour halls – about 650 – in the early 1920s. Thus the 78 incidents against So-

cial Democratic labour halls touched only about one in every ten establishments.

But what actually happened at the labour halls? What was the face of the closing down movement? In the analysis of the different cases, five distinct categories have been determined – Nailing Down, Arson, Blowing-up, Other Violence and Closing Down.. The first category, nailing down, includes cases in which the windows and doors of the labour hall were closed down by nailing to prevent any further activities in the building. The most radical form of nailing down were incidents such as the “popular feast” in Ylihärmä where the labour activist themselves were forced to perform the work. Minor actions, e.g., planks nailed up during the night across the labour hall door, also qualify as nailing down. In some cases, the nailing was accompanied by threats of tougher action if the activities at the hall were continued. Thus there was a lot of variation.

The nailing down of the Communist labour halls led to the outcome desired by the protagonists. All activities at the hall ceased. The situation was not the same at the Social Democratic labour halls. In most cases, the labour association simply removed the planks from the doors and continued their activities. In some cases, where the situation was particularly tense or the number of activist in the labour association was small, a forceful expression of violence would suppress the activities of a Social Democratic association, at least briefly. During the period of the nailing-down movement, 47 certain cases of documented incidents took place, 25 of which were directed against Communist and 22 against Social Democratic premises.

The Arson category includes fires wilfully started at labour halls, as well as attempts to do so. Some of the fires started in extremely vague circumstances, and it has not always been possible to prove the wilful setting of the fire. Therefore this category also includes cases which are supported by fairly scarce source material. However, it has been considered appropriate to classify the fires as a separate group due to the finality of the actions. When successful, they destroyed the entire building, thus destroying the operative conditions of the labour association. It is important to note that all 12 clearly defined cases of arson were directed against Social Democratic labour halls. What was said about arson also applies to destruction by explosion. There were only five cases of explosion or attempted explosion. But since these were serious acts of violence, they should be classified as a separate group in statistics. The target of all five cases of explosion were Social Democratic labour halls.

Besides the nailing down, arson and explosion actions, the labour halls were object of many other forms of violence and vandalism. These various actions have been classified under Other Violence in this study. The title describes the role of the popular movement in closing the labour hall in a violent manner. The least serious form of violence could be stoning of the labour hall windows during the night. The number also includes other acts of vandalism or destruction of the labour hall property or furniture – in some cases only a few broken windows or a lamp whilst other cases can be described as total destruction, with the entire stock of furniture, windows and movable property

rendered unusable. The destruction took place mainly at night, while in other cases the destroyers came to the hall whilst an entertainment evening or a meeting was in progress.

The category of Other Violence also includes the interruption of events arranged at the labour hall, not leading to the nailing down of the building or to the end of activities. One extreme case of these incidents is the interruption of the speeches held at the Okkola labour hall in Mäntsälä on 27 February 1932, which marked the beginning of the Mäntsälä rebellion; the event at the labour hall was interrupted by a force of about 400 men, partly armed. Other violence includes 38 cases of violent action. The majority of these cases, or 31 cases, were directed against Social Democratic labour halls. Communist labour halls were targeted only seven times.

“Closing-down” refers to the either autonomous or pressure-induced acts by the authorities to shut the labour halls, to “seal” them. In some cases, the order to close the labour hall was given by the provincial governor, in other cases the local authorities, mainly the rural police chiefs, acted on a considerable amount of self initiative. This group also includes cases in which the impact of the authorities is not clearly deductible from the sources. There are many reasons for the shortcomings of the sources, as noted many times above. Therefore, the category of closing down certainly also includes cases in which the activities at the labour hall stagnated or even died out due to an oppressive atmosphere. In these cases, some of the rural police chiefs did not think it was worth while to go and seal the premises in an official manner, the outcome being, however, the same in practice. The cases identifiable with certainty and classified as closing down totalled 292 in this study. The object in 284 cases was a Communist labour hall and only 8 were Social Democratic halls.

The first wave of the closing down movement, focusing on Communist labour halls, was clearly a phenomenon of northern and eastern Finland. Among the 316 cases involving a Communist labour hall, the majority, or 225, took place in the Provinces of Kuopio, Vaasa and Oulu. This focus of the activities was mainly due to the geographic distribution of the support of the Communist, extreme-left, labour movement: support for the extreme left was greatest in northern Savo, the provinces of Oulu and the southern and northern constituency in the province of Vaasa. In other parts of the country, the supporters of the party were mainly found in larger cities. For the most part, the movement to close down the Communist labour halls turned to violence only in the district where the movement had started, in southern Pohjanmaa. The movement to close down the Communist labour halls involved 316 certain cases, 284 of which were mere acts of closure and only 32 acts with associated violence. The actual cases of nailing-down were 25. Thus violence can be shown to have taken place only in one tenth of the cases.

The closing-down movement directed against the Social Democratic labour halls was clearly of a more violent nature. However, the acts took place in a clearly definable territory. The total number of certainly demonstrable acts against the Social Democratic labour halls was 78, 70 of which, or 90%,

involved some form of violence. The intense nature of the second wave of the closing movement is further emphasised if we calculate the number of cases clearly directed against social democracy: as of the year 1931, there were a total of 62 cases of acts against the Social Democratic labour halls, only three of which can be defined as closing down without violence.

Compared to the acts against the Communist labour halls, the movement against the Social Democratic institutions focused on clearly more limited geographic areas. Some protest continued in the regions where the action had started, in southern Pohjanmaa but was clearly concentrated in southern of Finland. The acts in southern Pohjanmaa can be paralleled with the violent incidents in southern Häme and northern Uusimaa.

The acts of violence performed by the popular movement were generally attributable to the local White forces in the region. Those who nailed down, burned, blew up and performed other acts of vandalism against the Communist labour halls came mostly from the immediate vicinity of the labour halls. The situation was completely different to the cases of forcible ejection, the majority of which were performed on the order or with the consent of the Lapua movement leaders in an organised manner. The forcible ejections were mostly orchestrated by groups of commandos with a fairly established composition who operated in the vicinity. With the Communist labour halls, the impact of the Lapua movement commandos is in certain cases evident. The role of non-locals in the nailing down of the Communist labour halls seemed to be associated with cases in which the extreme left enjoyed particular support in that locality. Thus the local Lapua movement supporters needed some sort of outside inducement.

The situation is clearly different when we examine the violent acts against the Social Democratic labour halls. This violence took a clearly organised form. At this stage of the closing-down movement, the acts that took place in southern Häme and northern Uusimaa, in particular, were performed in a clearly concentrated manner by commandos who moved from one locality to another. Between the end of 1931 and the beginning of 1932, this region was attacked by organised, mobile commandos who nailed down many premises in one night. Many of the sources suspect that these acts, especially those that took place in early 1932, were directed centrally by one command. In other cases, local forces were certainly also involved but the initiative came from outside. At the same time, the spontaneity that had characterised the actions against the Communist labour halls had vanished. There remains little accurate information about the identity of those who nailed down the Social Democratic labour halls. However, the sources refer to orders given from Helsinki, thus to the central leaders of the Lapua movement or to circles close to it.

One factor that was common to the acts of violence was the rural environment. The venue of the violence against both the Social Democratic and the Communist labour halls was the countryside. The nailing took place in rural areas where such incidents could turn into regular celebrations. The urban labour halls were closed by the authorities. However, there were great regional differences in the movement. Why was that?

There are several natural explanations to account for the differences between the rural and the urban modes of operation. In the countryside, especially in southern Pohjanmaa, the activities emerged spontaneously and were directed against the Communist movement operating in the same community. The internal tension of the community was clearly visible in a village. The labour hall was a reminder of the active operation of the party that had been defeated in 1918, operations that should no longer be possible according to the supporters of White Finland. When the movement burst out, things that the law could not contain were prevented through violence. The pressure for unity was also felt more clearly in the countryside. Particularly in regions where the support for the Communists was modest, the extreme left became a sort of a beam in the eyes of White Finland. The Communist labour halls suffered less violence in regions where the support of the extreme left was more significant. This could at least partly explain the differences between northern Savo or the province of Oulu on one hand and southern Pohjanmaa on the other hand.

If popular support was a protection for the extreme left in the rural areas, what then was the reason for the lack of violence and acts of nailing down in the urban areas? The cities were not, as such, havens for extreme-left activities. But their political and social climate was simply different. The strength of the labour movement in the cities was a real political fact which could not be ignored even by the extreme right. Another factor was the secularisation of the urban communities, as well as the loosening of the grip of the uniform social culture. Thus the right wing was no longer uniform, either. Public uprising, such as the nailing-down movement, could not, for the above reasons, achieve the same kind of public acceptance as it did in the countryside.

The more efficient operation of the authorities in urban areas also played a certain role. In urban areas, the number of policemen was clearly higher in proportion and distances were shorter. Thus the control of the police was easier to arrange and more efficient than in rural areas. The state authorities also took a clearly different stand to acts of violence in cities, compared to rural areas. The cities had also to be prepared for any eventual clashes. The police authorities were afraid that there could be incidents and situations in the labour neighbourhoods during which the police could not prevent violence or face-to-face clashes between the right-wing exponents and the workers. For this reason, the authorities assumed tactics in the urban areas differing from those in the rural areas. The cities were much more afraid of the eventual risk situations. Therefore, the labour halls in the biggest cities were closed as a preventive measure. The state authorities could not afford to let threatening situations get out of hand in the cities.

The destruction of the Työn Ääni and the riot in Vaasa had shown that urban unrest was also possible. Even if the city people themselves would not engage in rioting, the people from the provinces might enter the city, as had happened in Vaasa. Therefore, it was necessary to take preventive action – close the communist papers and the printing works that had published them, and close the doors of the labour halls. The popular movement did not hesitate to use pressure

and intimidation to bend the Government. Popular meetings and delegations visiting the Provincial Governors worked the ground for the measures desired by the movement. One of the principal justifications offered for the preventive measures taken by the Government was that there was no certainty about the stand to be taken by the Civil Guard organisation vis-à-vis the actions of the popular movement. The civil guards acted as a reserve force for the police but in a confused situation, it was no longer clear whether the organisation was trustworthy. The police could no longer rely on the civil guard's assistance. Nobody knew how the civil guards would react in a crisis.

The Importance of the Closing-Down Movement

The nailing down, the closing and the other acts of violence performed against the labour halls can be seen as a phenomenon that constituted a clearly defined movement. On the one hand, it was a part of the Lapua movement, one of its operative forms. In this sense, the closing of the labour halls was a phenomenon parallel to the forcible ejections and purges of the municipal councils. The closing movement started at the Lapua labour festival and took shape along with the development of the right-wing popular movement. However, the closing-down of the labour halls remained a part of the popular movement's operation much longer than the forcible ejections and the purges. The incidents were still taking place prior to and after the Mäntsälä rebellion. In this sense, the life cycle of the closing movement reflects the development of the Lapua movement at its most essential.

Why did the Lapua movement assume this form of operation – the closing of the labour halls? The labour hall was not only a symbol of revolution but also one of party politics and a society becoming increasingly politicised. In the first phase, the reactions of the nailing parties were directed towards the labour halls themselves, due to the revolutionary character and strange ideologies associated with them. Strolling around their labour halls, dressed in red shirts which were marked with the hammer and sickle, the young Communists undoubtedly aroused the urge among the “White Finland” to silence that “nest of Sovietism”. For those who had built the labour hall, it was their second home, the place for their own free operation, the symbol of the labour community. Therefore silencing and nailing it down with planks and boards was a strong political statement. When the objectives of the Lapua movement turned increasingly against parties and party politics, the labour halls controlled by the Social Democrats, symbols of party politics, had to face their share of the outburst.

The tearing of red shirts and the silencing of the labour halls marked the beginning of the closing movement and, just like the Lapua movement, it had a certain affinity with the objectives of the National Coalition Party. The basic objective of the movement – to end the irritating operation of the Communists – was of such clear and generally bourgeois nature that most right-wing citizens could easily support it. This guaranteed support for the demands of the move-

ment and silenced the opposition exercised by its critics. Accepting the basic thesis of the movement meant, among other things, support for a stricter Associations Act. As the movement became radicalised in the spring of 1930, its objectives were prominently characterised by an anti-party-political attitude. This alienated most of the centre-minded politicians from its ranks. The anti-party-politics flavour was present right from the beginning, but was less visible during the early stages when the movement still enjoyed the support of a large right-wing front.

Towards the summer of 1930, not only anti-party-political but also anti-democratic features had become emphasised among the movement's objectives. The movement wanted to limit the powers of Parliament in favour of the Government. "Parliamentary supremacy" had to be replaced by strong Government rule which would guarantee controlled and contained circumstances and prevent radical changes. These objectives were clear in the proposals for legislative amendments prepared by the movement's legislative committee, as well as in the negotiations conducted with Prime Minister Svinhufvud. Limitations to democratic activities would undoubtedly have benefited the political right. It is interesting to note that Prime Minister Svinhufvud was in favour of some of the movement's objectives, at least during the summer 1930 discussions. However, it is not so surprising, considering the background of the National Coalition Party; for a long time, they also wanted to avoid the party policy image. The restriction of democratic decision-making would have contributed to a decrease of the power of the labour movement, undoubtedly the motivation of these proposals. Directing its operations against the Social Democratic Party and its organisations, the Lapua movement lost its role as a significant popular movement. Therefore, when referring to the third phase of the movement to close down the labour halls, the term "popular movement" must be placed in inverted commas. The support gained by the movement at the beginning was, in the end, reduced to that of its most fervent core. It is also important to note that at this stage, there was also a clear change in the attitude of the security police (EK) towards the movement. Still in favour of most of the movement's objectives in the summer of 1930, EK could no longer accept its operations as from the autumn of that same year. Before this turn, EK had tried to exploit the force of the movement for its own ends. As of the autumn 1930, EK was clearly reserved and on alert against the operations of the movement.

A narrowing support base radicalised the objectives of the popular movement. As the moderate circles abandoned it, the real decision power was taken over within the movement by increasingly radical forces. This explains why the Social Democratic movement could be interpreted as a communistic and revolutionary movement. As the circle of the supporters diminished, the surrounding world became increasingly black-and-white in their eyes, a struggle between good and evil.

However, in order to understand contemporary events, it is even more important to look at the attitude of the majority of the citizens towards the movement and its objectives. The number of right-wing critics of the movement grew as the movement radicalised. An increasing number of those who had

initially passively supported the movement became suspicious and, finally, opponents of the movement. As the movement clearly directed itself against the Social Democratic Party, its labour halls and organisational activities, it reached a point at which it had lost the support of the moral majority. Social Democracy was the point after which the majority of the citizens were no longer sympathetic. For example, President Svinhufvud pointed this out to the exponents of the movement as early as the summer of 1931.

The limit presented by Social Democracy was the measure for the functioning and operation of the country's political system. Most citizens considered that the Social Democratic movement was an essential part of the democratic system. Although a political opponent, the Social Democratic movement still had a recognised role in the eyes of its adversaries. This status was gained by the Social Democratic movement through its commitment to the Finnish system. Within the Social Democratic movement, the events in the period marked by the Lapua movement contributed to a stronger commitment to the republican social system. Targeting its attacks against a recognised part of the system, the Lapua movement also clashed with the other groups that were committed to the current situation, i.e., the republican and constitutional forces of the right wing. These included not only the centre-minded forces but also most of the members of the National Coalition Party. Thus the Lapua movement had to share the same fate as its opponents – to be suppressed according to the will of the majority.

The end of the Lapua movement through banning reflects the way in which the democratic system finally discovered its own protective mechanisms and could guarantee democratic development. However, this does not mean that the extreme-right ideas would not still enjoy support, but only in certain restricted circles. What was then the reason for the fall of the Lapua movement? Undoubtedly its objectives did not, ultimately, correspond with the interests of the majority of the people. In political life, co-operation between the left and the right can emerge as a result of the clear trenches dug against either the left or the right. It was possible to step over the ideological borders once the rules of the political system were defined and both sides knew that they could trust the other in these basic issues. The final, important step towards a unified nation could only be taken after the Svinhufvud presidency, but the vital conditions for this development were created through an outspoken condemnation of the Lapua movement.

The example of the labour hall nailing acts can be used to say that during the time of the Lapua movement, the right-wing-minded part of the population finally had to take a stand as to the ideal of the "White Finland" nourished by the winning side. The presumed and nourished illusion of unity and unanimity collapsed during the period of the Lapua movement in a dramatic manner. As always – vanished illusions are followed by a moment of truth. In the development of the first republic this meant that it was necessary to admit that society contained some genuine conflicts of interests which had to be resolved in one manner or another. It was a proof of the growth of the nation that its great majority did prioritise the democratic system as the best way to solve these conflicts.