

## Introduction

The period following World War I was tumultuous for many nations, particularly Finland. The defeat of the Russian Empire and the subsequent revolutions in 1917 set off a chain reaction that deeply affected Finnish society, leading to a civil conflict between varying political factions.

## Collapse of the Russian Empire

In 1917, the Russian Empire experienced significant turmoil as it faced defeat in World War I and the February and October Revolutions. This unrest created a power vacuum in Finland, which had been under Russian control. This situation led to a breakdown in authority and societal structures in Finland, reflecting the chaos in Russia.

## Political Rivalries in Finland

With the absence of a stable government or established military and police, Finland saw the emergence of two competing political factions: the Social Democrats on the left and conservative forces on the right. These groups vied for leadership, working closely with their counterparts in Russia. This collaboration with Russian political forces further intensified divisions within Finland, as each faction sought to gain the upper hand amid the confusion and uncertainty.

## Formation of the Guardians

As the political environment deteriorated, both the left and the right began to form their own paramilitary groups for self-defense and order. The left formed the **Red Guards**, while the right created the **White Guards**. These groups were not officially sanctioned state forces but acted independently to impose their will on the situation. This privatization of security led to heightened tensions and escalated violence across the nation.

## The Civil War of 1918

The situation came to a head in January 1918 when violent clashes erupted between the Red and White factions. This conflict, known as the Finnish Civil War, resulted from the rising political and military tensions between the two sides. The White Guards, supported by Germany, ultimately emerged victorious in this conflict, leading to a decisive shift in the political landscape of Finland.

## Aftermath: The Transition to Independence

Following the civil war, Finland transitioned from being under Russian rule to being influenced by Germany. The conservative government attempted to establish a monarchy, proposing a German duke as king. However, with Germany's defeat in World War I, these plans were swiftly abandoned. Consequently, Finland declared its independence in December 1917 and evolved into a democratic republic, marking the end of a significant chapter in its national history.

## Conclusion

In summary, the period of 1917-1918 was critical in shaping modern Finland. The events following the collapse of the Russian Empire and the civil strife that ensued not only reflect the complex interplay of internal and external forces but also signify Finland's transition towards independence and democracy.

The legacy of this tumultuous time continues to influence Finnish politics and society today.