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***OPPONET's STATEMENT FOR THE  
DOCTORAL DISSERTATION BY Master of  
Sciences BARBORA SKÁLOVÁ:***

***”NA ČÍ STRANĚ STOJIŠ? Radikální levice v  
poválečném Finsku - fenomén marxismu-  
leninismu v zemi mimo východní blok”***

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***1. An overall look at importance and target  
setting of the dissertation***

I am very delighted having got such an interesting dissertation study for evaluation. It is an important theme, not yet studied very comprehensively and profoundly at the academic level in Finland. Thus our esteemed respondent has made a valuable service even to the Finnish students concerned on the contemporary history. It seems she is already running ahead her Finnish colleagues.

First, I would like to thank and congratulate the esteemed respondent of finding the thema of ”Taistoites” on the

background of the so-called "finlandization" and universal "baby-boom" and Finnish political history. I appreciate too, her findings of the "Taistoist"-movement as a unique phenomenon among the other radical European and American "New-Left"-movements outside the Soviet bloc.

This very theme has again appeared to be a topical one even in Finland once it had emerged to the surface after a few re-evaluations or "confessions" of some earlier "Taistoites", with which she has also carefully made herself familiar.

What about the target setting we may find the first point: origins and maintaining mechanisms keeping "Taistoism" alive, is a self-evident question. But the second: "Taistoism" and the New Left or the New Social Movement as well as the third question concerning: on how the past reflected on the present thinking of former "Taistoists" and how it is related to the mainstream of historiographic discourse are interesting ones and point us the independent thinking of the respondent that is again a merit to her.

## ***2. A brief evaluation of working***

The first arduousness is of course the language: how to pass the barriers for learning a remote Fenno-Ugrian language, while the original mother tongue of a student is an Indo-European, West-Slavic one. That the respondent has been

able to jump over this kind of tremendous threshold is already as such a honorable achievement for her. But she has been able to use versatile Finnish material and make interviews in Finnish language. This is also an undisputed merit for foreign researcher in Finland. However, as we can find from the list of primary and secondary sources, the preparative process with earlier studies on the theme has taken quite a long period

An interesting addition, not very frequent in traditional historical studies, is the explicit theoretical presentation of her research strategy before turning our attention into empirical part of the dissertation. Indeed, there are famous sociologists or historians or socialhistorians who had used to present their theoretical framework like Tocqueville Weber. Even Karl Marx without any doubt considered himself foremostly as a historian. But in anyway explicit presentation of theoretical framework and its logical deduction is also a merit to respondent Skálová's dissertation. She has explicitly chosen as her method a comparative historical that is necessary to point out the uniqueness of the "Taistoist" movement.

The general standard of this dissertation is high enough demanded from the research to the highest academic degree. The structure respects the standard as it should be: first a general introduction to the theme and arguments behind the choice of this very theme. Then presentation of the theoretical and methodological framework with argumentation, why the very path has been chosen to follow. Then the process advances to the setting on

hypotheses or fundamental questions coming out from the theoretical framework and the chosen methodological path. After that the research should answer in logical order to the questions he or she had set out. Finally he or she should turn to the conclusions.

The respondent has appropriately enough presented her strategic choices within various alternatives of historical comparisons based on the "everlasting tension between similarity and divergence". With good reason she has terminated her logical process to Charles Tilly's typology of historical comparisons choosing the alternative criterion of the "variation-finding" comparison and even more exactly, variation for only one of units (instances a.s.o.)

The respondent has also taken up the very sensitive subject-matter from the point of historical studies: individual and collective memories. But she seems to have avoided the most dangerous pitfalls of excessive subjectivity of interviewees about their past memories by reflecting and comparing them into the written material on those days.

### ***3. Some comments to the presentation of the empirical part of the dissertation***

The respondent had done a carefully work with the citations. She has also managed to translate them fluently. The list of sources is as it should be, carefully grouped and classified. She has made a good and valuable service even

to the Finnish history research with her profound engagement of a history and an odd language of a country with a small population, even smaller (roughly a half) than that living in the territory of Czech Republic.

As an old statistician who has had his earlier carrier in the Finnish public administration I would have desired more presentations of statistical tables like she has done in the pages 69 and 71 concerning on the electoral results for the representative organs of students (p. 69), and socila stratification of the original families of students in the universities of Helsinki and Tampere. For example the interesting figures describing the variety of attitudes towards the USSR among different Finnish political newspapers in 1954 on one hand, and in 1973 on the other. The statistical tables and histograms and curves, when concerned on numerical changes according to time or of another variable, used to illustrate and crystallize better a phenomenon concerned on than a mere verbal presentation.

There are further some remarks concerning on terms and their translations. For example extreme right party in 1930's IKL (page 21) was "*Isänmaallinen Kansanliike*" that means something like "Patriotic Popular Movement" or "Vlastenecké lidové (nebo "populární") hnutí.

It is true – I remember personally being a young university student in those days – that the Finns had taken the original English slogan "one man, one vote" and translated it too literally and narrow-mindedly into Finnish neglecting female students by expression "*Mies ja ääni*", (jeden muž,

jeden hlas). (pages 60 - 61) Thus our respondent, Mgr. Skálová had made a service for originally too narrow-minded Finns using the term "jeden člověk – jeden hlas" that corresponds to reality in those remote days. I personally knew many influential female students who side by side with their male colleagues were very active to defend this principle for reforms the administration of the universities and highschoools in Finland. Thus Mgr. Skálová happens to defend rightfully equality of genders.

#### ***4. Some compendious comments***

Generally speaking, I appreciate Mgr. Skálová's dissertation. It is easy to see, how much work and time she has offered to her work once a great part of that is based on her earlier studies on this very theme. It is worth having a translation into Finnish in future, if with some specifications, which I would like to present in the following chapter of my opinion to the work. They are mainly complementary questions because of some of my digressive views.

She might have better personal preconditions for as neutral and objective approach to her thema than her Finnish colleagues. With neutrality I mean treat the variety of parties or partners equally like they do in the ideal type of western court. With objectivity I mean cause-and-effect relation that could not be explained else, and might not be avoided as an appropriate interpretation of phenomena. Of course today communism both as an idea and as a Soviet-

type system seems to have profoundly spoiled its reputation and corrupted at least its afterimage both in the Czech and Finnish eyes. The era when the communists had a power monopoly in Czechoslovakia and the "Taistoists" had their highnoon in Finland is not yet remote. During the "normalization" period after the smash down of the Prague Spring the extreme leaders of Czechoslovakia resembled Finnish extreme "Taistoists" in their ardent devotion to the "Brezhnevian" USSR. Especially Alois Indra and Vasil Bil'ak resembled their Finnish comrades Markus Kainulainen and Urho Jokinen in their ideological fanaticism. But in anyway the relative historical vicinity of that era makes it difficult to find neutral and objective approach to it. The emotional factors used to emerge too easily into researcher's mind so to disturb the work.

Mgr. Skálová has succeeded in many important points to avoid temptations to turn off from the narrow paths of either neutrality or objectivity. To my mind there are enough factors working for her benefits. I suppose that she has not had personal experiences of the communist power monopoly in her country, because of her age. Thus she is able to look at things far enough in order to form herself a wholeness idea of totality. From the Finnish point she is an alien and therefore she is not and needs not to have engaged too much in our local Finnish disputes and variety of sometimes very fixed opinions to the events often severely quarreled about. Thus she has not an excessive need to emphasize Finnish national extraordinariness that native historians so easily are instinctively tempted to do more or less consciously, when they look at things exclusively from

the point of their own country as they used to have learned to do, because of their educational background and more or less open indoctrination.

Thus she had been able to form her original look at the Finnish phenomena in general, free from excess nativity. She brings to us, the Finns, a fresh pan-European view to our history that had too often been missing in the Finnish native historiography. The comparison of the Finnish "Taistoists" to the other contemporary radical youth organizations or the New Left movements in Scandinavia and elsewhere is a meritorious indication of that. Therefore her dissertation is a welcome and desired additional work even to the Finnish contemporary history writing.

## ***5. Complementary remarks and suggestions for further studies***

### ***5.1. The "Taistoites"***

The notion "Taistoite" is defined at the beginning of its presentation correctly. It included the cadres and members of the Finnish Communist Party, SKP, together with radical students and different kinds of radical cultural people who formed the minority both inside SKP and inside the common co-operative umbrella organisation, People's Democratic Union of Finland, SKDL. In SKDL the "Taistoite" minority was relatively even smaller,



because of the left-socialists within the Union had again begun to underline their particularity in mid 1960's. (page 22 and further) In this context I have to remark that Ele Alenius was never a communist. He was and still is (96 years old) a left-socialist who always emphasized his democratic principle as an opposite to the Soviet non-democracy. He was the Secretary General of the SKDL, first non-communist at this post, and elected then to the chairman of the SKDL. (pages 49 and 67)

But further chapters in the dissertation, this notion seems to have restricted concening mainly on radical students who had later entered to the party and on cultural people as well. Thus we might call the society Mgr Skálová had mainly studied the "young more or less educated taistoites and communist intellectuals".

But to my mind she has partially ignored the blue-collar people whether they have belonged to the moderate majority or to the strict Soviet-minded minority. The ordinary working SKP people at ground level belonging to majority was, however, quite a strong political factor at rank-and-file level in trade unions and at municipal level. Several battles between the moderate majority and the "Soviet-orthodox" minority used to be fought all the time so that in reality the worst foe to a moderate majorityman used to be the member of "Taistoite" party and on the contrary. As a matter of fact that our respondent says too, the SKP included two different parties hostile to each other. The SKP kepted to be only formally united only because of the Soviet financing. The real leaders of

the "Taistoite" party used to be mainly non-academic men like Taisto Sinisalo, Urho Jokinen and Markus Kainulainen. The student members served their "orthodox" leaders mainly as ideological and theoretical advisers. I myself can remember, how the moderates on the wider political field used to call the "Taistoites" with a pejorative nickname "änkyrä" (a stump) that means a stubborn man completely unable or unwilling to negotiate. The Taistoits in turn called their moderate enemies with the name "revarit" (revisionists) that used to be the worst swearword among the earlier communist generations as evil as the term bourgeois used to be.

Perhaps we might compare the people of party majority with its main basis on traditional workers to the Dubček-type reformers in the Prague Spring who enjoyed a strong support among the workers, if also among the intellectuals. While the Finnish "Taistoites" had their resemblance with the Czech and Slovak "normalizers" and people in the "*Lidové milice*" of 1968, and even among those few who secretly called the Soviets to defend their power positions (Kolder, Bil'ak, Indra), which they have certainly otherwise lost in honest elections, if it would have been possible to arrange such a kind move in Czechoslovakia in 1968 if the Warsaw Pact intervention to the country had not taken place.

I have nothing to remark Mgr. Skálová's analysis about the main origins and reasons for student radicalism. They have been without any doubt well and creditably brought out. But I would like to add that the consequences of the "baby-

boom” and new possibilities for worker and peasant parents to support higher education for their children caused a rapid and sudden increase in the amount of new university students. The consequence of that was the symbolic and often real descent too, in their social status compared to the earlier student generations. There appeared suddenly a new phenomenon, an academic unemployment, earlier quite unknown among the older student generations. This aroused naturally frustration that further without any doubt contributed to increasing radicalism, when the radicalized students began to consider themselves to the workers. Thereafter it was only a short trip for them to embrace Marxist ideas.

President Urho Kekkonen clearly did not like the indigenous ”Taistoites”, because they seemed from his viewpoint to sabotage his plan to integrate the Finnish Communists and left-socialists thus to torpedo any plans to bring socialism into Finland or sovietize it. His success was only partial. What about the moderate majority of the communists and the SKDL socialists he seemed to have achieved his aim. But among the ”Taistoites” he did not manage, if we don't think the foreign policy, when the ”Taistoites” supported his Soviet policy.

But then the Soviets happened to appoint in 1970 for new Soviet Ambassador to Helsinki Aleksej Beljakov, who had a high position in the Soviet party hierarchy. His mission was to bring step by step socialist changes into the Finnish society. He utilized first the wide strike of the union of metal workers in 1971. He also gave orders to

the "Taistoite" leaders how to act. But he was driven with his arrogant behaviour serious break with president Kekkonen.

As drunk Beljakov only worsened his situation in the break presidential supper. This led Kekkonen's demand to the Kremlin for returning Beljakov home. The Soviet leaders agreed and Beljakov had to leave back for Moscow at once. Therafter soon the new Soviet ambassador arrived in Helsinki. This kind of move would hardly have been possible anywhere in the Soviet bloc countries.

The "Taistoites" or minority of the SKP made one exception in their stubborn opposition policy. The old jurist Erkki Tuominen, who had served in the postwar years as a chief in the security police, the "Red VALPO", visited in 1971 government as a Minister of Justice. Kekkonen was very surprised when Tuominen proved to be extremely cautious without doing any radical moves.

I do not agree completely with Mgr. Skálová, when she tells us about the total lack of radical leftist intellectuals in Finland before the Second World War. (pp. 21 – 22) She says that the members of ASS and gultural organization "Kiila" had no living interests for practical policy. When Hertta Kuusinen returned from post civil war exile from Soviet Union she influenced one time in the underground communist movement before she was jailed. Hertta Kuusinen was a daughter to O.W. Kuusinen, the famous Comintern leader, the "Finnish Dimitrov", and she had also university degree from Helsinki. Further, for example, Mauri Ryömä, physician and psychiatrist, from

the ASS was a popular member of the social democrat parliament group belonging to party's radical Marxist wing, before even he was jailed. An interesting example is the radical leftist poet from the "Kiila", Arvo Turtiainen, who fought during the Winter War as a lieutenant against the Soviet Red Army. But during the Continuation War he was sitting in jail, because he could not approve the war against the Soviets side by side with Nazi-Germany. Later Turtiainen belonged to the moderate majority of the Communist Party.

After all these remarks presented above, I suggest that Mgr. Skálová would widen her further studies in future into the ordinary "blue-collar Taistoites", because they used to be the very back-bone to this radical. She has all the needed advantageous qualities to do that. I also keep "stubbornly" my claim that the political party in practice, the "Taistoits" included all the groupings: blue-collar workers, rank-and-file cadres the students and the cultural people. So did the respondent Mgr. Skálová too.

By the way, the chairman of the Communist party Aarne Saarinen, who belonged to the moderate majority, served in the Finnish Army during the both wars against the USSR as a sergeant.

## ***5.2. President Kekkonen and finlandization***

President J.K. Paasikivi's policy towards the USSR was really quite different from that of president Urho Kekkonen

as Mgr. Skálová has credibly pointed out in her dissertation. One example of Paasikivi's ability to maintain the independency of Finland in its internal affairs in order to avoid "the path of Czechoslovakia" that he ousted the communist and SKDL ministers from government, because the SKP and the SKDL had suffered serious defeats in the second postwar parliamentary elections in summer 1948. Thereafter Paasikivi appointed a pure Social Democrat minority government under the premiership of K.-A. Fagerholm. Fagerholm and his social democrats had been the closest allies of the conservative president in his successful efforts to prevent the communist political advancement. Of course the Soviets did not like at all this kind of move and began a furious propaganda campaign against Paasikivi before the next presidential elections in 1950. But Paasikivi could stand firmly and defended the government all through its term. Thus, Paasikivi achieved a great victory over his rivals in the elections of 1950. For these reasons the Americans granted beneficial loans to Finland despite of Finland's earlier refusal from the Marshall Aid.

Indeed, the policy of J.K. Paasikivi did not resemble at all the finlandization. The border lines he drew when defending Finland's independency were clear.

President Kekkonen instead let in 1958 the Soviets influence and contribute to the resignation of rightwing-social democrat coalition government, which the Soviets accused to be secretly hostile to them. Fagerholm was again Prime Minister in this government so much disgusted by the

Soviets. Indeed, Kekkonen benefited from that himself, because this political turn strengthened his own position as President: he could assure that he was an only serious alternative for the Finns and for the Soviets as well to get in terms with the Kremlin.

But the finlandization as such Kekkonen led it was not only humble acquiescent adaptation policy towards the huge Eastern neighbour a little bit otherwise than the British historian George Maude gives us understand. (page 34) Indeed, the main target of so called Paasikivi-Kekkonen line is to avoid anything that might provoke the huge Eastern neighbour as Kekkonen himself expressed it. (page 37) His strategy in relation to the big eastern neighbour based on idea that better the confidential relations to the East, the more there will be space for co-operation and trade with the desired western market economies.

Kekkonen continued keeping the communists out of the government although they had achieved a remarkable victory in the parliamentary elections in 1958, and the Kremlin would have supported the communist entrance to the government. But it happened not earlier than in 1966, as the SKP had changed the old "stalinists" in its leadership to the new "revisionists". This opened the schism inside the party that led to the birth of "Taistoite" movement. But Kekkonen's skillful strategy of integration the communists into the Finnish democracy seemed to work.

During Czechoslovak crisis in 1968 Kekkonen was shocked and deeply disappointed. He considered to resign, because

as it seemed to him all his work for reduction the tension between the two hostile blocs had gone down the drain. The Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin had obviously still in June 1968 promised to Kekkonen that the Soviets would not intervene in Czechoslovakia. Kekkonen informed the Kremlin that the Soviet Ambassador in Helsinki had given totally false information. The the Kremlin decided to send Prime Minister Kosygin to Helsinki. Kekkonen had better personal relations to Kosygin than to Brezhnev. At the beginning of October 1968 Kosygin made a "fishing" trip to Hanko in South Finland where he met Kekkonen. Thus Kosygin explained the Soviet decision on the occupation of Czechoslovakia as such as it really was. The question was about a military great strategy. From the Kremlin point the western defence-line of the Warsaw Pact military in Central Europe seemed to have been threatened, if Czechoslovakia had cancelled its treaty with the other Warsaw Pact countries. This must have been a real fact, when we remember the hostile Sino-Soviet relations in those days. Soviet soldiers were needed in East too. The Kremlin must have seen the geostrategic situation as such that Warsaw Pact countries might have been squeezed between two giants from West and East, if a big whole had been broken on the west front for the Warsaw Pact defence. This was motivation that Kekkonen, the realist politician, understood well.

Kosygin's aim was to relax tensions in fears in Finland not to occupy the small neighbour. For further assurances Kosygin promised to haste the Soviet oil leverages to Finland; the excess ought to be taken from the Polish quota



of the Soviet leverages.

This episode was quite far from typical acquiescent adaptation of the smaller partner that George Maude supposed according to his concept of finalandization.

It should be remembered that the shrewd president Kekkonen, every inch a realist politician, carried in his trade policy Finland clearly further westwards. In 1960 Finland joined as a particular associate member to the European Free Trade Association, EFTA, in which the Britain was a dominant partner. Of course the Kremlin expressed its reservations to that. In 1969 Finland joined to the OECD despite of the Soviet resistance. In 1972 Kekkonen threatened the Kremlin with his resignation, if the Soviets did not agree Finland's free trade treaty with the EEC. Then Brezhnev, Kosygin etc. retreated from their original tough conditions, and Finland got the desired free trade agreement with the EEC. Indeed. Finland had to conclude reciprocal free trade agreement with the smaller European socialist countries like Czechoslovakia (Kevsos). But the "Kevsos" agreement turned out in the long run to be beneficial for Finland.

Kekkonen and his ministers succeeded also in rejecting the frequent and stubborn demands from USSR and GDR to the one-sided recognition of East Germany at the costs of West Germany. Finland had namely kept since 1949 only commercial relations at the level of consulate. This was an exceptional case in international politics at that time as the respondent had correctly remarked. (page 46) If Kekkonen

has acquiesced to the Eastern demands, Finland would have lost creditability in the West that Finland had achieved after many troubles. But when Chancellor Brandt's new opening policy led to the mutual recognition of both German states, then Finland among many other countries recognized the both states. As Kekkonen argued to the Kremlin, the neutrality towards both the East and West was a basic precondition to approval Helsinki to host the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). For the Kremlin the realization of the conference was a primary target. Thus, the recognition of GDR was left on the secondary seat.

But the original Soviet initiative would have excluded the USA and Canada out of this conference. It had been a long-term Kremlin policy to try to oust the Americans from Europe. But it was the very Kekkonen, who demanded that participation of those both American states to the CSCE. Kekkonen enjoyed of much stronger good will in Washington than for example Olof Palme, Sweden's Prime Minister at that time. Kekkonen had carefully avoided all the expressions of solidarity to Vietnam, just opposite to that of Olof Palme. The Americans appreciated that much. Thus Kekkonen succeeded in Washington in his persuasions to Nixon and Kissinger for the participation of these American states. Thus, the Final Act of the CSCE, August 1975 in Helsinki proved to be a kind of coronation act for the whole political carrier of president Kekkonen's.

I have written all these points not so much to criticize the respondent Mgr. Skálová, but to oppose the excessive one-

sided points expressed by George Maude. In Finland we used to say that it is nice to shout advices people in danger from ashore, when they have met the emergency sailing on ship. It is easy to criticize Finnish foreign policy from Britain or the USA without any experiences of neighbourhood of the superior giant. What the British did in Munich, September 1938? They forced friendly Czechoslovakia for cession of the Sudeten lands for their rival and at that time still potential enemy Nazi-Germany. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain assured that the British should not have worried too much about the remote Czechoslovakia, about "country of which we (the British) know nothing. The similar echo might have sounded in Maude's stories of finlandization, when Maude said that the real danger is threatening from the one country whose relations to the both power blocs are necessarily asymmetric. Thus the neutrality of this country is to be an illusion. (page 34)

Finland had and still has also a good neighbour in west, namely Sweden, richer and stronger than Finland. Sweden's real public neutrality during the cold war proved to be questionable, because of the secret active strategic co-operation with the Americans. This fact restrained very probably the Soviet ambitions to suppress Finland. The Soviets knew well the covert USA-Sweden game and tried to avoid any moves that had brought the Americans into Sweden. If Maud questioned the neutrality of Finland, why he did not do the same with Sweden?

What I wanted to point out, is that Kekkonen's foreign

policy and the finlandization was a far more complicated case than when it used to be seen through the western spectacles only.

## **6. Conclusions and recommendations**

**I am glad to suggest an acceptance of the meritorius and creditable thesis or dissertation of the respondent Mgr. Barbora Skálová ”with flying colours”.**

I have presented rather complementary remarks than hardly any reservations to her work. There seems also to be an acute need to have a Finnish translation of this dissertation for the Finnish audience.

I would like to suggest a high mark **magna cum laude approbatur** or **eximia cum laude approbatur** on her work.

Thank you!

Best regards\*

Helsinki, September 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**Heikki Larmola,**  
the opponent