



# Finland in the Twentieth Century: A History and an Interpretation

*D.G. Kirby*

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Finland's search for a national identity is the underlying theme of this book. A small nation, geographically isolated and linguistically distinct from its neighbors, Finland has long maintained close ties with Sweden and also has had to come to terms with a powerful eastern neighbor, the Soviet Union. D.G. Kirby opens his history with a description of Finland at the turn of the century, when it was a Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire, and traces its emergence as an independent state with the collapse of the Empire in 1917. He examines the new republic's struggle for survival—and identity—after the civil war of 1918, which left a legacy of political instability through the interwar years.

Finland's complex political history is closely tied to its external relations. Kirby describes the evolution of Finnish foreign policy from the period when Finland and the Soviet Union were distrustful and then warring neighbors down to the present policy of friendship and cooperation which grew out of the treaty of 1948. The book closes with an account of Finland's international and domestic status in the Kekkonen era.

Throughout, Kirby provides a substantial socio-economic background to round out his political and diplomatic themes. He also brings to the English-language readers the results of modern Finnish historical research. Since historians have played a key role in Finland as interpreters of the nation's recent past, his analysis of their debates helps clarify the ways in which Finland has developed as an independent state in the twentieth century.

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