

## The Finnish Civil War 1918

# History of Warfare

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# The Finnish Civil War 1918

History, Memory, Legacy

*Edited by*

Tuomas Tepora  
Aapo Roselius



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Cover illustration: *Foreground*: Red guardsmen from Lammi (Häme region). Kalle Sahlberg on the left in the picture was executed on 30 April 1918 and Anselmi Haapamäki on the right was executed nine days later by the local Civil Guard. Photo: Finnish Labor Archives; *Background*: The victorious White Army in Helsinki on 16 May 1918. Photo: Military Museum of Finland.

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## Acknowledgments

During the last two decades, the field of research on the Finnish Civil War has broadened remarkably. Disciplines such as memory studies, histories of emotions, cultural history of war, gender history, psycho history, and oral history have added to the rich field of political and social history of the war. This volume brings together new approaches and established scholarship by ten historians. At the centennial of the beginning of World War I, the volume highlights one of the less-known episodes of the Great War and the Russian Revolution. It also traces the legacy of the conflict in Finnish society to the present.

The editors wish to thank the Finnish Association of Non-fiction Writers and the research project “Emotions and the Cultural History of War in Finland, 1939–1951,” funded by the Academy of Finland (project number 139902) for supporting the work. We are thankful for all the colleagues who have contributed to this volume, our copy-editor Dr Juleen Eichinger who made our text smoother and Marcella Mulder at Brill who supported us throughout the project.

In Helsinki, 16 May 2014, on the 96th anniversary of victory and defeat

*Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius*

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Juha Siltala is Professor of Finnish history at the University of Helsinki. He is known as a representative of psychohistory. For him, psychohistory is not limited to any specific psychological tradition or methodological individualism but means application of behavioral theories in the understanding of history and reaching for generalizations. His dissertation on the Finnish right-wing movement in 1930 interpreted it as an attempt to restore symbolic unity after the Civil War. Subsequent publications on religious awakenings during the first half of the 19th century and the nationalist movement in Finland dealt with autonomy – dependency challenges entailed in modern individuation. Siltala's most disputed study was the short history of the deterioration of working life during the neoliberal globalization. His study on shame and competence in the autobiographies of modern men belongs to

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# Introduction: The Finnish Civil War, Revolution and Scholarship

*Tuomas Tepora and Aapo Roselius*

One early afternoon in the beginning of March 1918, four men were slowly riding through a quiet snowy landscape in Northern Häme, in the middle of Finland. The man in front, carrying an improvised white flag, was followed by a man holding the Union Jack. Their advance in the wintry quietness was intercepted by sharp gunshots. The men flew off their horses and took cover, yelling and waving their flags. After a while the shooting ended, and they could see men with white armbands and rifles approaching.

The four men belonged to the vanguard of a convoy of the personnel of the British embassy in Petrograd, formerly known as St Petersburg. They had left the city in the aftermath of the Bolshevik coup, and the way out of the Russian capital in the haze of the Great War and the Revolution went through Finland and Scandinavia.<sup>1</sup> On their journey through Finland they had witnessed a country drawn into a bloody civil war. The former Imperial Grand Duchy, an autonomous unit that detached itself from Russia at the end of 1917, had been split between a revolutionary Red Finland in the relatively more industrialized South and an anti-revolutionary White Finland in the relatively more rural North. After spending several days traveling through Red Finland, the British convoy had finally reached the boundary of the socialist revolution just north of the town of Tampere, the most important industrial center in the country and a revolutionary stronghold. Eventually the crossing of the frontier succeeded, and the convoy could continue its journey, leaving the Finnish conflict and the revolution behind them.

The Finnish Civil War began on 27 January 1918. The confrontation between the socialists and the middle classes had begun to build up already after the collapse of social structures due to the February Revolution in 1917 and eventually led to violent confrontations late in 1917 and early January 1918. The positions of the Left and the Right had changed during the tumultuous year of 1917, and both of the parties had legitimate claims for power. The war began as a socialist revolution in Helsinki and with the simultaneous action taken by the Whites in Ostrobothnia on the western coast. Shortly after the above-

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1 Juho Kotakallio, "Brittilähetystön rintamalinjojen ylitys vuonna 1918," *Tammerkoski* no. 4 (2008): 10–12.

mentioned incident at the frontline in March, the until-then rather dormant warfare expanded into open and bloody battles between the revolutionary Red Guards and their antagonists: the White Army and its backbone, the volunteers of the White Civil Guards. The territory around the major industrial town of Tampere in northern Häme turned into the biggest battlefield in the history of the Nordic countries. Tens of thousands of soldiers of the White Army attacked the positions of the Red Guards and ended the stalemate that had lasted from the beginning of the war. The Red Guards were forced to withdraw into the inner city and finally, block after block, street after street, and building after building, the city fell into the hands of the Whites. The photographic scenes, where hundreds of corpses were lying on the streets and thousands of disillusioned Red guardsmen were drawn out from their hideouts and herded to the town square, became also the scenes of a failed revolution. Less than one month after the battle of Tampere, the last revolutionary troops surrendered in southeastern Finland. On 16 May 1918, the White Army could celebrate the victory by parading on the streets of Helsinki, which had been conquered by the German military expedition already in the middle of April.

The war may have been short, but the casualties tell us about a conflict that slipped not only into a human catastrophe but also into uncontrolled slaughter. The estimated death toll for the war is more than 38,000 persons, including all nationalities, a shockingly high figure in a country with a population of just over three million people and in a war that included fewer than 200,000 men in arms. Approximately one-third of the war dead died in battle, one-third was lawlessly executed in improvised courts-martial or murdered, and one-third died in the internment camps for POWs and other Red supporters in the summer and fall of 1918 due to diseases, famine, and violence. 85 per cent of all the victims belonged to the Red Guards or were otherwise associated with the revolution. Among the victims were also as many as 2000 Russian soldiers and civilians, of whom at least one-half were executed by the Whites, mostly in circumstances that can only be described as ethnic cleansing. Although the Finnish Civil War took place on the margins of a Europe entangled in a massive world war, the conflict in Finland included many of the ingredients that would make the first half of the 20th century one of the darkest periods in modern history. The catastrophe in the POW camps, with more than 12,000 victims, became a grim prelude to the global era of which the image of the internment or concentration camp is paramount.<sup>2</sup>

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2 A detailed discussion on the casualties is Lars Westerlund, ed., *Sotaoloissa vuosina 1914–1922 surmansa saaneet: Tilastoraportti*, Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja, 10/2004 (Helsinki: VNK, 2004).

The three-and-a-half-month Civil War was part of a broader process that reshaped the political, ethnic, and social landscapes of Eastern Europe during World War I and its aftermath. World War I, the first truly total war, had forced an enormous mobilization of both material and human resources all over Europe. Never before had people been affected by the war on such a grandiose scale; and the cruel reality of war, the hardships of everyday life, and the feelings of grief and fear produced not only massive social distress but also fertile soil for critical and radical popular movements. In Eastern Europe, the old political structure – sustained by the multinational empires of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Germany – faced an end. There were no victors on the battlefields in the Eastern Front when the armistice was signed. This enabled the rise of national movements and the actual creation of a new Eastern Europe, based on the principality of the nation-state. New popular movements with strong social and national programs emerged everywhere in the old borderlands forming new representative bodies, declaring national sovereignty, defining new political and ethnic borders, and creating new European narratives still (or again) current today – almost a century later. The nationalistic approach to the reshaping of Eastern Europe and the Baltic was paralleled, mixed, and sometimes overrun by demands of social reforms, represented in its most radical form by the socialist revolution. In some regions, for example in Estonia, the national movement could not be understood without a simultaneous social revolution. Hence, the Estonian social democrats formed a national force with the non-socialists to fight the Bolsheviks in late 1918. In Finland, however, the middle-class nationalistic and the socialist approaches were pitted against each other, with disastrous consequences.<sup>3</sup>

The Russification policies in the vast empire before World War I had been connected to the Great Power politics. In a conversation between the Russian Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin and the British historian Bernard Pares at the turn of the second decade of the 20th century, Stolypin explained to the Briton rather tellingly the rationale behind the imperial policy toward Finland. The Finnish border was only 20 miles from St Petersburg. Would England tolerate an autonomous state within the Empire as near London as Gravesend?<sup>4</sup> During World War I, the geopolitical position of Finland gained more importance in the eyes of the Russian authorities. The world war and the Russian revolution had suddenly pushed this rather remote and peaceful area into one of

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3 See the special issue “The Beginning of the First World War in the Baltic Area and in Scandinavia,” in *Revue d’Histoire Nordique* 15 (2012), 2e semestre, 11–174.

4 Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Cape, 1996), p. 246.

the epicenters of Europe. It was only a one-hour train journey from the Finnish border to the cradle of the world revolution in St Petersburg; hence, the images of Finland as either as a barrier to the “Red Scare” or as the first step for the spread of worldwide revolution became popular. Furthermore, any fleet operating on the Baltic Sea, if undefended, could easily reach the coastline in the South. In the years 1917–18, the historically significant strategic position of Finland as either a bulwark of the Russian capital or as a gateway for an offensive against Russia became very current.

The collapse of Tsarist Russia in 1917 resulted in a political vacuum in the former imperial borderlands and invited the advancement of both national movements and the socialist revolution. The revolution was usually opposed by national coalitions, but socialist coups, backed by the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia, were almost simultaneously made in Ukraine, Estonia, and Finland. During the spring of 1918 they were all swept away by the advancing German troops, who soon marched on the streets of Kiev, Tallinn, and Helsinki. From a German point of view, the national anti-revolutionary movements, such as the White Army in Finland, were to be integrated into the German war effort. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early March 1918, which ended the war between Bolshevik Russia and Germany, was more of a one-sided declaration by the latter, a final confirmation of an accomplished fact of German supremacy in the East. Germany, which had pushed Russia geopolitically back to the 17th century, could in the spring of 1918 include on its list of domains Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, and finally also Finland. In Finland the shift from the decreasing Russian sphere to the German sphere was completed when the revolution of the Finnish socialists, who had to wage the war without the official support of the Bolshevik Russia, was crashed two months after the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The violent transformation of Eastern Europe into a buffer zone of nation states continued through the World War I and beyond, with the process finally stabilizing in the early 1920s. In Finland the period of international turmoil fed an irredentist policy, with paramilitary activity aiming at the creation of a Greater Finland. The small-scale guerrilla wars waged mostly by Finnish volunteers in Russian East Karelia were partly a continuation of the Civil War and a demonstration of the depth of the political and societal change of 1910s.

In spite of the multinational scene with German soldiers and Swedish volunteers along with Russian and German-trained Finnish officers and soldiers on the White side and Russian Bolsheviks on the Red side, and despite of the international framework of Great Power politics, the Finnish Civil War possessed an inherently national character, reflecting internal fractures. The war was, however, primarily fought between fellow civilian Finns, as urban and



rural workers of the Red side fought farmers, civil servants, and conscripted young men of the White side for control of the state. Two points are crucial in understanding the conflict. First, the power vacuum created by the collapse of the Russian regime enabled the internal struggle for power, where national sovereignty and social reforms became both closely intertwined and polarized with each other. Thus, second, the war was tightly bound to class conflict in a rapidly modernizing society for which the unexpected social upheaval in the Russian Empire gave room to roam.

The history of the Finnish Civil War is part of the history of the construction of modern Europe, a process where massive social distress and political changes were reflected in the occurrence of national fundamentalism, socialist revolutions, violence, and terror; where liberation and suppression went hand in hand. In Finland, the very same process that enabled the sovereignty of the nation also resulted in a national catastrophe that split the Finnish nation into the victors and the defeated, patriots and traitors, victims and perpetrators, and affected the political and mental landscape for generations. World War I and the October Revolution sparked the Finnish Revolution and the ensuing Civil War, but its social roots nevertheless lay deeper.

The Civil War divided the nation – and it divided the Left into the communists and the social democrats. The steady support of communism in Finland until the collapse of the Soviet Union had its roots in the bitter experiences of the Civil War: initially, the Finnish social democrats who seized power had been ideologically rather moderate in comparison to the Bolsheviks, for instance. The splits between the victorious Whites and the defeated Reds characterized the politically hot-tempered interwar period. The victors named the conflict as the “War of Liberation” (*vapaussota*) that denoted a freedom fight from Russia and the Bolsheviks and effectively denied the civil-war nature of the conflict. The White interpretation remained hegemonic up until the 1960s, although after World War II the year 1918 lost its position as the primary point of social intrigue. Due to social changes in the 1960s, the name “Civil War” (*kansalaissota*) used by the social democrats in the interwar period became the name of choice among the public. Since the 1990s, academics and much of the public alike have replaced *kansalaissota* with the term *sisällissota*, which translates literally into “domestic war” but is used in a similar vein as the English-language “civil war.” The new name has been seen as neutral compared with both the White *vapaussota* and the Red *kansalaissota* terminology.

Today the Civil War forms a major part of the public narratives and collective remembrances of the nation. The violent event that split the society and caused a national trauma for generations to come has largely become almost 100 years later a part of a rather comfortable national narrative. This narrative

tells a story of a how a nation, threatened with total destruction and division, survived and began the slow healing process towards national unity. The experience of an external enemy during World War II and the subsequent building of the Nordic welfare state perhaps explain the reasons why the Civil War lost its significance as the primary source of collective identities; the unifying effects overwrote the White and Red allegiances. However, the internal violence has left its marks in the society and collective remembrances, and the divisions may even today be relived in the right circumstances. They may no longer be palpable (perhaps since at least since the 1970s, often even earlier), but there nevertheless exists a metanarrative that never fails to remind the Finns of the frictions in the past. The tragedy in the beginning of the sovereignty is inescapable in collective remembrance, although it is surpassed by the celebration of national unity during World War II. Moreover, the questions of justice and guilt have become topical since the collapse of the Soviet Union, along with the war, apartheid, and genocide tribunals in the Balkans, South Africa, and Cambodia. In the Finnish case, there are strong grounds for claims that the White Terror perpetrators, the victors, escaped justice. At the same time, however, the democratic development since the Civil War has rather effectively blurred the boundary between the victors and the defeated. Occasionally voiced claims for state apologies for the lawless White Terror may hit the reality that the political legacy of the Reds has effectively run the country periodically since the late 1930s.

The volume at hand is the first compilation of recent research in English on the causes, consequences, and memories of the Finnish Civil War. The wars rarely end when the firing stops. Accordingly, this book is not only dedicated to exploring the events and processes around the years 1917–18 but also traces the legacy of the bitter conflict through the interwar period, World War II, and the Cold War era until today. The aim of this book is to provide the readers with a unique insight into the history of the war-torn society, remembrance and the politics of memory of the conflict, the gradual healing process, the various interpretations, civil-war inspired fiction, and even the latest revisits of the almost 100-year-old legacy.

### **The Scholarship of the Finnish Civil War**

The Civil War had a huge impact on historiography. The war dramatically shaped the way events after 1918 have been interpreted and also the ways the problematic decades anterior to the war were seen. The War of Liberation narrative became an established myth in the wake of the conflict and historians

were in a key position to construct the interpretation of the armed war of independence. The newly independent state required national myths, and the historians fitted the past to conform to the idealistic middle-class version of national awakening. For instance, the close links between some aristocratic activists and Russian Social Revolutionaries in the first decade of the 1900s were for a long time forgotten as unsuitable to the White narrative of the independence struggle. Moreover, the patriotic motives of the Reds did not fit in the White narrative, so “Red” came to denote something alien and fundamentally unpatriotic within Finland.<sup>5</sup>

History as a discipline was not the only academic field affected by the violent clash in 1918. The social questions had been important within the nationally minded academe in the decades preceding the Civil War. However, in the interwar period, the emerging social sciences, for instance, on many occasions downplayed the class antagonism and effectively, with few exceptions, avoided confronting the social basis of the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Another illuminating example would be the legal sciences, where the social approach had been practiced as well; but in the interwar period jurists renounced these questions. Moreover, a major share of the lawyers and jurists had been employed in the White courts-martial, whose legal basis had been shaky.<sup>7</sup>

During the interwar years, the historiography of the Civil War was strictly divided between the victors and the defeated, and the works were more of commemorative character than comprehensive analysis. In fact, in the first decades after the war it is rather impossible to distinguish historiography from the remembrance culture and the identity-construction processes of the newly independent Finland. The period witnessed a rich memoir literature on the war, mostly written by White veterans and officers accompanied by some major state-sponsored history projects. Of major importance were two multivolume works on the War of Liberation, both published in the 1920s.

Especially the six-volume history *The Finnish War of Liberation in 1918* (“Suomen vapaussota vuonna 1918”), published between 1920 and 1926, reflected the importance of incorporating the interpretation of the victors into the national narrative in White Finland. The work was a product of the

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5 Risto Alapuro, “Coping with the Civil War of 1918 in Twenty-first Century Finland,” in Kenneth Christie & Robert Cribb, eds, *Historical Injustice and Democratic Transition in Eastern Asia and Northern Europe: Ghosts at the Table of Democracy* (London & New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), p. 171.

6 Risto Alapuro, “Kansalaissota ja yhteiskuntatieteet,” in Heikki Ylikangas, ed. *Vaikea totuus: Vuosi 1918 ja kansallinen tiede* (Helsinki: SKS, 1993).

7 Jukka Kekkonen, “Kansalaissota ja oikeustiede,” in *Vaikea totuus*.

state-sponsored Committee of the History of the War of Liberation, founded by General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim – the Commander of the White Army – in the summer of 1918 in order to produce the official history of the war. The Committee, consisting of several high-profile officers of the White Army, based their work on the large body of material compiled in 1918–19 by the State Archives. Consequently, the files were archived under the title “Archives of the War of Liberation.” Obviously concentrating on the effort of the Whites, the work presented the events of the war accurately and in detail but carefully bypassed the problematic questions of the White Terror and the humanitarian catastrophe of the POW camps. The work reflected the attitudes of the interwar era when the problematic social and political issues were overrun by detailed information that was believed ultimately to lead to the objective historical truth.

Simultaneously with the work of the official Committee, an eight-volume history of the war with almost an identical name, *The Liberation War of Finland* (“Suomen vapaussota”), was published by another group of White officers. This work focused more on the memoirs of leading commanders of the Whites.<sup>8</sup> The grandiose works on the War of Liberation were nothing but literal monuments to the victory of the Whites. Even though there were disputes over the White historiography during the interwar years, they never reached the level of confronting the official liberation history ascribed to the war.<sup>9</sup>

As an extreme counterweight to the White historiography, the Red literature on the war was mainly published in the Soviet Union or in the United States by Finnish Red emigrants. Former Red guardsmen established a Research Board of the Finnish Revolutionary Movement in the Soviet Union in 1927. The Board published several works during the following years with an explicitly Marxist-Leninist approach to the revolution.<sup>10</sup>

Social changes and World War II opened up the way for more developed research and new interpretations. History on the years 1917–18 remained a rather conservative discipline until the 1960s, when the “White truth” started to

8 Hannes Ignatius, Gösta Theslöf, E.G. Palmén, Kustavi Grotenfelt, Sigurd Nordenstreng, & Kaarle Soikkeli, *Suomen vapaussota vuonna 1918*, vols I–VI (Helsinki: Otava, 1920–26); Kai Donner, Th. Svedlin, & Heikki Nurmio, eds, *Suomen vapaussota*, vols I–VIII (Jyväskylä: K.J. Gummerus, 1921–27).

9 Another famous work in this genre is J.O. Hannula, *Suomen vapaussodan historia* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1933), which appeared in English translation as *Finland's War of Independence* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

10 For instance: A. Halonen, ed., *Suomen luokkasota: Historiaa ja muistelmia* (Superior, Wis.: Amerikan suomalaisten sosialististen kustannusliikkeiden liitto, 1928); J. Lehtosaari, ed., *Punakaarti rintamalla: Luokkasodan muistoja* (Leningrad: Kirja, 1933).

crumble. The historians did not initiate the change but, rather, responded to the demand from the public and the challenge set by a major work of fiction – *Under the North Star* by Väinö Linna (vols 1–3, 1959–62, “Täällä Pohjantähden alla”) – which brought the Red point of view forcefully into the public discussion. The social basis of the war received its first academic works as Viljo Rasila analyzed the social background of the war and the adversaries and concluded that the conflict should very much be seen as class struggle between urban workers and rural landless labor force on the one hand and the independent farmers and the bourgeoisie on the other. The crofters, or tenant farmers, unlike in contemporaneous views attributable to Linna which saw them as the Red avant-garde, in reality formed a middle group that was active on both sides if they did not decide to stay neutral.<sup>11</sup> Regarding social issues, the 1960s generation of historians, who were eager to distance themselves from the previous prevailing nationalistic narrative, discussed the international context of the Finnish Civil War with Tuomo Polvinen’s two-volume work, *The Russian Revolution and Finland* (in translation) as the main contributor.<sup>12</sup>

However, it was the terror that had aroused the bitterest social emotions and led to innumerable graphic rumors and legends. The horror stories still in circulation in the 1960s by both ex-sides were fuelled by the lack of research into the course of events after battles, the number of deaths, and causes of violence. Jaakko Paavolainen published two volumes in the late 1960s on terror – illuminatingly, first on the much smaller-scale “Red Terror” to be on the safe side, and then on the “White Terror.” His studies, 50 years after the war, not only clarified the chain of events and the nature of internal warfare but also debunked any persisting belief in the particular bloodthirstiness of the Reds. Paavolainen’s studies showed that the White Terror decidedly exceeded the Red atrocities. He concluded his studies on the Civil War by writing the first history of the POW camps.<sup>13</sup>

The findings by Paavolainen, Rasila, and Polvinen – along with late 1950s social-democratically inclined studies in political history by Juhani Paasivirta<sup>14</sup>

11 Viljo Rasila, *Kansalaissodan sosiaalinen tausta* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1968).

12 Tuomo Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi 1917–1920*, vol. I: *Helmikuu 1917–toukokuu 1918* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1967); Tuomo Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi 1917–1920*, vol. II: *Toukokuu 1918–joulukuu 1920* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1971); see also Juhani Paasivirta, *Suomi vuonna 1918* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1957).

13 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. I: *“Punainen terrori”* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1966); Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. II: *“Valkoinen terrori”* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1967); Jaakko Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa 1918* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1971).

14 Paasivirta, *Suomi vuonna 1918*.

– started the rewriting of the “War of Liberation” history into the “Civil War” history. The academic revision of the Civil War history coincided with the Leftist surge in the politics but was not straightforwardly connected to it. It is perhaps safe to state that the younger generation of historians such as Paavolainen (b. 1927) and Rasila (b. 1926), whose formative experience had been World War II in their youth, were mentally more free to research sensitive topics and adapt to changing social atmosphere than their arguably conservative masters, of whom the vast majority adhered to the White heritage. The late 1960s saw more balanced research on the Civil War violence than previous decades. It nevertheless failed to contextualize the violence properly. The given terror motives were still dominated by randomness and individual exceptions.

In line with the publication of the first balanced historical treatises of Finnish participation in World War II,<sup>15</sup> a non-Finnish historian was the first to write a basic and all-encompassing study on the Finnish revolution and the ensuing Civil War, when Anthony F. Upton published his well-researched study in 1980. It traced meticulously the political development of the war and placed the intrinsically Finnish experiences and actions within the broader political context in northeastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> The book was translated into Finnish in two volumes in 1980 and 1981 respectively and received a very warm review in *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, the main historical journal in the country. This was partly, as stated, because the study was a traditionally composed narrative that concentrated on the key players of the conflict, although the concentration on the socialists was slightly criticized. The research was praised for its realistic depiction of the revolutionary characters and the political development, but some academics saw the lack of research on the rank-and-file motives in the revolutionary development as a shortcoming.<sup>17</sup>

In hindsight it is possible to see Upton’s study as a prelude to the *sisällissota* (“domestic war”) shift that happened in the 1990s with an outspokenly neutral take on the issues that also attracted novel attention from the public. Another important precursor was the study *State and Revolution in Finland* by sociologist Risto Alapuro, published in 1988, which effectively rendered the still sometimes ongoing and rather bizarre polemic on the illegality of the revolution

15 Ville Kivimäki, “Three Wars and Their Epitaphs: The Finnish History and Scholarship of World War II,” in Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 13–14.

16 Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); a number of the earlier studies on the Finnish Civil War by non-Finns had been impaired by insufficient language skills.

17 Jaakko Paavolainen, “Kiintoisa esitys Suomen vallankumouksellisista 1917–1918,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 79.3 (1981): 258–64.

totally useless by forcefully expressing that the Russian revolution caused a vacuum of power in Finland – and hence a vacuum of legality – that led to the race to fill it.<sup>18</sup> Drawing theoretically from Charles Tilly's and Barrington Moore's work, Alapuro concentrated on the mass mobilization, class structure, and state formation in the early 20th century and designated Finland as a structural exception in the division between Eastern and Western Europe. In the early 20th century, Finland stood politically, socially, and culturally as a liminal state between the East and the West with an emerging civil society, Scandinavian social structure, and parliamentary system since 1906 on the one hand but ruled by an autocratic sovereign of the multi-ethnic Empire and being economically highly dependent on one export (timber) on the other hand. Alapuro's comparative approach in fact utilized the Finnish revolution and the Civil War as a means to achieve academically ambitious study that analyzed the underlying and still-topical questions concerning Finnish political and social structure.

There are a number of reasons why academic interest on the Civil War was renewed in the early 1990s, and these are detailed elsewhere in this volume. Among others are the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing neo-patriotic turn that notably renewed the remembrance of World War II. It had its effects on the memory and perceived significance of the Civil War as well. It should be registered, though, that thorough political history on the war had been practiced throughout the later phase of the Cold War period in the 1970s and 1980s, with major state-sponsored projects on the Red government and the Red Guards and studies on the White war effort, politics, and propaganda,<sup>19</sup> but it was Heikki Ylikangas's highly praised – and criticized – book on Tampere during the Civil War, published in 1993, that brought new interpretative in-

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18 Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); see also Risto Alapuro, "What is Western and What is Eastern in Finland?" *Thesis Eleven* 77.1 (2004): 85–101.

19 For the project on the history of Red Finland, see Jussi T. Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vols I–II (Helsinki, VPK, 1981); Marja-Leena Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty ja kehitys punakaartiksi 1917–18 ennen kansalaissotaa* (Helsinki: VPK, 1985); Juhani Piilonen, *Vallankumous kunnallishallinnossa* (Helsinki: VPK, 1985); Osmo Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena* (Helsinki: VPK, 1986); for the studies on White war effort, see Ohto Manninen, *Kansannoususta armeijaksi: Asevelvollisuuden toimeenpano ja siihen suhtautuminen valkoisessa Suomessa kevättalvella 1918*, *Historiallisia tutkimuksia*, 95 (Helsinki: SHS, 1974); Turo Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu, kansalaissota ja kapina: Taistelun luonne valkoisten sotapropagandassa vuonna 1918*, *Studia Historica Jyväskyläläisiä*, 24 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1982).



sights to the public.<sup>20</sup> He treated political violence outside battles graphically but realistically as an integral part of the warfare. His choice of subject – the events in Tampere – emphasized the White Terror and sparked controversy in the public that generated even some academic research that explained the White Terror as a primarily defensive measure.<sup>21</sup> Ylikangas's book marked also a new post-Cold War approach within the academic history that made an extensive use of oral history. The post-Cold War era also saw – and perhaps enabled – an interesting treatise by Jari Ehrnrooth, who traced the uses, connotations, and functions of the “archaic hatred” in the socialist rhetoric preceding World War I.<sup>22</sup>

All in all, the nature of terror and political violence has been in the fore of the latest research on the Civil War. Marko Tikka's influential study on the White and Red courts-martial aimed at a balanced treatment of the adversaries and concluded that a major share of the terror and the lawless, more-or-less-improvised courts-martial were pre-planned and organized activities aimed at cleansing the rear and disposing of enemies. Violence was cruel but predetermined and organized. The role of exceptional characters and the “dark side” of human beings as the root of violence has not been altogether disposed of in recent research but has been pushed to a supporting role in the large picture of political violence.<sup>23</sup> In 1998 the government inaugurated the research project *War Victims in Finland, 1914–1922*, which set as its aim the formation of an informative and reliable database of the persons killed during the turbulent years in Finnish history. The project was completed in 2004, and, in addition to a number of publications, it produced an online database of nearly 40,000

20 Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle: Dokumentoitu kuvaus Tampereen antautumiseen johtaneista taisteluista Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1993).

21 Mikko Uola, “Seinää vasten vain!” *Poliittisen väkivallan motiivit Suomessa 1917–18* (Helsinki: Otava, 1998).

22 Jari Ehrnrooth, *Sanan vallassa, vihan voimalla: Sosialistiset vallankumousopit ja niiden vaikutus Suomen työväenliikkeessä 1905–1914*, *Historiallisia Tutkimuksia*, 167 (Helsinki: SHS, 1992).

23 Marko Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet: Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 90 (Helsinki: SKS, 2004); Mirja Turunen, *Veripellot: Sisällissodan surmatyöt Pohjois-Kymenlaaksossa 1918* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2005); Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä: Valkoisten väkivalta Suomen sisällissodassa* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2006); an important research and a legal exploration of the problematic criminal jurisdiction in the “Courts on Crimes against the State” established in the aftermath of the Civil War to convict the rebels is Jukka Kekkonen, *Laillisuuden haaksirikko: Rikosoikeudenkäyttö Suomessa vuonna 1918* (Helsinki: Lakimiesliiton kustannus, 1991); Antero Jyränki, *Kansa kahtia, henki halpaa: Oikeus sisällissodan Suomessa?* (Helsinki: Art House, 2014).



names of the war victims with information on the causes, locations, and dates of death.<sup>24</sup>

Although the nature of political violence has attracted the most public interest, academics have kept the social and economic histories alive. One of the most influential studies on the events around the years 1917–18 is Pertti Haapala's comprehensive book on socio-economic developments – and devolve-ment – in the 1910s titled *When the Society Collapsed* (in translation).<sup>25</sup> Risto Alapuro's microhistorical treatise on the social and political mobilization in a southwestern parish in Satakunta province from the late 19th century until the 1930s provided the readership with an intrinsic view on both the social conflicts and the drive for consensus caused by the shadow of Russia in a local, pre-, and post-civil-war context with comparisons to the state-scale changes.<sup>26</sup>

Civil War military history has been revived as well, as reflected by new detailed studies on the German military expedition to southern Finland and the battle of Rautu on Karelian Isthmus, where Russian influence was the strongest.<sup>27</sup> The extension or continuation of the Civil War, namely, the military operations to East Karelia in the wake of the Civil War, in this volume named the "Irredentist Wars" (*heimosodat*), have received steady scholarship that has largely concentrated on military and political history.<sup>28</sup> Soviet Karelia in the interwar period has attracted wider interest from the scholars of the Russian revolution and early Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> The research on paramilitary hegemony and violence of the Civil Guards in the early post-war period has emphasized the notion that the war did not end in 1918.<sup>30</sup> The undertakings of the Jägers,

24 *War Victims in Finland, 1914–1922*, <<http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmaetu/sivu/main>> (accessed 14 October 2013).

25 Pertti Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995)

26 Risto Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1994).

27 Tuomas Hoppu, *Vallatkaa Helsinki: Saksan hyökkäys punaiseen pääkaupunkiin 1918* (Helsinki: Gummerus, 2013); Heikki Ylikangas, *Rata Rautuun: Ratkaisutaistelu Karjalan Kanaksella 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2013).

28 Jouko Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi": *Valkoisen Suomen pyrkimykset Itä-Karjalan valtaamiseksi vuonna 1918*, *Studia historica septentrionalia*, 17 (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1988); Jouko Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota: Suomen sotaretki Aunukseen 1919* (Helsinki: Otava, 1997); Jussi Niinistö, *Heimosotien historia 1918–1922* (Helsinki: SKS, 2005).

29 Markku Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehallinnosta: Nationalismi ja suomalaiset punaiset Neuvostoliiton vallankäytössä 1920–1939*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 60 (Helsinki: SKS, 2000); Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2007).

30 Marko Tikka, *Valkoisen hämärän maa? Suojeluskuntalaiset, virkavalta ja kansa 1918–1921*, *Historiallisia tutkimuksia*, 230 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006); Pertti Haapala & Marko Tikka, "Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918," in Robert Gerwarth & John Horne, eds,

the Finnish volunteers in the German Army in World War I, who formed a key element in the White Army, have attracted detailed research as well.<sup>31</sup>

One crucial factor behind the resurgence of the Civil War studies was that it attracted the interest of the reading public. Academic history moved closer to popular history in style, and this time, unlike in the 1960s, academic historians were able to generate the wider interest, not just respond to it. Another factor beneath the public interest was the fact that the Civil War had started to become a part of such a distant past that it did not arouse politically hot-tempered or “threatening” emotions or too personal feelings. It had, nevertheless, retained its tragic narrative that made people want to identify with one or the other side, sometimes even both of them. Many people wanted to trace their family history in connection with the events of 1918 – and it was not unusual to find relatives on the both sides of the conflict. Local Civil War histories, some of them rather merited microhistories, by professional historians and amateurs, have abounded in the last two decades, testifying to the great interest in the subject. Practically all the major theaters of war have received a detailed analysis of the military, social, and cultural aspects of the conflict. These include Tampere, Helsinki, and Vyborg (*Viipuri*) and not forgetting key rural areas.<sup>32</sup> The still ongoing trend in the public interest in Civil War studies has been complemented with a boost from literary fiction dealing with the events of 1918. It is worthwhile to acknowledge, though, that in spite of substantial research, a number of amateur historians have resorted to publicizing unsubstantiated claims that still circulate within local communities. For instance,

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*War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Stanley G. Payne, *Civil War in Europe, 1905–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

- 31 Matti Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona 27: Vaiheet ja vaikutus* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1966); Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkäreiden tuntematon historia: Jääkäريلiikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000); Anders Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscriptio and Masculinity in Finland, 1917–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).
- 32 To name a few, Marko Tikka & Antti O. Arponen, *Koston kevät: Lappeenrannan teloitukset 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1999); Jukka Rislakki, *Kauhun aika: Neljä väkivallan kuukautta Jämssä 1918*, rev. ed. (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2007); Sture Lindholm, *“Röd galenskap – vit terror”: Det förträngda kriget 1918 i Västnyland* (Helsinki: Söderströms & Proclio, 2005); Tuomas Hoppu et al., eds. *Tampere 1918: A Town in the Civil War* (Tampere: Vapriikki, 2010); Hoppu, *Vallatkaa Helsinki*; Olli Korjus, *Hamina 1918: Nimi nimeltä, luoti luodilta* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2008); Teemu Keskisarja, *Viipuri 1918* (Helsinki: Siltala, 2013); Samu Nyström, *Poikkeusajan kaupunkielämäkertä: Helsinki ja helsinkiläiset maailmansodassa 1914–1918*, Historiallisia tutkimuksia Helsingin yliopistosta, 24 (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2013).

alleged still-uncovered burying places more often than not belong to this category of rumors and legends. This, obviously, tells about the stubbornness of the unanswered questions and the bitterness that tragic events of this scale produce.

Social sciences have contributed to the Civil War studies, as evidenced by the work of Alapuro. Since the mid-1990s, the historiography on the Civil War has benefited also from fields in humanities other than history. Folklorist Ulla-Maija Peltonen filled in a substantial lacuna in research with her 1996 study on the patterns and genres of Red folklore and oral history. She analyzed incisively the logic of the legends and horror stories that abounded in the interwar period and were still somewhat vivid in the 1960s. One of her findings established that one of the major rationales after the Red oral tradition depicting and exaggerating the brutality of the White Terror dealt with seeking justice in a society that effectively denied it to the defeated.<sup>33</sup>

The memory boom in Western historiography has enriched the historiography of the Finnish Civil War and, as in this volume, uncovered the collective traces of the conflict until today. The research in collective memories of 1918 has unfolded in the 2000s, following the work of Peltonen, with major studies on the Red and White memory cultures and the politics of memory.<sup>34</sup> Interestingly the studies have usually concentrated either on the White or the Red memories, but the fruitfulness of comparative approaches has recently been recognized.<sup>35</sup> The scope of the memory studies has, for understandable reasons, concentrated thus far on the interwar period, when the cult of the War of Liberation was established and when the former Reds maintained a rich subterranean memory culture. The newest trend, therefore, should lead the 1918 memory studies to the more uncharted post-World War II era.

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33 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Punakapinan muistot: Tutkimus työväen muistelukerronnan muotoutumisesta vuoden 1918 jälkeen*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 657 (Helsinki: SKS, 1996).

34 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 894 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003); Aapo Roselius, *Kiista, eheys, unohdus: Vapaussodan muistaminen suojeluskuntien ja veteraaniliikkeen toiminnassa 1918–1944*, Bidrag till kännedom av Finlands natur och folk, 186 (Helsinki: Suomen Tiedeseura, 2010); Anne Heimo, *Kapina Sammatissa: Vuoden 1918 paikalliset tulkinnat osana historian yhteiskunnallisen rakentamisen prosessia*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 1275 (Helsinki: SKS, 2010); Miika Siironen, *Valkoiset: Vapaussodan perintö* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2012).

35 Tuomas Tepora, *Sinun puolesta elää ja kuolla: Suomen liput, nationalismi ja veriuhuri 1917–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011).

In line with the trend in cultural history of war in Finnish World War II studies,<sup>36</sup> historians of the Finnish Civil War today have turned to themes that do not generally belong to traditional military history. Gender history has been one of the most active strands in the new approaches. Historians have dealt especially with the gendered social and cultural questions arising from women's participation in battles in the Red Guards and the overall impact of the war on established gender systems and masculinities.<sup>37</sup> Other lines of recent research include the role of the Lutheran Church in the White war effort and the religious overtones in the White rhetoric.<sup>38</sup> The emotional history of war, particularly the notions of sacrifice and the function of emotionally charged collective symbols in the group experiences during and after the war, is another field of recent academic development.<sup>39</sup> Rather than uncovering new archival sources, today's grand histories on the Civil War offer fresh interpretations. For instance, Juha Siltala's work on the psychohistory of the Civil War stands out as a major contribution to understanding the behavioral basis and group processes in a crumbling society.<sup>40</sup>



This volume is divided into three parts. Each of them consists of four chapters. Part One focuses on the political and social background of the Civil War, the military history of the conflict, and the Finnish military expeditions to Soviet Karelia in the wake of the war. Pertti Haapala opens the first part of the book, writing about the social, economic, and political changes in Finnish society

36 Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia tabi- ja jatkosodasta* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2006); Kivimäki, "Three Wars," pp. 33–35.

37 Anu Hakala, *Housukaartilaiset: Maarian punakaartin naiskomppania Suomen sisällissodassa* (Helsinki: Like, 2006); Tuomas Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaarti: Myytit ja todellisuus* (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2008); Tiina Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009); Tuulikki Pekkalainen, *Susinartut ja pikkuummet: Sisällissodan tuntemattomat naiset* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2011); Ahlbäck, *Manhood*.

38 Ilkka Huhta, ed., *Sisällissota 1918 ja kirkko*, Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia, 212 (Helsinki: SKHS, 2009); Niko Huttunen, *Raamatullinen sota: Raamatun käyttö ja vaikutus vuoden 1918 sisällissodan tulkinnoissa*, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia, 255 / Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia, 216 (Helsinki: SKS, 2010).

39 Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*.

40 Juha Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria* (Helsinki: Otava, 2009); see also Juha Siltala, "National Rebirth out of Young Blood: Sacrificial Fantasies in the Finnish Civil War, 1917–1918," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31.3 (2006): 290–307.

from the turn of the century until the fall of 1917. Juha Siltala's chapter on the escalation of social juxtaposition and the group psychology of the adversaries from the fall of 1917 until the outbreak of the war in late January 1918 offer the readers a unique view on the formation of social blocks within the society and the function of enemy images and violent fantasies in the process. Marko Tikka, for his part, concentrates on warfare, political violence, and POW camps in 1918. He offers a detailed account on the fighting armies and the scope of the White and Red Terror with a verifiable number of casualties. Aapo Roselius analyzes the Finnish military expeditions, the Irredentist Wars, to Soviet Karelia and Estonia in the midst and the wake of the Civil War and thus offers also a view on the significance of East Karelia in Finnish nationalism.

Part Two sheds light on the cultural, emotional and gendered aspects of the Civil War. It begins with the chapter by Tuomas Tepora on sacrificial and mystified images of the White and the Red war effort and the significance of contemporaneous authors in the wartime propaganda. He also touches on the importance of the youth in wartime fantasies. Tiina Lintunen's chapter offers a detailed analysis of the participation of both the Red and the White women in the war, with special interest given to the public images of the Red female combatants. Marianne Junila's chapter, for her part, deals with mostly White schoolgirl experiences of the Civil War in Red-occupied Tampere. The sources of her case study consists of a number of essays written only a few months after the battles ceased and thus offers an interesting glimpse of the war and juvenile civilian experiences and emotions. Anders Ahlbäck writes about the German-trained Jägers, volunteers who obtained leading positions in the White field army and became national heroes in the middle-class society after the war. He focuses especially on the images of ideal manliness these celebrated "warriors" conveyed and analyzes the consolidation of the Jäger legacy in the interwar period.

Part Three deals with the commemoration and the long-lasting political and cultural legacy of the year 1918. It traces the memories and interpretations of the conflict from the interwar period until today. It opens with a chapter by Aapo Roselius on the White War of Liberation commemoration in the interwar period until World War II. He focuses especially on the significance of the Civil Guards and the organized White veterans for the politics of memory and the maintenance of the White legacy in the hot-tempered interwar society. Tauno Saarela writes about the Red – social democratic and communist – politics and commemoration within the same time frame as Roselius. His chapter portrays the division in the ranks of the defeated and the difficulties in forming a coherent stance toward the events of 1918. The extreme Left maintained the memory of the failed Revolution, whereas the social democrats distanced themselves

from it. Both parties, however, maintained the memory of the terror victims. Tuomas Tepora's chapter deals with the changes in the collective memories of 1918 since the late 1930s until the 1970s. His chapter analyzes the significance of World War II in transforming the divisive memories springing from 1918 into unifying symbolism of 1939–44. He goes on to scrutinize how the War of Liberation changed into Civil War in the 1960s and how the public commemorations, the press, and fiction portrayed the Civil War in the Cold War era, especially against the backdrop of World War II experiences.

The last chapter, written by Tiina Kinnunen, looks at the post-Cold War commemoration and interpretations of the Civil War. The chapter shows that in spite of growing temporal distance, profound social changes, and more balanced attitudes towards the war, the year 1918 can still be harnessed for specific political functions. In addition, it is interesting that the Civil War is topical in 21st-century fiction.

**PART 1**

*War and Its Prelude*







# The Expected and Non-expected Roots of Chaos: Preconditions of the Finnish Civil War

*Pertti Haapala*

It is difficult to understand and explain the crisis, political violence, and the Civil War in Finland in 1917–18. The difficulty stems from the prevailing image of Finland as a distant, quiet, peaceful, harmonious, homogenous, and industrious society. That was the reality in the 19th century, when Finland was a loyal Grand Duchy in the Russian Empire without an army, and after World War I, when Finland became a democratic republic and later a welfare state of a Nordic model. Things look different if we look at the years of the early 20th century only, and with contemporary eyes. Even then the overall image is not one of crisis but one of progress, growth of wealth, and rapid change in all spheres of life. The optimistic view was reflected on the pages of a book titled *Modern Times*, published in 1908: “If a man came from the distant past like in a fable – how strange the world would look to him! By every step he would be confronted by things whose significance he could not understand ... And today this fable is clearly among us.”<sup>1</sup> The evidence for this view was not only the technical miracles of the time but also a claim, that “we think and feel unlike before” and that people were aware of the world around them: “It is as if the great historical moments happened right under our windows. We are living it all through; our spiritual life becomes all the more fuller and richer.” Among other things, the Finns were witnessing the birth of New Russia. This is what the author believed ten years before the Russian revolution: “As radical as the French Revolution in the end of the 18th century will be the Russian Revolution in the beginning of the 20th century. It will be the spring before a new summer dawns.”

This optimism was not ungrounded. It was the tone and spirit of the time, which will be described further below, but it included the option of crisis, too. Not all of the people were satisfied with modern times – or cultural decay, as they called it. New tensions were in the air. New kinds of debates and clashes emerged concerning values, religion, the rules of everyday life, and politics.

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1 Gustav Bang, *Nykyaika*, vols I–II, trans. by Gunnar Lindström (Porvoo: WSOY, 1908–09), cit, vol. I, pp. 3–5, vol. II, p. 201.

New steps towards democracy caused as much distrust as hope. All this went through the minds of the people as well, and it is well recorded in the discussions of the time, private and public. There were also great changes, which were not so visible but deeply affected peoples' conditions, expectations, and possibilities. Societal life was changing, but why and to what direction remained unclear and uncertain. That is the normal case in human history, and such changes can be analyzed only afterwards. Now, one hundred years later, it is much easier to see and explain which factors shook the world. Among those were new kinds of demographic, economic, and social changes that were related to the rapid growth of global markets, industrialization, power politics, etc. In the case of Finland, most of those factors were "external," an outcome of things that happened in Europe, North America, and Russia. This chapter discusses those structural determinants of Finnish society and the resultant internal and external preconditions for the political crises of 1917 and 1918. How people reacted to those changes in their life caused by World War I and the Civil War will be analyzed in detail in other chapters of the book.<sup>2</sup>

### Special Economic Zone

Early 20th-century Finland was an agrarian society in which farming directly supported two million people out of a total population of three million. The country was peripheral when compared to most parts of Western Europe, but it was not as backward as often believed. In fact, Finland was driven and changed by the same factors that drove and changed the most developed areas of the world. The most important was capitalistic industrialization, which resulted from the so-called first globalization between 1880 and 1910. Finland had been a part of the northern European economy for centuries, exporting mainly wood and tar, but now the scale of foreign trade exploded and began to dominate economic and social development through creating new jobs, relocating population, and by reacting to economic fluctuations. Both exports and imports more than tripled between 1890 and 1910. The greatest economic boom was experienced in the 1890s when industrial production, employment, exports, GDP, and wages raised more than ever. In Finnish historiography the decade is usually presented as the "golden age" of Finnish art, when the

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<sup>2</sup> A more detailed analysis of the social conditions of the time and references can be found in Pertti Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995); and Pertti Haapala, "Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan rakennemuutos," in Juho Saari, ed., *Historiallinen käänne* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2006), pp. 106–24.

best-known national symbols were created. For contemporaries it was, first of all, the decade of golden capitalism with new opportunities, which was followed by two decades of insecurity.<sup>3</sup>

The factors behind Finland's economic success were the growing European and Russian economies. But the flexibility of the Finnish society in adapting itself to the world economy played an important part as well. Though agrarian for the most part, Finnish society was open, connections to Europe and Russia were dynamic, the level of education was rising, and there were low barriers for technology transfer and investments. It is true that Finland industrialized late, but it did so rapidly, in the same boom with the United States and Russia. A special feature, which supported or was even required for successful industrialization, was the extraordinary position of Finland in the Russian Empire. Finland formed a separate customs area, it had its own gold currency (mark), a state budget, and legislation different from the Russian system. All that made Finland a semi-independent economy with its own resources and economic policy. This may seem strange in a later perspective, but in fact that was the policy of the Russian Emperor. The motivation behind supporting the economic autonomy of Finland was rather clear: to promote the economy of the most western and modern part of the Empire next to St Petersburg and to alienate Finns from their previous tight connections to Sweden.<sup>4</sup>

Finland benefited greatly from the Russian connection, and due its many privileges Finland may be called as a "special economic zone" in the Russian Empire. The other side of the deal meant that the Finns stayed loyal to Russia – for good reasons. Industrialization of Finland was supported by investments, loans, and the infrastructure (canals and railroad), but the most important tool was tariff policy. Trade between Finland and Russia was free, but it was regulated by tariff agreements between the Senate of Finland and the government of Russia. Finnish industrial products were exported to Russia without tariffs, which protected them against Western competition and opened large markets especially for paper, textiles, and machinery. The strong Finnish paper industry was created for the Russian market, and other branches were as dependent on those special arrangements. In Finland the same industries were protected against Western competition with one exception: imported investment goods

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3 Riitta Hjerpe, *The Finnish Economy 1860–1985: Growth and Structural Change* (Helsinki: Bank of Finland, 1989), pp. 151–71 and appendix 3A1; Yrjö Kaukiainen, "Foreign Trade and Transport," in Jari Ojala et al., eds *The Road to Prosperity: An Economic History of Finland* (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), pp. 138–48.

4 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 50–58; Antti Kuusterä & Juha Tarkka, *Suomen Pankki 200 vuotta* (Helsinki: Otava, 2011), pp. 295–341.

(technology) remained duty-free. In short, the outcome of the system was that Finland had a favorable double position between Western and Eastern economies: Finland exported raw materials (wood, butter) to Europe and finished goods to Russia, and imported raw materials, grain, and luxury products from Russia and new technology (machines) from Europe. Wages in Finland were clearly below western European standards but higher than in Russia. Due to low productivity, Russian companies could not compete with Finnish products. All were happy with the system – except Russian entrepreneurs, who often blamed the policy of their own government. Although Finland was politically in a colonial position to Russia, it was by no means a colonial economy. It rather “exploited the motherland,” as the Russian nationalists claimed.<sup>5</sup>

It was only natural that Russia became the most important trade partner of Finland. Exports and imports began with a few millions of marks, but they both exceeded 100 million before World War I. Finland had become dependent on Russian markets – and on Russian grain – but then it was not seen a problem. Likewise, St Petersburg was dependent on Finnish foodstuffs, and 20,000 Finns worked there. As soon as the war broke out, Russia was in need of Finnish armament industries.<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, Russia’s share never exceeded 40 per cent of Finland’s foreign trade. Sweden remained important, as did Great Britain. Just before the war, the share of the trade with Germany equaled that of Russia, due to increased imports of machinery, minerals, and grain. That is, Finland’s economy was critically dependent on Western markets, too. In addition to forestry, half of the industrial workers (100,000) were employed in the exports sector. In addition, Finland imported almost all the flour that was sold in the country. All this meant that the war preparations increased economic activity and welfare in Finland, but as soon as the war broke out, Finland became critically dependent on the course of the warfare.<sup>7</sup>

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5 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 52–55; Erkki Pihkala, *Suomen Venäjän-kaupan puitteet autonomian ajan jälkipuoliskolla*, Historiallinen arkisto, 65 (Helsinki: SHS, 1971), pp. 5–85; on Finland’s position to Russia compared to the Baltic states, see Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 221–59; Max Engman, *Pitkät jäähyväiset* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), pp. 89–139.

6 Erkki Pihkala, *Suomen ja Venäjän kauppa vuosina 1860–1917* (Helsinki: Suomen Tiedeseura, 1970).

7 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 156–66; Leo Harmaja, *Effects of the War on Economic and Social Life in Finland*, Economic and Social History of the World War (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1933).

### Emerging Nation State

The early 20th-century Finnish society was a peculiar “nation state in the making” – or a semi-state. The Grand Duchy had its own institutions in all fields of life except the army. Most important, Finland was not a backward periphery, as even Finns themselves have often described it. The official languages were Finnish (80 per cent of the speakers), Swedish, and Russian. The Russian language had no practical importance in everyday life. Laws and newspapers were published in Finnish and Swedish. A great majority of the population spoke only Finnish, but in coastal towns Swedish dominated. Upper- and middle-class people often knew both. Swedish was the dominant language in higher administration and at the Imperial Alexander University of Finland in Helsinki. At the same time, Russian authorities favored Finnish; and in politics, the Finnish parties dominated discussions of the time. In cultural life, “Finnish” sentiment was expressed in Swedish as well in Finnish.

Language has been said to have been an indicator of the class and political divisions of the Finnish society and a key factor for the Civil War.<sup>8</sup> That is how it looks at first glance, but that is not the whole story, as the “language question” was a far more complicated matter. First, all Finns rejected the use of Russian and succeeded in minimizing the teaching of Russian at schools. Second, among themselves they fought fervently against each other on the language issue. In fact, there was a political and ideological battle between Finnish-speaking nationalists (the Fennomans) and Swedish-speaking nationalists (the Svecomans), which did not even follow the language line among the people. Language did not form a clear-cut class boundary, though the owners of manors and companies were mostly Swedish speakers and the workers spoke mostly Finnish. In areas where Swedish was the majority language, workers supported socialists as elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> In fiction it has been typical to demonstrate the social gap between the owners and the workers by seeing them as people who did not understand each other’s speech.<sup>10</sup>

8 A strong but not convincing statement on this is Pekka Hamalainen, *In Time of Storm: Revolution, Civil War and the Ethnolinguistic Issue in Finland* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979).

9 Magnus Westerlund, “Suomen ruotsinkielisten sotasurmat 1914–22,” in Lars Westerlund, ed., *Sotaoloissa vuosina 1914–1922 surmansa saaneet* (Helsinki, VNK, 2004), pp. 177–83. Sture Lindholm, *Röd galenskap – vit terror: Det förträngda kriget 1918 i Västrnyland* (Helsinki: Söderströms & Proclio, 2005).

10 Väinö Linna’s classic novel *Under the North Star*, vols 1–3, trans. by Richard Impola (Bea-verton: Aspasia Books, 2001–03), is the most influential story of the Civil War of this kind. The original was published in Finnish in 1959–62 and is a realistic and convincing descrip-

Finland was simply a bilingual society, and that is why Finns could also be nationalists in two languages. The Svecomans identified themselves with Finland, not Sweden, though many of them ranked themselves above other Finns, whom they regarded as “lower race.” Most of the early leaders of the Finnish Party had originally been Swedish speakers, and some of them never learned Finnish. For them, Finnishness was a political program with idealistic and democratic tone: they admired original Finnish culture and appealed to the “people” to win political support. The nationalistic movement, Fennomania, attacked the “Swedish” upper class and received thus silent support from the Russians. The Finnish-speaking nationalists activated people of all ranks and succeeded in creating large popular movements for language rights, education, culture, temperance, sports, and the labor rights. The rapid rise of mass organizations gave a reason to call Finland the “Promised Land of Voluntary Associations.”<sup>11</sup>

A well-organized civil society (the press, political parties, and voluntary societies) made Finland a rather peculiar entity within Russia. There was freedom of speech and organization despite a rather formal censorship and the Russian administration’s campaign to root out crime against the state. It was commonplace that Russian revolutionaries were hiding and meeting each other in Finland – like Stalin and Lenin in 1905.<sup>12</sup> Okhrana, the Russian secret police, worked in Finland but was inefficient. The Social Democratic Party of Finland (*Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue*, SDP) was legal in Finland and took part in elections locally and nationally. Despite their connections to Russia, the socialists’ relationship to Russian radical revolutionaries remained weak, and the party was nationally orientated. The Labor Party adopted a German-style socialist program in 1903, emphasizing the “class struggle” as the only way to do politics. This meant that the party made no compromises with other parties. This gave them widespread support among the poor but also isolated the party from the other segments of society.<sup>13</sup>

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tion of the agrarian poor of the time, but not the whole picture of the Finnish society. Yrjö Varpio, *Väinö Linnan elämä* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2006), pp. 421–81.

- 11 Väinö Voionmaa, “Yhdistyselämä,” in *Suomen kulttuurihistoria*, vol. iv (Helsinki: Gummerus, 1936), pp. 466–84; Henrik Stenius, *Paradoxes of the Finnish Political Culture*, in Johann Pall Arnason and Björn Wittrock, eds, *Nordic Paths to Modernity* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012).
- 12 There is Nadezhda Krupskaya’s romantic description of the happy days in Tampere, Finland, in 1905. N.K. Krupskaja, *Muistelmia Leninistä: Bolševikkien maanalaista toimintaa ja Toveri Lenin Suomessa vv. 1905–1907* (Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri, 1969), p. 51.
- 13 Hannu Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen puolue 75 vuotta*, vol. I (Vaasa, SDP, 1975).

Finns received universal suffrage in 1906. The parliamentary reform was a result of heavy political pressure caused by the Russian revolution and political strikes in 1905, which were followed by the Great Strike in Finland in November 1905.<sup>14</sup> This week of mass demonstrations changed the political scene in Finland.<sup>15</sup> Finns demanded not independence but national and civic rights. The strike began with demands to withdraw laws and special orders that had been passed by the Russian government and were seen to “violate the Constitution of Finland.” The demands were supported by all segments of society, in joint mass meetings filled with feelings of national unity. Gradually the socialists succeeded in taking the lead. In the mass meetings in Tampere and Helsinki, demonstrators accepted the Red Declaration demanding that the Senate resign and that the new National Assembly be founded with a “vote for all.” Without other choices available then, the (Russian) Imperial government decided to put an end to the crisis by promising parliamentary reform for Finland – the same as happened in Russia with the founding of the Duma. It should be noted that the strike in Finland followed the turmoil in Russia, which raised the oppositional power of the Finns above their usual level. Later it became common to see the Great Strike of 1905 as an exercise for 1917. In fact, it became, for the Russians and for the Finns alike, a kind of model for how to make a revolution – and how to make it together.

The first universal parliamentary election in Finland in 1907 shocked everyone, especially those in the bourgeois parties. They lost the power they had enjoyed in the previous House of Estates, which had been elected with a very limited right to vote. Socialists won 40 per cent of the seats in Parliament, *eduskunta*. It was a world record at the time. Bourgeois parties still retained the majority and formed the new Senate, but they were badly split into four parties and were not able to effect compromises: the Old Finns (conservatives), the Young Finns (liberals), the Agrarian League (small farmers), and the Swedish Party (middle and upper classes). In addition to the language issue, they were split by social issues and the question of how to respond to Russian efforts to “reduce the autonomy” of Finland. This issue had been a major source of political quarrel for years. Finns were no longer – if they had ever been – unified

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14 Teodor Shanin, *Russia 1905–07: Revolution as a Moment of Truth* (London: Macmillan, 1986), who typically excludes Finland, the nearest province to the capital, from his analysis.

15 A detailed contemporary description is Sigurd Roos, *Nationalstrejken i Finland*, vols 1–2 (Helsinki: Lindbergs förlag, 1907). A more balanced analysis of the contradictions of the strike is Pertti Haapala et al., eds, *Kansa kaikkivaltias* (Helsinki: Teos, 2008), which emphasizes the accidental and chaotic nature of the “Great Strike.” A compact account is Marko Tikka, *Kun kansa leikki kuningasta: Suomen suuri lakko 1905* (Helsinki: SKS, 2009).



against Russia, but they accused each other of achieving benefits by compromising with Russians. This is the way things were experienced, and this would persist until 1918. In addition to the quarrels between the political elites, popular sentiments towards Russia were divided, or at least confused. Many rural poor believed that the Tsar would defend them against their Finnish landlords.<sup>16</sup>

The roots of the successful revolution in Finland in 1905 go back to 1899, when the interpretation of the constitution of Finland became an acute political crisis and a wide national movement was organized.<sup>17</sup> There was profound disagreement on the limits of the Finnish autonomy, which caused a political schism called the “legal struggle.” In the past decades, Finns had been accustomed to think that Finland was a state of its own and had only the same sovereign as the Empire of Russia, whose powers in Finland were limited by the “constitution of Finland.” Legal arguments were developed to support this view, which understandably could not be accepted by the Russians – and are not accepted by historians of today, either.<sup>18</sup> The dispute did not have many legal outcomes, but it caused a heated debate, demonstrations, imprisonments, and terror attacks against Russians. A young Finnish nobleman, Eugen Schauman, assassinated the Governor General Nikolai Bobrikov in 1903. He killed himself and became a martyr of resistance.<sup>19</sup>

The peaceful 19th century was over, and the Russian government started to see Finland more often as a threat to the Empire and its nearby capital than as a trustworthy northwestern province. The years from 1899 to 1914 saw constant political conflicts between the Finns and the Russians and among the Finns themselves. In spite of the parliamentary reform, the power to nominate the Senate of Finland remained with the Emperor, and all the laws prepared by the Finns themselves, just like before the reform, were passed through him. It is, however, good to remember that no continuous, clear-cut confrontation between Finland and Russia existed and that the Finns were not planning to separate themselves from the Empire. A violent and an illegal separatist movement, the Activist Party, worked clandestinely but enjoyed very limited

16 On popular sentiments, see Sami Suodenjoki, *Kuriton suutari ja kiistämisen rajat: Työväenliikkeen läpimurto hämäläisessä maalaisyhteisössä 1899–1909* (Helsinki: SKS, 2010).

17 Päiviö Tommila, *Suuri adressi* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999), pp. 93–300.

18 Osmo Jussila, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta 1809–1917* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2004), pp. 257–595. Another detailed study of Finland’s legal position is Robert Schweitzer, *Autonomie und Autokratie* (Marburg: Lahn, 1978).

19 In fact, Schauman’s motivation was not entirely political, but connected to disappointment in a love affair. See Seppo Zetterberg, *Viisi laukausta senaatissa: Eugen Schaumanin elämä ja teko* (Helsinki: Otava, 1986).



support in Finland.<sup>20</sup> Politicians, higher civil servants, and businessmen were defending their own interests and the special interests of Finland as well. All of them had colleagues, allies, and enemies in Russia. Hundreds of Finns served in the Russian army in high positions, and hundreds of thousands of Finns made their living through trade with Russia. Cultural and scientific contacts with Russia were also part of everyday life, especially between Helsinki, Vyborg, and St Petersburg. The Karelian Isthmus between the Gulf of Finland and Lake Ladoga, populated by Finns, was known as the summer paradise for the elites of St Petersburg. It was an annual political maneuver when the Emperor sailed to Finland for holiday and received a warm welcome.<sup>21</sup>

In short, the position of Finland within Russia was stable and critical at the same time. There certainly were tensions, but they were compensated by mutual benefits. Ethnic hatred was minimal, but there was distrust on both sides towards the policemen and the politicians. Many high-ranking Russians, especially in the army, could not understand Finnish “separatism,” which offended them. For instance, Russians needed a passport when travelling to their villas on the outskirts of St Petersburg. Finland was a problem on the army draw tables. The Finns had no army of their own, and they were not required to serve in the Imperial Army. Therefore, their loyalty was suspect. Instead, Helsinki was a critical and important navy base for the Imperial Baltic Fleet. Helsinki and many other towns had Russian garrisons, and thousands of soldiers lived in Finland. This had been the case “forever” and caused no anxiety before 1917.<sup>22</sup>

The birth of a “nation state” with well-organized civil society in Finland before 1914 tells us about a social process reflecting changing economic, social, and institutional structures. It was a form of societal reorganization, which may be called modernization and which was pushed by external factors, although it was experienced locally. Nationalism and socialism were the dominant ideological expressions of the change and became the most appealing political promises and identities for the masses. These two worldviews, or civic religions, played major roles in the beginning of 20th-century politics, but both of them had roots much deeper in the ground, i.e., in the 19th-century thinking, than in the new conflicts of the time. Nationalism in Finland was not a reaction to Russia’s presence or politics but, rather, a popular movement that

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20 For the development of active resistance, see Harri Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta: Sotilaskomitea 1915–1918*, Bibliotheca historica, 124 (Helsinki: SKS, 2009).

21 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 56–59. A detailed history of Finns in St Petersburg is Max Engman, *Pietarinsuomalaiset* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2004).

22 Pertti Luntinen, *The Imperial Russian Army and Navy in Finland, 1808–1918* (Helsinki: SHS, 1997).

was made possible under the wings of the Empire. Likewise, socialism in Finland can be described rather as a version of nationalism that included the extension of civil rights than a reaction to capitalism. Finnish society with its legal forms (Finnish nationality and passport) and Finnish identity emerged gradually during the 19th century. In that sense, Finland in many ways was a ready-made society in the new setting of the early 20th century, when Finland began to look for sovereignty. It was, however, connected to Russia with countless ties. The great promises of the time, nationalism and socialism, which had originally been inclusive ideologies, began to reflect more and more exclusive ways of social thinking and new social divisions.

### Class Struggle

Industrialization, economic growth, urbanization, capitalization of agriculture, education, and increase of services, mobility, and other changes produced new kinds of social divisions and understandings of them. It is commonplace to say that in the “old society” or *ancién regime*, which Finland was in the 19th century, deep social gaps existed but there was no class-consciousness. Instead, a kind of harmonious patriarchal order prevailed, and the people were more or less satisfied with the place they had been given in their society. That is how things were, if one looks at the public discourse. In fact, the old society was a class society with experienced and identified class boundaries, which were difficult, if not always impossible, to cross. The 19th-century industrial and rural workers felt and knew that they were a class of workers, of a low rank, without any political rights, and not even freedom of movement until 1880. Still, they did not know the term “working class” – which belonged to the vocabulary of the educated people of the time. Early 20th-century workers were legally free wageworkers with more options and political influence. They more or less clearly identified themselves collectively as a working class, which, most important, now became a political identity.<sup>23</sup>

Definitions of social classes and class struggle were introduced to the Finnish political vocabulary in the beginning of the new century. Previously, “class struggle” was familiar only to some social scientists who knew the German school of national economics. Now it became a new concept of the world, a

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23 Here class consciousness is not restricted to “orthodox” socialist thinking but includes popular conceptions of class boundaries, too. On workers’ class identity, see Pertti Haapala, “How Was the Working Class Formed? The Case of Finland, 1850–1920,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 12.3 (1987): 179–97.

new civil religion inheriting the promising messages of the Bible, nationalism, and temperance. It represented fascinating new social imaginary, but it was also social reality, a reflection of new positions and new prospects.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the rising standards of living and modernization, it is not exaggeration to describe early 20th-century Finland as a class society. The class divisions that socialists talked about were actual and were noticed by all, regardless of what people thought about socialism or how they understood socialism. Political divisions followed “classic” class boundaries, and in the Civil War in 1918, people were divided into the Reds and the Whites along the class line between owners and non-owners. A vast majority (60 per cent) of Finns were poor people without property. Even most of the land-owning farmers were not wealthy at all. Typically for Finland, if not exceptionally, the majority of the workers belonged to the group of rural laborers, the “landless people,” as they were called in the official statistics. These “rural poor,” as the social reformists called them, made up close to 40 per cent of the total population. Did they form a class of their own? Not in a sense of any homogenous social group, since they were dispersed around the wide country and socially diverse. They were mostly young and non-married people moving from farm to farm and from village to village in search of work. The best option for them was to move to towns or to North America. About half a million people left the countryside between 1880 and 1914. In southern Finland, rural workers in farming and forestry were usually members of a more established community than in the north or east. Around manors, big farms, and sawmills, the landless comprised a local class of their own, with families and more stability. They were reached by socialist agitation and voted the Social Democratic Party, which in fact had a higher turnout in the countryside than in the cities. Without this mass support from the rural people, socialists would have not become such a strong political force in Finland. In the Civil War, the landless of the southern Finland joined the Reds and secured their power in the area.<sup>25</sup>

A special group among the landless was the tenant farmers or crofters (*torppari*), who hired farmers' land and paid rent in kind, mostly in workdays. Crofters comprised only ten per cent of the total population and about 20 per cent of the agricultural population, but they became the symbol of class struggle

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24 This is clearly seen in the rhetoric (printed and oral) of the early labor movement; see Sami Suodenjoki, “Kansalaisyhteiskunnan ja Suomen ideat, liikkeet ja julkisuudet ennen vuotta 1917,” in Kari Paakkunainen, ed., *Suomalaisen politiikan murroksia ja muutoksia*, *Politiikan ja talouden tutkimuksen laitoksen julkaisuja*, 1 (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston politiikan ja talouden tutkimuksen laitos), pp. 53–74.

25 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 137–42.

and justice in the political debate on the “land question.” Their small farms were usually inherited and had practically become a “property of their own.” As the value of farmland and forest increased in tandem with the market economy, there were constant disputes over the rent level.<sup>26</sup> The crofters wanted to buy their land, and they were widely supported, most aggressively by the socialists, in whose opinion the capitalist farmers exploited the work of the crofters. Some crofters were evicted from their land, which caused a political storm in 1907.<sup>27</sup>

In the years preceding the Civil War, the land question was one of the most critical political and ideological issues, and the crofter’s union was founded under socialist leadership. Most of the crofters were not politically active, but in southern Finland, many crofters of large manors supported the Reds, because they were promised to become landowners. Half of the crofters, especially those who lived in the north and hired their relatives’ land, fought on the White side in order to defend their rights against the socialists.<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the wide support of the southern rural people, the Revolution in 1918, as the Reds called their attempt, was led by the organized urban workers. They made up only 20 per cent of the total population, but they were concentrated in the largest cities such as Helsinki, Tampere, Vyborg, and Turku, as well as in the industrialized localities (small company towns), mostly in southern Finland. Urban workers were rather well organized in their unions, and the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAJ) was a part of the Social Democratic Party, i.e., all union members were also party members. This made the party exceptionally strong and powerful, the best-organized political force in Finland. The membership peaked at 110,000 in 1917, and regular meetings were organized in close to 1000 Workers’ Halls. The party and its local associations created a lively subculture of papers, books, festivals, cultural activities, and sports. It is self-evident that the organization of the Red Guards and the Red civil organization in 1918 were based on the organizational structure and activity of the previous years. Ironic or not, the choirs and playhouses were the backbones of the volunteer army.

Rapid growth of the economy and wages began in the 1890s but halted later and was characterized by insecurity until the early 1920s. Nevertheless, the

26 Matti Peltonen, *Talolliset ja torpparit: Vuosisadanvaihteen maatalouskysymys Suomessa* (Helsinki: SHS, 1992); Kyösti Haataja, *Maanvuokraolot Suomessa v. 1912*, vols 1–2 (Helsinki: Suomen Virallinen Tilasto xxx:7, 1917).

27 Viljo Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys vuoteen 1909* (Helsinki: SHS, 1961).

28 A reliable statistical analysis of the social background and divisions in the Civil War is Viljo Rasila, *Kansalaissodan sosiaalinen tausta* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1968).

living conditions just before World War I remained clearly above the previous standards and above what previous generations had experienced. Finland lagged behind Great Britain, the United States, and Sweden, but there was no deep and widespread poverty as in many other parts of the Russian Empire. Housing conditions in Finnish towns were far from excellent, but better than among the rural poor, who had no electric light, running water, sewing system, or paved streets. In 1910 the average nutrition and health levels were higher in the towns than in the countryside. This was due to the higher income, sanitation reforms, and medical knowledge, which reached the cities first. Finland in fact was in the forefront in Europe in the hygienic revolution.<sup>29</sup> Another success story “in a poor country” was the rapid increase in education level. Practically all knew how to read, and most of the people were also able to write. In towns, primary education in public schools had been compulsory to all since the 1870s, and secondary education was the novelty of the 20th century. In 1915 the majority of the secondary-school students were females, including working-class girls. That was unique globally and reflects the (relative) independence of women in Finnish society. They also were active in the labor movement, and many were elected to Parliament – which shocked many foreigners. Education possibilities benefited mostly middle-class people, but school doors were also open to working-class youth, and schooling was, or was becoming, the most important channel of upward social mobility. It was not unusual, but it was possible for urban working-class children (15–20 per cent) to elevate themselves to a middle-class position. Here was a striking difference with rural workers who did not have the same option.<sup>30</sup>

The affluent people in early 20th-century Finland were the tiny upper class and the small middle class, which consisted basically of small entrepreneurs (artisans and shopkeepers) and lower-level civil servants (teachers, nurses, clerks). The wealthy people were a diversified group of a few thousand persons like company owners, landlords, higher civil servants, and academics. The House of Nobles had 2000 members (including their families), but they had no more economic or political privileges. The old elite, i.e., certain families, was visible among the high-ranking officers, civil servants with old ties to the

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29 Minna Harjula, *Tehdaskaupungin takapihat: Ympäristö ja terveys Tampereella 1880–1939* (Tampere: THS, 2003); Marjatta Hietala, *Services and Urbanization at the Turn of the Century: The Diffusion of Innovations* (Helsinki: SHS, 1987).

30 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 127–36; Irma Sulkunen, “Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: A Comparative Perspective,” *Nordeuropa Forum* 1 (2007); Mervi Kaarina, *Nykyajan tytöt: Koulutus, luokka ja sukupuoli 1920- ja 1930-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: SHS, 1995).

Russian administration, and among the owners of the largest estates. Their position, however, was challenged by newcomers in all fields of life, and support from Russia was no longer possible in the beginning of the 20th century. In short, the upper class in Finland was relatively weak.<sup>31</sup>

The vast majority of the owner class was farmers, most of them ordinary folks cultivating a farm with fewer than 20 hectares of field. The wealthy farmers with more than 50 hectares of field were small in number though locally prominent. Many of them had been able to buy the lands of indebted nobles. This means that there was a “bourgeois revolution” going on in the countryside fueled by the new market economy. Some made big fortunes by selling timber, but mostly the growing wealth of farmers was based on new dairy business, that is, they gave up grain production and turned to dairy farming, that is, production of milk, butter, and cheese, which had rapidly growing markets in Finland and abroad. The income and wealth of (medium and large scale) farmers increased much more rapidly than that of other rural people.<sup>32</sup> Due to their position in local politics and their number nationwide, the farmers were the social backbone of the bourgeois parties. Farmers and rural people in general were needed to back any political initiative in Finland. That made Finnish politics complicated. Majorities were difficult to find, which was reflected in the experience of frustration in Parliament in 1907–17.

In urban areas the “class struggle” was mostly waged between the workers and the middle classes. In social conditions, the gap was not very long but clear. The annual pay of an industrial worker varied from 500 to 1500 marks, from where the middle-class wages began. Upper middle-class people such as lyceum rectors earned 5000 marks, and higher civil servants 10,000 marks. A wealthy factory owner could make hundreds of thousands of marks annually. Middle-class people had decent apartments, they dressed well, they had no shortage of everyday items, and they educated their offspring. Their way of life was nevertheless in the reach of the workers, and skilled workers were able to follow middle-class behavior, just like unmarried young workers. For most workers, however, the middle-class way of life was something they did not possess but thought they should, i.e., a somehow stylish and secure life without too heavy or dirty work.<sup>33</sup>

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31 Alex Snellman, *Suomen aateli: Yhteiskunnan huipulta uusiin rooleihin 1809–1939* (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2014).

32 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 109–10; Matti Peltonen, ed., *Suomen maatalouden historia*, vol. 2 (Helsinki: SKS, 2004).

33 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 119–22.

The political dividing line between the workers and the middle classes indeed represented more of a political issue than competition of resources. The labor movement was inspired more by the idea of equal rights than by opposition to employers. Since the 1890s workers had demanded the right to use their vote in municipal elections, where the electoral system was based on income. When the middle-class voters rejected that demand, the workers simply frustrated and boycotted local administration. No wonder that in the political chaos in 1917 the first attacks were made against city councils representing “the power of the burse.” One may conclude that what had been gained by universal suffrage in Parliament was ruined by the striking inequality in local government. That set the workers and the middle classes against each other and eroded social trust.<sup>34</sup>

In sum, the class structure of Finnish society was characterized by the dominance of rural people, low average income, scattered communities, a weak elite, and small urban classes. The distance between the top and the bottom was long, but most people lived under conditions that did not differ so much from each other. In that respect the society was “equally poor.” The disputes of everyday life remained mostly minor issues, and even the big questions were not so difficult to overcome, as was seen after World War I and the Civil War. Compared to this and the rather homogenous culture (religion, ethnicity), the political dividing lines were surprisingly deep. Political life was loaded with high expectations and strong enemy images. The traditional explanation offered for this has been that the Russian government halted social reforms in Finland and caused the tensions. The history of Finnish politics between 1899 and 1919 – a total lack of consensus – proves the opposite. The class struggle was self-made reality.<sup>35</sup>

### The Crisis Hits Slowly

There was no feeling of any deeper crisis in Finland on the eve of the World War. Employment was rather good – thanks to the war boom. Emigration to the United States continued and eased the pressure on the rural population. Wages in agriculture were rising, and many crofters succeeded in buying their

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34 On the role of local administration before and during the Civil War, see Juhani Piilonen, *Vallankumous kunnallishallinnossa* (Helsinki: VAPK, 1982).

35 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 219–25. Development of events in Finland looked rather irrational when seen from Sweden; see Seikko Eskola, *Suomen hurja vuosi 1917 Ruotsin peilissä* (Helsinki: Edita, 2008).



land. The parliament was passive due to its limited powers, and when the socialists won a majority in 1916, the other parties were even less interested in the reforms, and they never actually accepted “the power of the mob.” As the loyalty of the Finns towards the Empire had been diminishing since 1908, members of the Senate and many civil servants were replaced by “loyal” Finns, who in turn were not accepted by most of the Finnish politicians. Although there was distrust between the Finns and the Russian government, there was no effective opposition to Russia in Finland. Serious politicians and businessmen did not believe in resistance but were waiting for a liberal turn in Russia, which would end the constitutional schism and return things to normal. Nor did the Finnish elites believe that Russia would be in trouble if war broke out. Russian generals were less confident and were afraid that Finns might sympathize with Germany. They prepared to prevent sabotage at the same time they prepared for the German invasion of Finland.<sup>36</sup>

When the war actually broke out, it was a shock for most Finns, at least a surprise. During the first days of August 1914, Helsinki experienced a slight panic because the authorities advised the people to seek a safer place. Some left the city, but within a week it became evident that Finland was left outside of the zone of active warfare and that the Finns retained their exclusion from the Russian army. However, a state of war was declared, and Finland was put under martial law. In practice it meant special orders concerning trade, prices, manufacturing, and freedom of the press and political meetings. The orders stayed in force until spring 1917. Several newspapers were suspended, and some prominent politicians were arrested and expelled, but for the most part, Finns could communicate freely, and political meetings were held despite limitations. In spite of censorship papers found ways to write critically about the war and the Russian administration. The first years of the war were troublesome but not threatening.<sup>37</sup>

The attitudes of the Finns towards Russian war efforts were mixed. It was a big relief that men were not called to arms. Already before the war, Finland had paid compensation from Finnish tax revenue to cover Finland's share of imperial military expenses. That satisfied both parties, if not the Russian

36 Luntinen, *Imperial Russian Army*, pp. 253–70; for a description of the beginning of World War I in the Baltic area, see articles in the special issue of *Revue d'Histoire Nordique* 15 (2012): 2e semestre, 11–174.

37 There are a lot of memoirs and sources on the conditions and feelings of the time; Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 152. The situation was most critical in Helsinki; see Samu Nyström, *Poikkeusajan kaupunkielämäkerta: Helsinki ja helsinkiläiset maailmansodassa 1914–1918*, Historiallisia tutkimuksia Helsingin yliopistosta, 29 (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2013).



nationalists. Finnish career officers in the Russian army continued their service in wartime, and 45 of them were killed. Surprisingly, many Finns volunteered to join the Russian army during the early months of the war. About 700 were accepted, and 160 of them were killed. Many more volunteers were rejected because they had no military training, and organizing troops that could not speak Russian was found too difficult. In any case, the number of volunteers reveals how people were thinking. Volunteers perhaps were not enthusiastic about defending Russia, but they saw no problem in fighting in the Russian army, which offered a job or chance for a military career. The soon-to-become-famous General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, the son of an influential noble family in Finland, served in the Russian army until spring 1917, was active in recruiting volunteers to the Russian army, and did not see it as problematic to fight for the Empire and Finland at the same time.<sup>38</sup>

Some people had other thoughts. Between the years 1915 and 1917, almost 2000 Finns joined the German Army with the motivation of liberating Finland. In February 1918 most of them were sent to Finland to participate in the Civil War on the White side. Just like Mannerheim, they became national heroes after the Civil War, but as long as they fought in the German Army, their experiences were less encouraging: many had difficulties and many deserted.<sup>39</sup>

During the war it was neither realistic nor wise to think that Finland could be separated from Russia. On the contrary, Finland received more military personnel than ever before, and Helsinki became one of the most important bases of the Baltic Fleet, with 20,000 soldiers. The total number of Russian soldiers in Finland peaked at 125,000 in 1917.<sup>40</sup> Their presence was felt in all major cities. The coast of Finland was heavily fortified, offering much-needed jobs for the Finns, as the army paid for all the services it needed. With the absence of active warfare in Finland, the situation was calm on the surface but excited beneath it. The Russian military was prepared for German maneuvers, but the Finns did not know how critical the situation was. The best option was to support the

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38 Tuomas Hoppu, *Historian unohtamat: Suomalaiset vapaaehtoiset Venäjän armeijassa 1. maailmansodassa 1914–1918* (Helsinki: SKS, 2005).

39 Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkärideiden tuntematon historia: jääkäriliikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000); for an in-depth analysis of the Finnish German-trained Jägers, see Anders Ahlbäck's chapter in this volume.

40 The active number of Russian soldiers stationed in Finland is difficult to estimate due to high turnover. The estimate of 125,000 men represents the maximum number, including all categories such as fortress troops. The minimum number of Russian soldiers active at one time is around 80,000 men.

Russian war efforts, benefit from it, and hope that after the war things would be better. A proper way to support Russia was to organize military hospitals in Finland. For instance, the Union of Finnish Industrialists provided an ambulance (field hospital) to the front.<sup>41</sup>

After August 1914 ordinary people were most concerned about their everyday life, jobs, and food. There was reason to be worried, because Finland's foreign trade with Europe was blocked immediately by the German troops. Trade with Germany and Great Britain ceased, which caused immediate difficulties. Sawmills were closed, and there was a fear of a forthcoming shortage of grain and important minerals and machinery. Industrial employment in Finland declined by 14 per cent and remained at that level until the end of the year. The main reason for this was the halt of timber and paper exports. Difficult times continued in the sawmills, but the jobs were replaced by the increase of paper exports to Russia and by fortification works organized by the Russian military. That created about 20,000 new jobs with reasonable pay. In 1915 Finnish industry was mobilized, i.e., the army began to regulate production and prices. Finnish companies had generally nothing against it and organized special committees to promote armament production. The coming years were very successful for Finnish industrialists, especially for the machinery and textile industries. Paper mills increased their production. New investments were made in most branches; and, lucky enough: wartime inflation paid the debts taken for investments. The total value of the military orders was 750 million marks in 1915–17. That was about one-third of the total production. In addition to industrial products, Russia bought as much food from Finland as could be sold.<sup>42</sup>

The war boom created an illusion that the economy was in good shape. In fact, the economy was not growing but declined in 1914 and 1915, then returned to the pre-war level in 1916 and 1917. In wartime conditions it was, of course, more important that the economy did not collapse, and the Finns survived rather well. Total private consumption (per capita) decreased less than 10 per cent. The price level rose from the very beginning of the war but remained moderate until mid-1917. The rationing of food started in 1915, but it worked reasonably, and no serious shortages were experienced before 1918 (see below), although in the fall of 1917 shortages became anticipated and thus politicized. It is difficult to measure real wages in the time of crisis, but the figures indicate that there was no actual decrease before 1917 except in the case of civil

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41 Tuomas Hoppu, "Les débuts de la première Guerre mondiale en Finlande: loyauté et séparatisme," *Revue d'Histoire Nordique* 15 (2012), 2e semestre, 153–74.

42 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 156–83; Harmaja, *Effects of the War*.

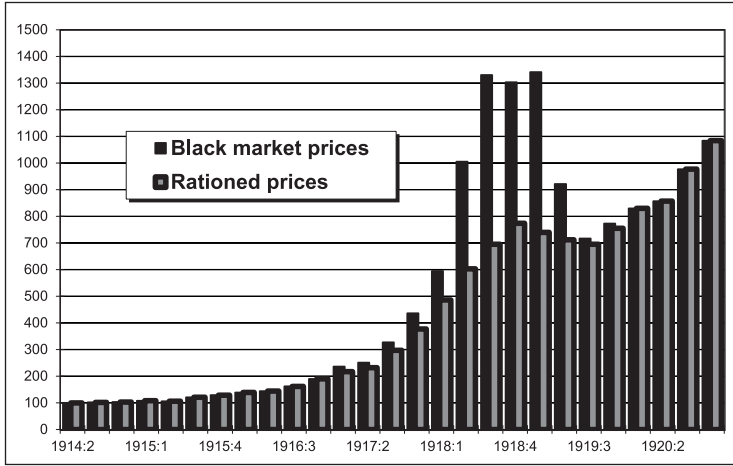


FIGURE 1.1 Food prices in 1914-20 (three-month average).

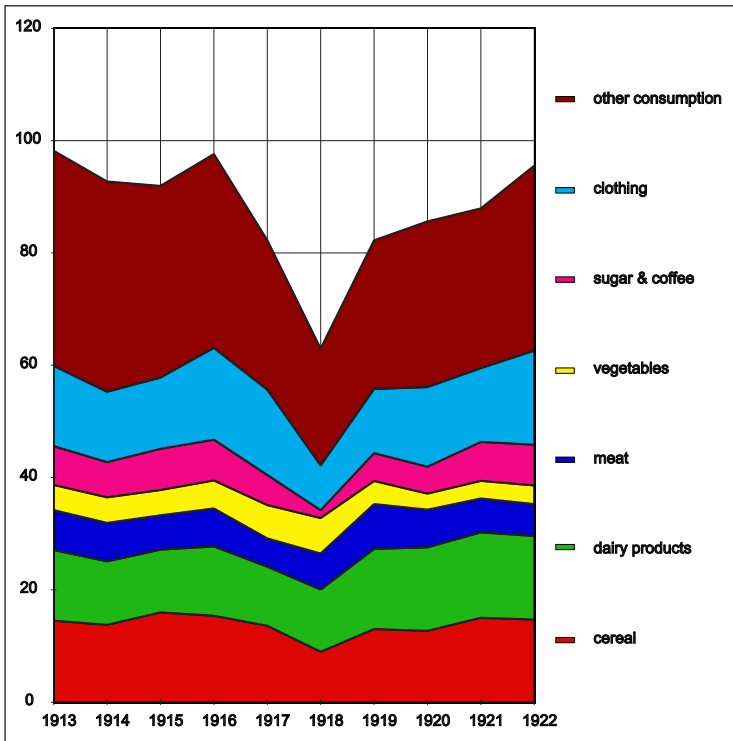


FIGURE 1.2 Private consumption 1913-22 (value per capita).

servants. Their wages lagged behind inflation, but at the same time their standard of living remained well above the average. Rural people did not suffer from significant shortages. The black market remained an option for the wealthy in towns. The workers' choice was to replace expensive items with less expensive ones, e.g., the prices of meat, fish, and potatoes did not rise like those of sugar, coffee, and flour. Before the fall of 1917 and the winter of 1918, everyday life included more and more nuisances and growing insecurity but no catastrophes or immediate want. An easy life and wonderful success stories of the speculators reflect the "positive" side and atmosphere of the wartime years.<sup>43</sup>

The critical dimensions of the economy were unforeseen to almost all contemporaries. The elements of collapse developed gradually towards a chaos, but the path was not predetermined, and other outcomes were also possible. Some figures tell how the possibility of a happy end of the war diminished. According to official statistics, exports from Finland declined to 50 per cent of prewar levels in 1916 and to 29 per cent in 1917. That was not an immediate misfortune, because exports (and imports) were, as noted, replaced by increasing trade with Russia, especially by orders from the Russian military. However, that made the Finnish economy fully dependent on Russia's warfare and on Russia's capacity to pay for it. It is evident that the Russian economy began to crumble immediately when the war began, but there was the typical solution available: printing more money. As inflation was not familiar to people in the prewar years, the increasing amount of money raised no worries. In fact, many people felt that they were getting wealthy, and moneymaker became a typical wartime image.<sup>44</sup>

Only after the war was it realized that the "flood of rubles" actually meant a loss of wealth. That became also a popular explanation for the crisis: the Russians destroyed the Finnish economy. In fact, things were not that simple at all. The Finnish currency (mark) had been separated from the value of the Russian currency 20 years earlier. The Bank of Finland secured the value of the mark with its assets in gold and foreign currency. Finland never gave up the gold standard, but the central bank stopped changing notes to gold in November 1914. A problem arose when trade with Russia increased and military orders were paid in rubles. The Bank of Finland exchanged rubles to marks at a fixed rate in order to support the Finnish industry and employment. The number of

43 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 156–83; for a contemporary analysis, see J. Karhu, *Sota-ajan taloudellinen elämä Suomessa* (Helsinki: Edistysseurojen kustannusosakeyhtiö, 1917).

44 A novel of the time: Eino Leino, *Pankkiherroja* (Helsinki: Otava, 1914).

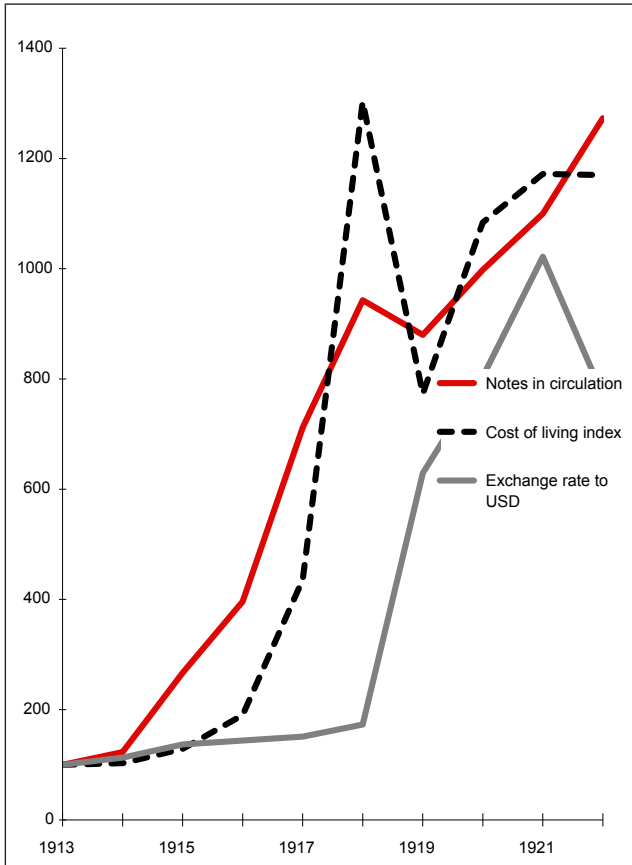


FIGURE 1.3 *Notes in circulation and the value of FIM.*

notes increased, and prices began to rise. Inflation was a reality, but it was not seen a serious problem. Russia was badly indebted to Finland, but it was believed that the value of the currency would return to its parity value after the war and debt would be paid. In fact, the Bank of Finland had no other choice than to support the Russian war efforts – and avoid unemployment and shortages in Finland. After the February Russian Revolution in March 1917, Finland no longer accepted Russian currency and did not give new loans to Russia. Russian currency and bonds in the possession of the Bank of Finland proved to be worthless. The losses for the bank were 695 million marks. That was the price Finland actually paid for the Russian warfare – by employing its own citizens.<sup>45</sup>

45 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 170–78, 190–93.

In 1917 the Finnish currency was rapidly inflated, and after the Civil War collapsed to one-eighth of its prewar value. The warfare in 1918 was financed by using the resources of the state bank and by printing more notes. The price of the Civil War is estimated to have been 700 million marks, including the expenditure of the two armies and damages paid to civilians. All that public debt was finally covered in the 1920s by the taxpayers and by selling “Freedom Bonds” to the public.<sup>46</sup>

### Promise and Disintegration

Despite hardening conditions and growing insecurity and anxiety among the population, Finnish society was not in a serious crisis before summer 1917. Instead, it was expected that things would settle somehow after the war ended. The poor situation and problems of discipline in the Russian army were not commonly known. Finland had avoided direct participation in the war, and people were arguing about its outcome. If Russia were to win, it was expected that Finland would regain its high status of autonomy, if an independent state was not a possible option. This seemed to become true when Nicholas II gave up his throne on 15 March and the Provisional Government was nominated. In the manifesto given by the new rulers of Russia on 20 March, Finland retained its “constitutional autonomy,” censorship and illegal restrictions of civil rights were abolished, political prisoners were liberated, and the national culture and languages were to be respected. The Finns were satisfied with the end of the “Russification acts.” The Parliament of Finland was called to assemble and prepare a new “Constitution for the Grand Duchy of Finland.” It was promised that Russia would not intervene in internal affairs of Finland, and it was declared that “Russia and Finland will be combined by the respect of law to secure the mutual friendship and happiness of the free nations.”<sup>47</sup>

Finns participated in the enthusiasm felt all over the Empire about the turn caused by the revolution in St Petersburg. The Provisional Government nominated a new Senate for Finland on 26 March, and it consisted of six senators, i.e., ministers from the Social Democratic Party and six from bourgeois parties. The chairman was the socialist Oskari Tokoi, and the national government became known as the “Tokoi Senate.” The whole Parliament and the leading political forces in Russia backed it. Voters had high expectations, because the Russian authorities were removed from administration and police forces. From

46 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 182–83.

47 Jussila, *Suomen suuriruhtinaskunta*, pp. 740–70.

this point onward, it was believed, Finns would be in charge of their own affairs. It was thought that social and political reforms could be introduced as soon as the war was over. Yet, the Tokoi Senate became a failure in the end – for several reasons.

The most important factor – regarded as serious by the Finns – was that the Provisional Government continued the war. This meant new pressures also on Finland. New loans and other efforts were required, and a German invasion was expected. Both the economy and the army were in confusion, and, above all, the government itself was struggling for its existence. Under these conditions no separatism could be allowed, which was made clear when Minister of Justice Alexander Kerensky visited Finland at the end of March. Russians were not convinced that the Finns would stay loyal, and they were aware that Finnish socialists had connections to Russian revolutionary soldiers based in Helsinki. The men of the Baltic Fleet had killed 38 of their officers as soon as they learned that the Emperor had fallen. All this together meant that the Provisional Government saw Finland in general and Helsinki in particular more as a threat to St Petersburg than its safeguard.<sup>48</sup>

The new position of Finland was crystallized in the disagreement on the supreme power in Finland. It was a legal issue but became a major and complicated political problem, which was finally solved no earlier than in summer of 1919, when the Parliament of Finland accepted a new constitution (form of government), which made Finland a sovereign democratic republic. The two years preceding that event included several *coups d'état* – or good attempts – and a bloody civil war. Already in early April 1917, the Senate finished a draft of a provisional constitution for Finland. The main idea was that the previous imperial prerogatives (the powers of the Emperor) would be transferred to the Parliament of the Grand Duchy, which would hold power to make all decisions except those regarding foreign and military affairs. Finland would remain a part of the Empire, with its own legislation and state apparatus. All parties supported the draft but disagreed on the procedure, i.e., should the Finns negotiate with the Provisional Government and seek a compromise or not. Chairman Tokoi declared on 20 April that the Senate would follow only the will of Parliament. The idea of a real people's power was inspiring, but the reality was different: Kerensky, now Minister of War, saw the draft as a betrayal in an imperially critical situation.

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48 For developments in 1917, see Pertti Haapala, "Vuoden 1917 kriisi," in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), pp. 60–70; Tuomo Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi*, vol. I: *Helmikuu 1917–toukokuu 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1967).

The next phase, in June and July, was the treatment of a new bill given by the Provisional Government in order to maintain its power over Finland. But the majority in the Finnish Parliament changed the bill to quite opposite to what the government had proposed, and on 18 July Parliament accepted a law that made Finland practically independent. It was even decided that the “Law of Supreme Power” (*valtalaki*) in Finland required no ratification by the Russian authorities. The confidence of the Finns that they would succeed was based on the belief that the Russian government was falling. Tokoi even announced that it had happened. But the Bolshevik-initiated July rebellions in St Petersburg were suppressed, rebels were arrested, and Lenin escaped to Finland. Kerensky became Prime Minister, and he concluded that the Finns had joined in revolt against his government. The Finnish Parliament was dissolved, and new elections were ordered. The majority-holding socialists harshly opposed the dissolution and tried to continue the assembly. The order by the Provisional Government was accepted among the bourgeois leaders, who actually, rather tellingly, had advised Kerensky to do it. A strange interregnum followed: Finland had no Parliament until November and no functioning government before late November, when the situation in Russia – and in Finland – had radically changed after the October Revolution.<sup>49</sup>

Elections were held in a frantic atmosphere at a critical moment. Living conditions were rapidly worsening – or expected to worsen – in the summer. Despite the new harvest there was a lack of flour in towns, because imports from Russia had almost ceased. The allies would have sold grain to Finland, but the Senate did not accept their demands for control of the trade. There were “butter riots” in August, which gained much publicity. People were angry over rising prices and claimed that farmers were hiding food. In fact, the shortage of butter was a result of continuing export to Russia at good prices. It was demanded that the Senate and other authorities solve the problems caused by food rationing. Despite all the legal powers given by Parliament, however, the Senate failed badly in “organizing the hunger.” Prices began to rise rapidly towards the end of the year. Still, in larger cities, local authorities succeeded in buying and rationing foodstuffs fairly well, and it is clear that there was no absolute shortage of food in a large scale. The amount of flour in the market was only half of normal, but it was also true that flour was only part of required diet.<sup>50</sup>

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49 Eino Ketola, *Kansalliseen kansanvaltaan: Suomen itsenäisyys, sosialidemokraatit ja Venäjän vallankumous 1917* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1987), pp. 174–259.

50 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 203–11.



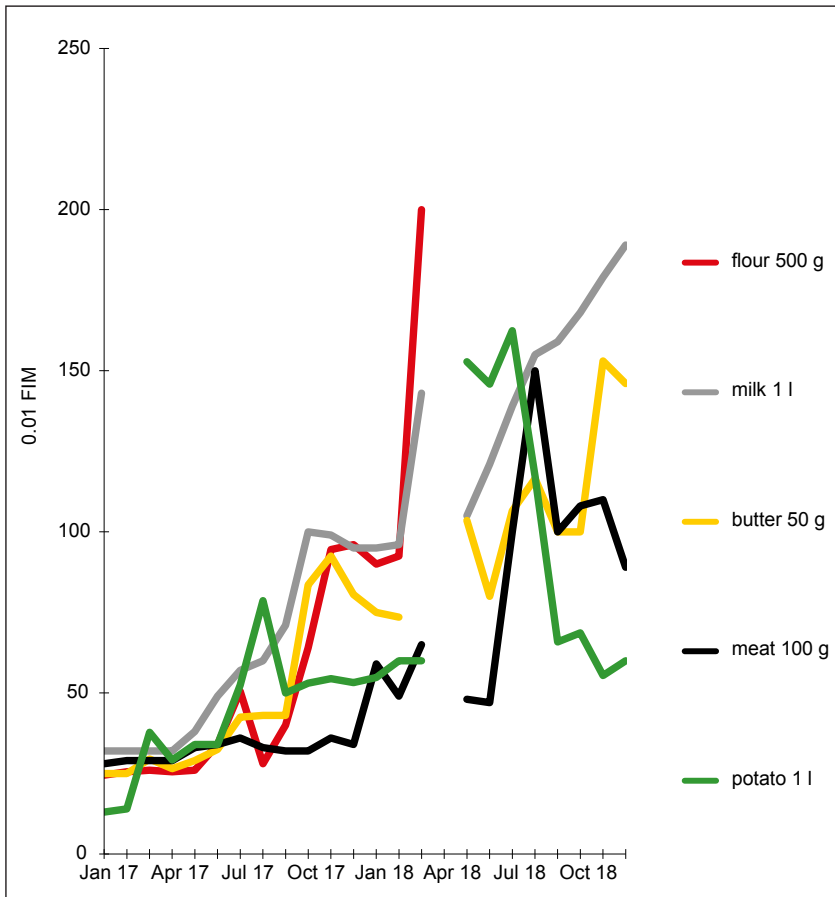


FIGURE 1.4 *Food prices in Helsinki in 1917–18 by daily consumption units.*

Another actual and politicized problem was unemployment, which began to rise in the summer of 1917 when orders from Russia began to decline and finally ended in August. When thousands of unemployed men gathered in Helsinki and other towns, there was unrest enough to talk about a crisis. The majority of them were employed by the municipalities, however, and open unemployment remained relatively low. At least part-time unemployment was experienced by 10 per cent of the workers. But the lack of work had become a political problem, fueled by continuous political strikes demanding an eight-hour working day, land reform, and municipal democracy. The number of work strikes exceeded 500 in 1917, and more than two million working days were lost. In most cases the workers' demands of higher wages were satisfied. Strikes were not an economic catastrophe. It was more important that they mobilized

people politically. Even policemen of Helsinki went on strike in July, in the middle of unrest on the streets. City councils were attacked in several localities. In many cities, local compromises were made between the socialists and the bourgeois parties, which helped the management of social problems. But, for instance, in Helsinki, a continuous power struggle resulted in confusion over who was really in power and responsible for the problems.<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned above, living conditions in the summer of 1917 were not as poor as imagined. At the heart of the crisis were the incompetence and the lack of political power of the Senate of “national unity.” The unity of the parties never worked. When the new national government was formed in March, top politicians of all parties declined to participate. Party leaderships were afraid of political failures and chose rather to wait their opportunity than take the initiative. That is why the Tokoi Senate was nicknamed a “government of sacrificial lambs.” Due to mutual distrust, the leading parties were committed not to the joint government but to their own interests. This was reflected also in the fact that both the socialists and the bourgeois parties aimed at a majority position – and with foreign help rather than by compromising among themselves. The socialists had a strong ally in Bolsheviks, who had old ties to Finland. The socialists believed that the Bolsheviks would support Finnish independence, as they had promised. Thus, the revolution in Russia helped the revolution in Finland. Joining Finland to the forthcoming socialist Russia was, however, out of the question among the Finnish socialists. Ideologically they were not Bolsheviks but were influenced by the German Social Democratic Party, and that is why there were positive sentiments toward Germany, too, among socialists. Nevertheless, the Russian connection was what the bourgeois leaders were most afraid of, and they did not hesitate to use the “Russian card” in domestic politics. To beat the socialists they were also ready to compromise with Russian liberals and the Mensheviks. After the October Revolution, the Finnish elites sought support from Germany against the Reds, which finally made Germany an ally of the White Army in the Civil War.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the political confusion in the summer and fall of 1917, neither the socialists nor the bourgeois parties had exact plans or an idea of the future. They just tackled the current crisis and tried to exploit it politically. The Russian government could not be trusted, the Senate had lost its powers, local administration and the police forces were in a state of confusion, and the Russian soldiers caused anxiety. In other words, there was a classic state of disorder. The “power vacuum” was gradually filled by volunteer civil guard units, which

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51 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 195–200.

52 See Juha Siltala's chapter in this volume.



FIGURE 1.5 *Russian soldiers and Finnish workers celebrate May Day in the Workers' Hall in Savitaipale (southeastern Finland) in 1917. PHOTO: PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.*

had been founded since spring 1917 in various forms. In addition to locally oriented guards of both sides, also the Activist Party of the Finnish resistance movement under the pseudonym “New Forestry Office” and the anti-Russian Military Committee consisting of a number of Finnish officers encouraged people to found anti-revolutionary protection guards with the publicly stated goal of liberating Finland from the Russian tyranny, with the help of Germany.

The guards of both sides were organized in an atmosphere of political distrust and confusion. Campaigning in October elections was harsh, and all the problems and fears of the people became exaggerated. As the bourgeois parties were able to form a coalition “against the anarchy,” the division between two sides was emphasized in rhetoric and in the options for the future. Both sides accused each other of betrayal, that is, relying on foreign help. The left claimed the Finnish bourgeoisie was allied with the Provisional Government in order to prevent social reforms. That is why the Bolsheviks were the natural allies of the workers. They were also the only political force in Russia that supported Finnish independence. Finnish social democrats really believed that they could successfully combine the two big goals: national independence and socialism, which meant vaguely defined “people’s power.” For the bourgeois parties, this combination seemed to lead to a catastrophe. That is why saving

Finland from revolution became the most important task – with the help of Russians or Germans if needed.<sup>53</sup>

Although the socialists increased their number of votes, the bourgeois coalition won the majority in Parliament. That frustrated the socialist leaders and their supporters and made them more willing to find solutions through political pressure, i.e., mass demonstrations. A chance opened suddenly when the Bolsheviks succeeded in their *coup d'état* on 7 November. The October Revolution, as it became known later, can in fact be seen as begun in Helsinki with the revolt in the navy.<sup>54</sup>

When the people in Finland were informed that the Provisional Government had fallen, Parliament had just convened, and Finland had no government due to political disagreement and distrust. The socialists were not even present, and the bourgeois parties could not decide what to do. The majority accepted a manifesto, which proposed that the Provisional Government transfer the (imperial) supreme power to the Senate of Finland in internal affairs. The answer was never received.

The October Revolution accelerated the mutual distrust and social disturbance. During the general strike that halted the entire society in mid-November, the socialists in fact decided to seize power. But, tellingly, the newly selected Workers' Revolutionary Central Council (*Työväen vallankumouksellisten keskusneuvosto*) revoked the decision by a vote of 13 against 12. During the last months before the outbreak of the war, the bourgeois government tried to maintain the initiative of the situation by declaring Finland independent on 6 December. The socialists, who named it a *coup d'état* because it included the transfer of parliamentary power to the Senate, opposed the declaration of independence. Obviously, the socialists did not oppose the independence but required negotiations with the Russian government. Those finally took place between the bourgeois government of Finland, headed by Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, and the Bolshevik government. Lenin signed the agreement on Finnish independence on the last day of 1917. Both sides recalled later how it was unpleasant to recognize the legitimacy of the partner. But there was no other option. The Finns had to beg the Bolsheviks because other states refused to ratify Finland's sovereignty before the Russian government. It was also known that the Bolsheviks were playing a political game with their "policy of national sovereignty." Lenin explained that he gave Finland its independence only because the Finnish socialists asked for it as a way to promote their revolution in Finland. Later Lenin commented that Finnish socialists were traitors.<sup>55</sup>

53 For a detailed analysis, see Marko Tikka's chapter in this volume.

54 Ketola, *Kansalliseen kansanvaltaan*, pp. 325–30.

55 Ibid.

Amidst the growing power of local Red Guards, the bourgeois Senate tried to control the situation by declaring the bourgeois Civil Guards, or Protection Guards (*suojeluskunta*), a state army. The last efforts and attempted negotiations by the both sides failed to stop the collapse of the society, and the country fell into war in late January 1918.

### Summary

The Civil War of 1918 had its preconditions in the inequality of social life and in the unstable political institutions of the Grand Duchy. The Finns had a rather strong national identity, which was actively promoted in schools and in the public life. Civil society was developed, and a great number of people were socially and politically active in cities and in advanced rural areas. Finnish social life, though on the European periphery, was quite similar to other Nordic countries and Western Europe. Connections to Russia were strong, but Russia remained culturally strange to most Finns, despite the cosmopolitan features of St Petersburg. Likewise, the Russification of Finland never succeeded and was not even tried by force, which made Russia in Finland more distant than its geographical presence would have suggested. Finland enjoyed remarkable, if not exceptional, cultural, political, and economic autonomy in the multinational Empire, and hence stayed loyal to Russia until the very end – almost. Even the constitutional schism of the early 20th century could have been settled if Russian modernization had succeeded without the sudden political crisis of 1905 and the World War. As long as the Emperor stayed in power, Finns were reasonably satisfied with the Empire and among themselves.

Modernization of Finland was moving forward and could have gone smoothly without sudden political crises. All those crises from the turn of the century until the Civil War were crises of state power and were connected to Russia. It is self-evident that internal conflicts would have not reached the same massive scale without the external impulses. Also, the great victories of democracy and nationalism were fueled by the Russian example or by the opportunity offered by the crises in the Empire. Finns could repeatedly benefit from the weakness of the central power. That made also the labor movement so powerful while the Finnish upper class remained relatively weak. In 1905 and 1917 the socialists allied with Russian socialists and could not be opposed under those conditions. That gave socialists courage to demand much more than would have been possible otherwise. One may conclude that the powerful position was their weakness, too: what to do with political power without

allies and compromises, or how to conduct “people’s power” with 1 per cent majority as the Red Constitution of 1918 seemed to believe.

The other faction, the Finnish bourgeoisie, was nationally minded and politically well informed. As the vision of the unified nation state began to disrupt due to Russians’ hostility, workers’ resistance, and internal splits of their own class, new ideas were not developed to run a society. The bourgeoisie were as reluctant to divide power, as were the socialists. Class divisions were deepening in people’s minds at the same time they were diminishing in social reality. Hence, it is not logical at all to see the deepening political divisions and conflicts of early 20th-century Finland as a result of worsening or unmanageable social conditions. Rather the opposite: the politics ruined the chances to make social reforms that were accepted by the vast majority.

The crisis in Finland that developed between 1899 and 1919 cannot be even imagined without external political crises, viz., those of Russia and the World War. Likewise, the emergence of crisis in Finland cannot be imagined without the cleavages within Finnish society, class divisions, and homegrown political divisions. Both dimensions, external and internal, were required for situations when everyday difficulties, which were no novelties, developed into political crises. That process was always in the hands of the Finns themselves, who themselves made the decisions. There was, in fact, surprisingly little external interference or pressure on Finland. In that sense, Finland was different from other Russian borderlands, especially the Baltic countries, which were more closely intertwined with Russian political structure and more touched by the war itself. Again, one may conclude that the road to civil war was an internal conflict, an unhappy way to solve the problems of the old and new society at the same time. What made it so difficult, unexpected, confusing, and finally traumatic was that the course of things was, unfortunately, connected to external factors, which created the big scene of politics that proved to be all too complicated.

## Being absorbed into an unintended war

*Juha Siltala*

Everyday material scarcity and the deepening cleavage between the proprietors and the rural workers did not come out of the blue in Finland during World War I. Neither did these problems peak in 1917.<sup>1</sup> But they lost their inevitable character right at that moment. When living conditions are conceived to be changeable, mass movements are able to turn the unarticulated sense of injustice experienced by individuals into political empowerment. Then, scarcity is experienced as an insult against human rights. Having one's relative worth recognized might be the most crucial way of retribution, without which even material gains fade.<sup>2</sup>

The need for recognition and ranking are long-term features of human beings,<sup>3</sup> but their surfacing as political challenges presupposes a combination of middle-term social structures and a short-term historical situation. Their confluence in Finland in 1917–18 arranged a natural experiment of social psychology, behavioral economics, and group dynamics – an experiment that hardly would have met the criteria of any ethical board.

World War I left the disarmed Finns outside the battlefields but caused first an economic boom and then an ensuing bust: as suppliers of the Russian imperial army, Finnish companies gained huge profits, but the funding of the commerce also drew the Finnish currency into Russian inflation. By 1917, average living costs had tripled. Waged and salaried breadwinners suffered, whereas speculators and black-market food sellers became ostentatiously rich. The economy proved to be a zero-sum game, now rewarding vices instead of virtues. Farmers' real income doubled between 1917 and 1919. Even if wages doubled in 1917, they lagged behind the living costs. The standard of living of civil

1 Pertti Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995); Osmo Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena* (Helsinki: VAPK, 1986), p. 41.

2 Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Barrington Moore, *Injustice: Social Bases for Obedience and Revolt* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

3 Axel Honnet, *Kampf um Anerkennung: Zur moralischen Grammatik sozialer Konflikte* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998); Ian T. King, *The Political Theory of Darwinism: Zoon Politikon and the Evolutionary Case for Social Democracy* (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2008), pp. 333–68.



servants was halved. In 1917, prices doubled, and during 1918 they tripled again. The stock market in Helsinki boomed in the summer of 1918, when people died like flies.<sup>4</sup> The justification of economic conditions eroded in the long queues in front of alleged wood or milk deliveries during the cold winter of 1916–17, just as the Russian war economy lost its momentum, ending the demand for the Finnish industries and fortification constructions against eventual invasion. Last but not least, grain imports from Russia halted in the summer of 1917.<sup>5</sup>

Finland remained practically blockaded from the Western world but stuck in the embrace of the eroding imperium. In the biggest centers, an army of unemployed people gathered without any means for self-sufficiency. A café spectator could conclude that the major part of the Finnish people now bought and sold something in the black market instead of working for their living. Speculation had “once and for all wiped away all reciprocation, patriotism and honesty in those who had money.” It had taught people to lie and ignore laws.<sup>6</sup>

### “A Moment of madness”: Politicizing the Destiny

According to Risto Alapuro, Finland in 1917 partly fulfilled the first two of three preconditions set by Barrington Moore for any revolution: deterioration of the legitimacy of the state and interest conflicts between dominant classes. The tsarist regime was widely experienced as an external force, and the most heated conflicts had emerged in relation to it, especially between the Finnish-speaking co-operators who preferred the Finnish language at the cost of legalism and the Swedish-speaking and younger Finnish groups of unbending constitutionalists. But the third and last precondition was fulfilled entirely: when the police and the army now had gone lame, a simple parliamentary majority could carry out any social reforms.<sup>7</sup> One of the most egalitarian parliaments in the world had been established in Finland in the aftermath of Russian revolutionary wave in 1905–06, but until 1917 its majoritarian power had been contained by tsarist decrees of dissolution and military governments

4 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 170–97. For a detailed economic analysis, see also Pertti Haapala's chapter in this volume.

5 Samu Nyström, *Poikkeusajan kaupunkielämäkerta: Helsinki ja helsinkiläiset maailmansodassa 1914–1918*, Historiallisia tutkimuksia Helsingin yliopistosta, 29 (Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, 2013).

6 *Työmies* 26 October 1917.

7 Alapuro, *State and Revolution*, pp. 143–48, 185–89.



consisting of trustees of the tsar. Thus, no party in Finland had assumed the role of conservatives, because foreign oppressors carried out the secret wishes of the privileged groups in preventing radical reforms. The pent-up frustration of the socialists could now be compensated, if only the Finnish bourgeois parties co-operated with them or the Russian Provisional Government would not interfere in favor of the bourgeois opponents of reforms. For this reason, the social democrats were at first more prone to cut the ties with Russia than the bourgeois parties.<sup>8</sup>

The revolution of rising expectations led to rapid mobilization on the basis of long-existing associations and political groupings. This thoroughgoing politicization meant that even food shortages soon were politicized. "All alimentation should absolutely be confiscated and put under the surveillance of the state, so that they do not again fall in the hands of reckless jobbers," demanded a typical mass meeting in the southwestern parish of Somerniemi.<sup>9</sup> Membership in trade unions quadrupled during 1917, mostly because the young now saw political action as profitable. The social democratic agenda was short: The universal and equal municipal franchise would allow a simple popular majority to tax the rich.<sup>10</sup> An eight-hour working day was demanded, including rural workers. In order to make certain that these crucial reforms would not be annulled, the Finnish Parliament should inherit the highest power of the fallen emperor, the ultimate instance to confirm or reject laws. The Law of Supreme Power (*valtalaki*) by the socialist-led Parliament was thus a strategic move in the power game but it was also endowed with an aura of all-encompassing equality: its mere existence would guarantee further progress, while obstructing it would entail backlash on every front.<sup>11</sup>

8 The Finnish Labor Archives (TA), 329:5 (471): Otto Wille Kuusinen to Kerensky, March 1917, the report by K.H. Wiik and Yrjö Sirola on the presentation of Finland's question for other socialist parties in Stockholm, 30 May 1917, and a draft of the address by K.H. Wiik to the Russian Social Democratic Party central council, 26 December 1917.

9 *Työmies* 27 August 1917.

10 Hannu Soikkanen, *Kunnallinen itsehallinto kansanvallan perusta: Maalaiskuntien itsehallinnon historia* (Helsinki: Maalaiskuntien liitto, 1966), pp. 383–85, 447–49, 483–88; Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 31–36, 140; Juhani Piilonen, *Vallankumous kunnallishallinnossa* (Helsinki: VAPK, 1982), pp. 25–27; Janne Viitamies, *Tuuman laudoista kyhätty aita: Mikkelin esikaupunkilaisten kapina ja mentaliteetti* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Helsingin yliopisto, 2000), pp. 68, 75–77, 81–93, 105–06; Turo Manninen, "Järjestysvalta järkkyy," in Ohto Manninen ed., *Itsenäistymisen vuodet*, vol. 1: *Irti Venäjistä* (Helsinki: VAPK-Kustannus & Valtionarkisto, 1992), pp. 318, 323–423.

11 TA, 329:5 (mf 14), Protocols of the Social Democratic parliament group, 1 & 9 November 1917; *Työmies* 5 & 22 August 1917.



FIGURE 2.1 *Demonstration for the 8-hour working day on Senate Square in Helsinki on 17 April 1917. PHOTO: HARALD ROSENBERG, AFK-COLLECTION, THE FINNISH MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY.*

In the Law of Supreme Power, the social democrats were defending all their achievements and their political dominance. For the rank-and-file socialists, pressing the law through could justify even extra-parliamentary means and overcoming formal obstacles. If the bourgeoisie would prevent its immediate acceptance, wrote a local party organizer in Pori to his MP wife, “the world would fall in chaos more than ever – they should understand this.”<sup>12</sup>

Municipal laws of democratic franchise and the eight-hour working day were accepted in Parliament under the pressure of demonstrations during July 1917. The Russian Provisional Government, however, did not confirm the Law of Supreme Power, leaning on the negative stance of Finnish bourgeois circles. On account of this, the social democrats interpreted the following dissolution of Parliament and arranging of a new election as class tactics against any further reforms. From now on, the socialists clung to the legitimacy of the old Parliament with its leftist majority.<sup>13</sup> Progress remained beyond imagination

<sup>12</sup> TA, Forstén collection (92, 47:471), Kaarlo Forstén to Aino Forstén, 9 and 11 May 1917.

<sup>13</sup> Tuure Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota* (Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri, 1978), pp. 53–54; TA, 329:5 (471), Protocols of Social Democratic parliamentary group, 28 September 1917.

until the power balance would again tip in favor of the socialists: “We will get laws, even if they now have got stuck. When we once have reached other circumstances, we can dictate them.”<sup>14</sup>

For the bourgeois parties and the Agrarian League, excluding the relatively small and still, for the most part, academic independence movement that had crossed traditional bourgeois divisions, breaking ties with Russia unilaterally would have meant losing business opportunities and would risk revenge in the final account of the Great War. First and foremost, removal of Russian state structures – especially the head of the state – would have left the bourgeoisie exposed to the pressure of the impulsive masses without institutional barriers.<sup>15</sup>

The first confrontations after the carnivalesque February Revolution had already occurred in rural strikes for the shortened working day. Municipal boards were also pressed by mass demonstrations both to promote democratization of their electoral basis and to obtain immediate hunger relief. As the activist independence movement proposed the establishment of a “neutral” police force for Oskari Tokoi, the social democratic head of the coalition government, Tokoi assumed a pacifist-quietist stance in renouncing any centralized armed force to be used against demonstration. He could have hardly done otherwise, because “minister socialists” did not enjoy the support of their party that remained in fundamental opposition against the bourgeois society. According to this formal prime minister, law-and-order demands for now represented vested special interests and were directed against the common good.

As a matter of fact, the monopoly on violence had eroded. Local establishments had reacted against legalized food surplus requisitions since May 1917 and counteracted rural strikes during the summer by organizing tentative civil guards authorized by province governors.<sup>16</sup> People believed that grain had been hidden somewhere and could simply be discovered if only the food rationing boards would be democratically elected and not dominated by those

14 TA, Forstén collection (92, 47:471), Kaarlo Forstén to Aino Forsténille, 21 July 1917.

15 *Työmies* 16 August 1917; *Helsingin Sanomat* 17 August 1917; Tuomo Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi 1917–1920*, vol. I: *Helmikuu 1917 – toukokuu 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1967), pp. 88–91, 92–93; Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) pp. 52–55, 92, 94–95; Eino Ketola, *Kansalliseen kansanvaltaan: Suomen itsenäisyys, sosialidemokraatit ja Venäjän vallankumous 1917* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1987), pp. 133–42, 207–08, 225, 233.

16 Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 57–58; Harri Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta: Sotilaskomitea 1915–1918*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 124 (Helsinki: SKS, 2009), pp. 149–56, 160–69; Tokoi's speech 12 June 1917 in response to activists' proposal: I parliamentary protocol I, 1917, pp. 508–09; Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy,” pp. 292–96.

who directly benefited from shortages. In municipalities that had included workers in the administration of food regulation, conflicts did not usually culminate in violence. During August and September 1917, food delivery got stuck in an irresolvable crisis, as local food administration and state suppliers overpriced each other, thus accelerating price inflation and hoarding. The struggle to either conquer or protect butter storage developed into organized violence.<sup>17</sup>

In the socialist camp, the Red Guards – under the euphemistic name of “order guards” (*Työväen järjestykskaarti*) – replaced provisory pickets in September 1917.<sup>18</sup> A permanent, centralized guard organization to protect civil rights and prevent opposition was first initiated by local radicals in Helsinki, then accepted by the parliament of workers’ organizations there and finally assumed by the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP) party council. In reaction to the accelerated founding of bourgeois guards, culminating in food crises, to losing their parliamentary majority, and in light of the approaching Bolshevik revolution, the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAJ) encouraged since 20 October the founding of guards. The Bolshevik regional committee had promised rifles for the guards. Until 14 November, workers’ guards amounted to 237 units, most of them in southern Finland, far outnumbering the membership of the bourgeois civil guards.<sup>19</sup>

For the social democratic leadership, the principle of undistorted majoritarian democracy signified the only way to both mobilize and regulate a mass movement. For the members of the movement, the repeal of the Law of Supreme Power came to mean that the bourgeoisie had deprived them of their equality and, thus, their vital means to live.<sup>20</sup>

All that for the first seemed to be feasible without any delay has been taken away just before we got it and closed behind barriers erected by the

17 Heikki Rantatupa, *Elintarvikehuolto ja säännöstely Suomessa vuosina 1914–1920*, Studia Historica Jyväskylänensia, 17 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1969), pp. 73, 79; Marja-Leena Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty ja kehitys punakaarteiksi 1917–1918 ennen kansalaissotaa*, vol. II (Helsinki: VAPK, 1985), pp. 24–27; *Työläisnuoriso* 21 September 1917; Provincial Archives of Vaasa (VMA), Alkio collection (III Aa1), Kyösti Kallio to Santeri Alkio, 5, 23, & 25 August 1917.

18 Until late January 1918 the guards of both sides were loose unofficial organizations.

19 Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, p. 42; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 137–40, 148, 246–48; Ketola, *Kansalliseen kansanvaltaan*, pp. 289–93, 325; Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy” & “Kaartit vastakkain,” pp. 247–48, 318, 323–43, 393–94; Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 237–41; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta*, pp. 156–69.

20 *Työmies* 30 September & 20 November 1917, 5 February 1918; *Kansan Lehti* 24 November 1918.

reawakened reaction. All that ruling classes earlier had consented to give, should now be retaken by fighting, with extreme efforts that hardly occur without any sacrifices ...

The relief among the people during the spring had turned into a “fierce mood to fight” and into a “longing for a decisive rush.”<sup>21</sup> According to economic prospect theory, a loss of something already promised is painful and renders normally risk-averse persons gamblers, if they still can ignite the slightest hope to prevent the realization of losses.<sup>22</sup> A spectator described in the socialist press the frustrated hope in front of self-indulgent life of the speculators like a fall toward an abyss.<sup>23</sup> This overarching insult evoked older layers of traumatic experiences of humiliation that needed to be avenged, as well.<sup>24</sup>

### Family Metaphors in Socialist Fantasies

Political conceptualizations draw a part of their motivational energy from deeper emotional assumptions concerning the opposite parties, which did not basically change during the crisis. Rather, they were prone to confirm themselves, rendering any perception of eventual counter-evidence more and more ineffective. This biasing effect of fantasies does not turn people from rational choice-makers into irrational executors of unconscious forces in every situation. The crisis promotes hasty decisions based on earlier experiences, both because all needed information is not available and people seek, first and foremost, immediate relief from overwhelming stress.<sup>25</sup>

Family imagery pertaining to the political discussion helps one to understand how obviously practical challenges could tap the wells of inherited, underlying humiliations and abandonment. The appearance of family metaphors does not necessarily indicate pathological regression, but it refers in any case to the primary level of fits and misfits, trust and distrust, actualized in the po-

21 *Kansan Lehti* 13 November 1917; *Työmies* 27 October 1917.

22 Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, “Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk,” in Daniel Kahneman & Amos Tversky, eds, *Choices, Values, and Frames* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 23, 31–43.

23 *Työmies* 14 August 1917.

24 Marc Ferro, *Le ressentiment dans l'histoire: Comprendre notre temps* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2007), pp. 13, 49, 198, 202.

25 See, e.g., Joseph LeDoux, *The Emotional Brain: The Mysterious Underpinnings of Emotional Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996); and Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2011).

litical conflicts of 1917–18. Psychological factors can be taken as mechanisms of mediation, amplification, and heuristic biases, not as causes in their own right.

The socialist press often depicted class conflicts as shattered family relationships. The disappointment felt by the socialists concentrated on the lack of care from the Mother-society and its paternal elite, while the middle classes were worried about pollution of the maternal blood by the vices of hooligans and Russians soldiers. The Reds craved revenge against those who had stolen the bread of the children, whereas the Whites wished to punish those undeserving children who had usurped the parental position and simply taken the bread for which one should work according to the moral order of the universe.

*Työmies* (“The Worker”), the organ of the social democrats, depicted poor people as orphans who never had received an empathetic response from their stepparents, the uncompassionate bourgeoisie. On one level, the argument over nourishment seems like sibling rivalry. The social system “had provided the social parasites with alimentation, even with luxury, whereas the makers have got nothing.” The country’s scarce resources were wasted in the “orgies of the possessing classes.”<sup>26</sup> “The bourgeoisie plays with people’s pain. It is preparing to give a shot of lead for the hungry,” wrote *Työmies* 30 September 1917, and on 13 October they alarmed: “The bourgeoisie are trying to starve us. Are we prepared to die?” Later this desperate appeal reached a peak:

The working class begs relief for its want, bread to still hunger. But does the ruling class listen to the cry of the starving class? It has been heard! Has it responded? Yes, but how? Infinite sums are spent to supply weapons, to organize and provide with the armed guards. The guards will be sent to ascertain a ‘firm order’ for the society. They will feed people with leaded sausage.<sup>27</sup>

The arms race could be stopped if only the bourgeoisie would empathize with the poor and feed them. But the bourgeois parents were obviously not mature adults, able to comfort and contain children tore apart by their pressures. “They are themselves disoriented, upset and rushed,” concluded a psychologically incisive writer in *Työmies*. “Their mental life has not become more responsive but more rigid. Its scope of imagination has shrunk.”<sup>28</sup> On the eve of the war, the “step-children of the society” felt that they – workers and socialists – should themselves assume the parental role to calm down their stepparents

26 *Kansan Lehti* 13 and 21 November 1917.

27 *Työmies* 21 January 1918.

28 *Työmies* 16 & 26 January 1918.

who, in turn, could contain the anger of their stepchildren! If the “stepparents” were unwilling to recognize the anxiety of their “stepchildren,” they surely would force the unempathetic caregivers to feel their pain. Yrjö Sirola, a central ideologist of the Social Democratic Party and the Commissar of Foreign Affairs in the People’s Delegation during the Red revolution, later defended himself against accusations of having agitated the masses: “All that you felt was disgusting in us – the angry mouth features – can be seen only as an attempt to prevent the threatening revolution by pressuring and convincing the bourgeoisie.”<sup>29</sup> The reconciliation offered by the SDP leaders was rejected, as the bourgeoisie preferred to cling to their privileges and prevent reforms. The repeated experience of being not acknowledged eventually drove the masses into direct action. Without aid from the bourgeoisie, the leaders were unable to stop the circle of rage and revenge.<sup>30</sup> “As the bourgeoisie built an insurmountable wall in front of all democratic, pro-labor development, one could predict the approach of the moment when the stream contained by the wall was going to break its way through,” explained one writer.<sup>31</sup> Masses, left to their own devices, were tearing apart not only the party but also the collective self of the nation – a fantasy central for all those educated in nationalist mass movements. Sirola interpreted that the children were provoked to air and act out their anger so that the unjust parents could punish them. The feeding required by the party should also include the emotional response of loving and respecting the child, i.e., acknowledgement. Common people, taking the place of the elites, were felt to have committed a symbolic patricide. Now, when parents no longer helped, the working class had to find “a savior in itself,” stated Tampere-based *Kansan Lehti* at Christmas 1917.<sup>32</sup>

A group that promises to mother itself must cling to its unity and imagine away the cleavage between the reality and the ideal.<sup>33</sup> The collective self of the working class was evoked to replace the lacking “parental care.” An impersonal revolution was constructed as a strict father, who would punish the unjust but would not bring about unnecessary pain. “The Revolution punishes the reckless, the enemies of the people, but a resourceful protector to all those oppressed and suffering.”<sup>34</sup> Class hatred was one but not the only indicator of

29 Yrjö Sirola’s open letter to Juhani Aho in *Sosialistinen aikakauslehti* 1/1920.

30 *Työmies* 23 November 1917.

31 *Kansan Lehti* 22 November 1917.

32 *Kansan Lehti*, 24 December 1917.

33 Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, *La Maladie d’Idéalité: Essai psychoanalytique sur l’idéal du moi* (Paris: Editions Universitaires, 1990), pp. 71–83.

34 *Työmies*, 27 & 28 January 1918.



the fallen social trust and of the race to grasp anything one could, before others could get their hands on it.<sup>35</sup>

### Reluctant Revolutionaries

The doctrine of Finnish Social Democracy offered little advice for a truly revolutionary situation. The SDP interpreted Marxism through the ideas of the German ideologist Karl Kautsky, who excluded any voluntary action and relied on the technical determinism of productive forces as necessary preconditions of socialism. Violent action and coups were seen only as signs of immaturity. The only way to take over society was self-education to rule complex societies, and this could best be achieved through eliminating all co-operation of class-conscious organizations with the bourgeoisie. Socialists should stay united at all cost. They should neither compromise themselves by joining coalition governments nor imitate Russian or southern European ways of protesting.<sup>36</sup>

During World War I, the survival of the workers' organizations had overridden revolutionary goals in Finland, as it did in Germany. Now, the group of party leaders had to justify its salaried existence for moving masses. The masses had only partially absorbed the technocratic philosophy of a self-reinforcing socialism, but they had been more receptive to millenarian promises of getting things even. The social democrats had succeeded in emotional mobilization by reaching a parliamentary majority despite lagging reforms, but they did not succeed so well in inculcating all the theoretical constraints on action.<sup>37</sup> The majority of the consisted of down-to-earth reformists and Kautskyan builders of some future socialism, but the minority of activists (now and then inaccurately accused of being "anarchists") achieved a disproportionate leverage in the party by representing the alleged majority of the streets against the supposedly "elitist" leadership.

The academics among the social democratic leaders feared being labeled guilty by definition, due to their middle-class background and their way of life.

35 Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi*, pp. 12–14.

36 Seen from a contemporary point of view, the pre-World War I Social Democracy combined the technocratic program of the Social Democratic Parties of the last decades of the 20th century with the identity politics of radical intellectuals.

37 David Kirby, *War, Peace and Revolution: International Socialism at the Crossroads 1914–1918* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 1–114; Karl Kautsky, *Köyhälistön vallankumous ja sen ohjelma* (Helsinki: Kansanvalta, 1925); "Menettelytapavaliokunnan mietintö suhtautumisesta hallitukseen," in *SDP:n 9. puoluekokouksen ptk. 15.–18.6.1917* (Helsinki: SDP:n puoluetoimikunta, 1917), pp. 104–05.



They had abandoned bourgeois careers and built alternative careers in the party organization. Individual achievement, however, was laden with a moral taboo in a party based on equality and disregard for merits. The academic leaders had to prove to their proletarian comrades that they were joined with them on an equal footing. When we take into account the intrusive and delegating child-rearing practices so typical for the rising middle classes at that time, we may hear here the repercussions of early parental disappointment for any “egoist” individuation of their children.<sup>38</sup> With their strong internalized moral standards, the party leaders could overreact to the slightest suspicions concerning their dedication to the common issue. Individual materialistic sacrifices were offered for potential critics as exercises of repentance. In the vein of old awakening movements, the comrades had to fight against the temptations by their “old Adam” and sense a divine mercy in the moments of shared enthusiasm among the masses.

The gradual handover of the whole party to the “purest” radicals proved to be the ultimate sacrifice of the leaders. When committing this, the Kautskyan leaders did not only make tactical calculations. They were convinced, both morally and intellectually, that the oppressed and their representatives could survive only by maintaining the unity of the group, the organized working class. The unity of the masses guaranteed security, and here the party might have functioned also as an ideal ego for those dependent on it. Should the unity be dissolved, their identities would be disintegrated, too. The group unity developed into a goal in itself, no longer being only a means to achieve political goals. This offered a power advantage for any minority threatening to break up the party.<sup>39</sup> The tactics of maintaining the unity of organizations became an all-encompassing strategy and led to a fatalist *laissez faire* attitude. Even though the revolution by seizing state power did not convince the SDP leaders

38 Glenn Davis, *Childhood and History in America* (New York: Psychohistory Press, 1976); Juha Siltala, *Valkoisen äidin pojat: Siveellisyys ja sen varjot kansallisessa projektissa* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999).

39 II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, p. 828 (Edvard Valpas-Hänninen's analysis of socialist factions on 9 January 1918). Sven Lindman, “Inledning: Karl H. Wiiks Dagbok från storstrejken till upproret 1917–1918,” *Meddelanden från stiftelsen för Åbo Akademi Forskningsinstitut*, 36 (Turku: Åbo Akademi, 1978), pp. xvi–xxi; O.V. Kuusinen, *Suomen valankumouksesta: Itsekritiikkiä*, Suomalaisten kommunistien julkaisusarja, 18 (Pietari: SKP:n keskuskomitea, 1918), pp. 11–12; *Kansan Lehti* 28 February 1914; Erkki Salomaa, *Yrjö Sirola – sosialistinen humanisti* (Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri, 1966), pp. 121–25, 131–32, 143, 152, 143, 165, 181; TA, Forstén collection 92 (47:471), Aino Forstén to Kaarlo Forstén, 4 & 7 May 1917; Wesley collection 92/7, August Wesley to Fanny Käyhkö, 8 December 1916, “liuska 2” to Fanny Käyhkö, c. January 1917.

in the months leading to the revolution, the municipal takeover of power by arms altered the realities: the armed groups on the both sides allowed the party leaders to only react to a *fait accompli*. History obviously took place on the local level. The socialists held municipal authorities accountable, if “something special should happen due to food shortages.”<sup>40</sup>

Angry projections surfaced already after the parliamentary election in October 1917, when the social democrats felt themselves living in the midst of an illegitimate reaction that threatened them with armed oppression, and many bourgeois citizens were afraid of anarchy.<sup>41</sup> The leading ideologist beside Siro-la, Otto Wille Kuusinen, later to be remembered as a member of the Soviet Politburo, now considered reformism ended: the bourgeoisie had moved to attack, and a reaction on the streets would soon ensue.<sup>42</sup> Hilja Siljanmäki, a typical worker girl in the cotton industry in Tampere, felt that “the workers were now under pressure” and joined the workers’ guard. She had been activated first by the trade union and its demonstrations. For her and her peers, joining an armed guard obviously was a means of survival, perhaps the ultimate way.<sup>43</sup>

The promotion of workers’ guards, urged on 20 October by the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAJ), aimed to restore the initiative and the trust of the masses. These guards were no longer to serve only as strike guardsmen but were invested with the hope to press through reforms connected with the Law of Supreme Power, now apparently buried. Open revolution was not yet considered but, rather, an extra-parliamentary mobilization to defend the achieved advantages was promoted.<sup>44</sup> The formal subordination of the guards under the managing boards of the party and the SAJ meant nothing, because the central organization could neither select the guard membership nor

40 Risto Alapuro, *Suomen synty paikallisena ilmiönä 1890–1933* (Helsinki: Hanki ja jää, 1994), pp. 176–77.

41 II Parliamentary protocol 1917 I, pp. 1920 (Oskari Tokoi, 8 November 1917); *Työmies* 14 September, 14–15, 16, & 27 October and 1 November 1917; *Kansan Lehti* 17 October 1917; *Sosialisti* 12 October 1917; National Archives (KA), Gebhard collection 2, Hannes Gebhard to Oskari Rantasalo, 14 October 1917; TA, Forstén collection, Kaarlo Forstén to Aino Forstén, 10 October 1917; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 125–26, 132–33.

42 TA, 329:5, Protocol of the Social Democratic party council, 28 October 1917.

43 Quoted by Tuomas Hoppu in *Tampereen naiskaarti: Myytit ja todellisuus* (Jyväskylä: Ajatus Kirjat, 2008), pp. 29, 50–52.

44 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 203, 241–68, vol. II, pp. 13–17, 41–44, 55–56; Alapuro, *Suomen synty*, pp. 182–83; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta*, pp. 166–69; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 18 October 1917; *Työmies* 20 & 28 October 1917; *Sosialisti* 24 October 1917; KA, The War of Liberation collection (VapsA: 161 j) Social Democratic party council to local associations, January 1918.

punish them.<sup>45</sup> The vague feeling of losing initiative and getting strangled was realized concretely in hunger. The SAJ directly accused the bourgeoisie of starving the workers in its greed. To prevent this, commerce and food delivery were to be socialized, food prices were to trend downward, while price hikes were to be entirely compensated in wages.<sup>46</sup>

The *We demand* (“Me vaadimme”) declaration in November 1917 by all the central organizations of workers’ movement fused reformist goals with unconstitutional means in a mood of revolutionary determinism. A national assembly should replace the parliament and the government, and the bourgeois militias should be dissolved.<sup>47</sup> Adversary action obliged one to react. If the government did not agree to these demands, the masses represented by the party would answer by declaring a general strike that was imagined also as a kind of “dictatorship of the workers.” Workers’ guards figured here as the central instrument of pressure to achieve a political solution (i.e., the surrender of the bourgeoisie). The guards, gradually armed, with the help of revolutionary Russians, should requisition food and arm storages of the bourgeoisie. The Russian situation would hopefully turn the Finnish power game to the advantage of the socialists.<sup>48</sup> The few Bolsheviks among the Finnish socialists, Adolf Taimi and Jukka Rahja from St Petersburg, prepared an outright revolution also in Finland instead of mere defensive mobilization. Such prominent party functionaries as Edvard Gylling, Matti Turkia, and Karl Harald Wiik opposed the revolution, while Otto Wille Kuusinen, Yrjö Sirola, and the future head of the Red Government, Kullervo Manner, changed their position according to the situation.<sup>49</sup> The Russians were ready to arm their Finnish comrades only after they had begun to act.<sup>50</sup>

45 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 68–93; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 23 October 1917.

46 TA, Central Organization of the Finnish Trade Unions (SAJ) representation protocols, 18–20 October 1917, pp. 45–55; *Työmies* 21 October 1917; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 19–21.

47 Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 47–52.

48 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 29 September 1917, Wiik collection, 60 b, fol. 29 & 66: “Bilaga till 18/10–17”, and Wiik’s notes in the meeting of the Social Democratic parliamentary group, 31 October 1917; TA, 329 (471) 5:328, the protocol of Social Democratic parliamentary group, 20 November 1917; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. II, pp. 27–31, 39; Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, p. 80.

49 *Työläisnuoriso* 21 September 1917; Adolf Taimi, *Sivuja eletystä* (Petroskoi: Karjalais-suomalaisen SNT:n Valtion kustannusliike, 1954), pp. 187, 215–19; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 141, 159; Salkola *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, p. 60.

50 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 12 September, 18 & 25 October 1917; Polvinen, *Venäjänsä vallankumous ja Suomi*, pp. 41–45, 101.

The general strike emerged as a watered-down compromise: it could at the same time be imagined as a peaceful demonstration or parade displaying the workers' power, as a provisory takeover of power to press the bourgeois parties – who the workers imagined to be the only accountable actors<sup>51</sup> – to every possible reform, or as a revolution, be it a municipal upheaval of the owners' oligarchy or a Bolshevik revolution carried out by the best-organized minority. In any case, the imagined content of the revolution meant something milder than it came to mean after the terror experienced in war, communism, and eventually under Stalinism.<sup>52</sup> The leaders of SDP eschewed any thought of shedding blood; their guards should rather refrain from any sort of violence that otherwise threatened to rise amongst the masses. This organized way of pressure would “satisfy and maintain the revolutionary mood” without chaos, defined Edvard Gylling in the party council. They acted not as a subject of revolution but as buffer to mitigate the events dictated by the given historical situation.<sup>53</sup>

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- 51 Kurt Gray & Daniel M. Wegner, “Morality Takes Two: Dyadic Morality and Mind Perception,” in Mario Mikulincer & Phillip R. Shaver, eds, *The Social Psychology of Morality: Exploring the Causes of Good and Evil* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2012), pp. 119–21.
- 52 These varying meanings can be found in the protocols and public utterances: See, e.g., TA, 329.5 (471), protocols of the party assembly of the Social Democratic Party, June 1917 (p. 35) and a draft of protocols of the party assembly of the Social Democratic Party, 25–27 November 1917, p. 17 (Kuusinen), p. 93 (Virtanen); 331.88671 (471), protocols of the unskilled metal workers' section no. 66, 30 November 1917; 329 (471) 5:328, protocols of the Social Democratic Party council, 28–30 October 1917, protocols of the Social Democratic parliamentary group 8 November (§ 3 Gylling) and 19 November 1917 (§ 2 Mäkelin); TA, 331.88 (471), protocol draft of the meeting of SAJ representatives, 12–13 November 1917, pp. 41–42; I parliamentary protocols 1917 I, p. 47 (Tokoi, 20 April 1917); the declaration in *Suomen Ammattijärjestö 11–12/1917*: “Taistelu leivästä ja oikeudesta” (p. 171); *Sosialisti* 24 October 1917; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 8 & 18 October 1917; Vapsa, 13 b: protocols of Kotka workers' council 10 November 1917, § 1; Lehen, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, pp. 96–97; and Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. II, pp. 39–41, 49.
- 53 TA, 329.5 (471), Protocols of the Social Democratic party council, 28–30 October 1917, p. 18 (Airola); KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 8–9 November 1917; *Sosialidemokraatti* 28 October 1917 & 2 November 1917; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, 136–46, vol. II, 49–51; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 138–50; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 52–55; Polvinen, Heikkilä, & Immonen, *J.K. Paasikivi*, pp. 322–34. On the general aim of maintaining organized forms for action under pressure, see also Kirby, *War, Peace and Revolution*, pp. 201, 222.

### A Breakthrough into an Impasse

From the bourgeois perspective, the general strike from 14 November until 21 November 1917 has been treated as a prelude of a forthcoming Bolshevik-style *coup d'état*, aimed at full-scale socialism. As a matter of fact, the strike was an attempt to try something decisive without committing to anything irreversible. From the point of view of SDP leaders, the apparent “revolution” meant, rather, a maneuver of avoidance and a postponement of decisive action.

The social democratic leaders played the card of the recent Bolshevik revolution when they set up the Workers' Revolutionary Central Council to execute the workers' demands. Their aims concentrated on the re-establishment of the old Parliament; without it, the masses would abandon their leaders and undertake – according to Kuusinen – an “unorganized revolution.”<sup>54</sup> According to Juho Wuoristo, a member of Parliament, “the masses would otherwise turn against us so that we would lose the leadership.” For him, “the revolution should go on step by step but in any case so that we gain something that cannot be taken away.” The social democratic leaders imagined that their general strike magically would return the Left majority and with it the Law of Supreme Power and a socialist government: by these means, the reforms could be carried on legally, without any violent collision with the bourgeoisie. In their parliamentary speeches, the social democrats saw themselves preventing a bourgeois *coup d'état*, by concentrating the imperial power for three chosen regents. To pre-empt such conservative maneuvers, the socialist leaders dreamed of a legal revolution: “Only when no other exit is open, then the dictatorship of the proletariat.” As a sharp contrast to this moderate attitude, however, the representatives of the workers' organizations in Helsinki set their own committee for the general strike, ready for the takeover of power by arresting the members of the government. But the Revolutionary Council appointed by the party leaders did not consider the workers' guards yet to be ready for military action.<sup>55</sup>

Parliament rejected the ultimatum. From now on, the Revolutionary Council held the bourgeoisie accountable for the forthcoming general strike. However, its leaders were divided in the meeting of the representatives of the trade

54 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 21 November 1917; *Työmies* 9 November 1917; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, 140–41, 146–47; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 146–47.

55 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 8–11 November 1917, quoting Wuoristo on 9 November; People's Archives (Ka), personal files, 5. Jussi Tuominen's memoirs, vol. III, pp. 141; II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, pp. 53–88 (10 November 1917); Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 141–45; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 27–30.

unions. Eero Haapalainen, the spokesman of the Red Guards, exaggerated the preparations made in Helsinki and the southeastern port of Kotka when urging action: guards were needed if results were to be achieved. His ideas were enthusiastically embraced by many. The workers should not surrender and be starved: "It is better to rise and fight with honor instead of doing nothing and die."<sup>56</sup> The relief of immediate pressure was felt so important that the Revolutionary Council ultimately declared the general strike.<sup>57</sup>

The general strike serves well as a textbook example of decision-making under stress: the solution emerges after reducing the alternatives to the two that were the most antithetical and emotionally laden. Only when swift associations failed did the decision-makers rely on their analytic faculties and systematic comparisons. The result represented not so much human irrationality but human efficiencies in thinking, supplemented with its unconscious responses. The goal remained unclear, but it was hoped that clarification would come as events unfolded. Confronting a narrowing window of opportunity, the decision-makers were prone to overestimate the risk of omission and underestimate the risk of radical action.<sup>58</sup> It has been demonstrated that a simplification of the situation and the exclusion of other options results in an optimistic bias as to the feasibility of the plan. The goal motivates only when disturbing counter-evidence is no more taken into awareness.<sup>59</sup> A counter-productive strategy is best explained by the motive of maintaining the individuals' inner balance

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- 56 Hannu Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa: Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta, Vol.: 1899–1937* (Helsinki: SDP, 1975), p. 244; TA, 331.88 (471), a draft of protocols for the meeting for SAJ representatives, 12–13 November 1917, pp. 35–64; *Työmies* 13 November 1917.
- 57 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 13 November 1917, and VapsA, 2, the account given by Sirola of the action of the Central Revolutionary Council, p. 22; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 149–50; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, p. 156.
- 58 Melissa L. Finucane, Ali Alkhami, Paul Slovic, & Stephen M. Johnson, "The Affect Heuristic in Judgment of Risks and Benefits," *Journal of Behavioral Decision Making* 13.1 (2000): 1–17; Steven A. Sloman, "Two Systems of Reasoning," and Paul Slovic, Melissa Finucane, Ellen Peters, & Donald G. MacGregor, "The Affect Heuristic," in Thomas Gilovich, Dale Griffin, & Daniel Kahneman, eds, *Heuristics and Biases: The Psychology of Intuitive Judgment* (Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 381–82, 394–96, 397–420; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking Fast and Slow* (London: Allen Lane, 2011).
- 59 Kahneman & Tversky, "Prospect Theory," pp. 28–29; Roger Buehler, Dale W. Griffin, & Michael Ross, "Inside the Planning Fallacy: The Causes and Consequences of Optimistic Time Predictions," in Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, *Heuristics and Biases*, pp. 253–60, 266–68; David Armor & Shelley E. Taylor, "When Predictions Fail: The Dilemma of Unrealistic Optimism," in Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, *Heuristics and Biases*, pp. 339–41, 346–47; Norbert Schwarz, "Feelings as Information: Moods Influence Judg-

and the cohesion of the group. For this reason, people defend obstinately what they have obtained or continue the strategy chosen, disregarding the costs.<sup>60</sup> The social democratic leaders in the fall of 1917 were wary of breaking the “whole power” of the worker’ movement, as Kuusinen framed the choice. In order to maintain it intact, they pressed the bourgeoisie to take the role of a benevolent parent, simultaneously threatening them with anarchy and offering them power “on a plate,” as Kullervo Manner succinctly put it. So the social democratic leaders let the workers’ guards march into a confrontation with the bourgeoisie without any ideas how to finish the confrontation, if the middle classes did not behave according to the socialists’ vague script: a return into the *status quo ante*.<sup>61</sup> Their miscalculated conduct confirms Daniel Kahneman’s theory of the disproportionate subjective value of losses as compared to possible gains.<sup>62</sup>

The general strike took local bourgeois guards by surprise despite their mere numerical omnipresence (there were 315 local bourgeois guards by November 1917). Red Guards could dominate by mobilizing 40–50,000 men and prevent their counterforce from organizing. Even if the strike left large swaths of the land untouched and did not halt all the industries or capture telecommunications, the Red Guards in the biggest towns were able not only to rule locally but also to spread their influence into the countryside. The most belligerent actions occurred as the Reds sought their potential opponents’ arms and captured the police school in Saksanniemi in Eastern Uusimaa province and the bourgeois militia headquarters in Helsinki. They arrested the governor of Uusimaa, Bruno Jalander, and the Minister of the Interior, Allan Serlachius, in Helsinki. The captives were accused of organizing the parallel bourgeois police force in and around Helsinki, along with 200 suspected members of bourgeois militias. As a matter of fact, Serlachius and Jalander had been carrying out the governmental plan of establishing a flying police squad. In the big cities, the

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ments and Processing Strategies,” in Gilovich, Griffin, & Kahneman, *Heuristics and Biases*, pp. 542–47.

60 See Gerhard Roth, *Fühlen, Denken, Handeln: Wie das Gehirn unser Verhalten steuert* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 558.

61 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 15 November 1917 (parliamentary group), 16 November 1917 (central revolutionary council), 17 November 1917 (parliamentary group & central revolutionary council); *Työväen Vallankumouksellisen Keskusneuvoston Tiedonantolehti*, 16–17 November 1917; Kuusinen, *Suomen vallankumouksesta*, pp. 14–15; Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, pp. 102–03; Soikkanen, *Kohti Kansan valtaa*, vol. I, p. 245; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 155–58; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 175–76.

62 Kahneman & Tversky, “Prospect Theory,” pp. 23, 31–34, 41.



strike re-established the workers' militia, replacing the recently introduced municipal police.<sup>63</sup>

Violent food and weapon requisitions lived long in bourgeois folklore. Such attacks against civilized privacy and patriarchal rule in the countryside were formally authorized by the food regulation boards but surpassed their authority when necessary.<sup>64</sup> A farmer in Honkajoki in Satakunta province put it simply: "[...] the Reds had chosen a regulation board among them, consisting of the most ardent hooligans, and authorized these organs to rob the grain storages of the farmers with violence."<sup>65</sup> For the middle classes, the armed presence of Russian soldiers made local food requisitions look like nothing less than a foreign invasion.<sup>66</sup>

The Agrarian League, representing small holders and moderate conservatives, prevented a further deterioration of the situation by working out a compromise between the adversaries. Parliament, however reluctantly, agreed to hold the highest sovereignty in Finland. On 16 November it also accepted municipal democratization and an eight-hour working day. The solution advanced by the conservatives was a reaction to the Russian revolution. The bourgeois parties anticipated that the parliamentary empowerment would be only an intermediary phase in arranging the highest power in Finland. Contrary to the intentions of the conservatives, Parliament remained the highest authority while the design of the government was debated. Contrary to the socialist fantasies that parliamentary empowerment was the ultimate solution, Parliament remained dominated by the bourgeois parties.<sup>67</sup> By the way, this meant a

63 *Suomen Vapaussota vuonna 1918*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Vapaussodan historian komitea, 1921), p. 303; Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. I: "Punainen terrori" (Helsinki: Tammi, 1966), pp. 71–78; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 138–79; Niilo V. Hersalo, *Suojeluskuntain historia*, vol. I: *Puolustustahtoinen kansa, Muinaisitsenäisyydestä valtiolliseen riippumattomuuteen* (Helsinki: Hata, 1955), p. 188; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta*, pp. 274–76; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 161–70, 177; Aino Ackté-Jalander, *Kenraali Bruno Jalanderin muistelmia Kaukaasiasta ja Suomen murroskaudelta* (Helsinki: Otava, 1932), pp. 189–225; Manninen, "Järjestysvalta järkkyy" and "Kaartit vastakkain," pp. 284–89, 297–98, 323, 346–61; *Uusi Suometar* 23 November 1917.

64 *Työväen Vallankumouksellisen Keskusneuvoston Tiedonantolehti*, 16–17 November 1917; Rantatupa, *Elintarvikehuolto*, pp. 82–91, 99–100.

65 KA, The War of Liberation and Independence collection (svi: C 9 12/II, fol. 5) memoirs n:o. 88.

66 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, p. 173, 184–85; *Sunnuntai* 25 November 1917.

67 Vesa Vares, *Konservatiivi ja murrosvuodet: Lauri Ingman ja hänen poliittinen toimintansa vuoteen 1922* (Helsinki: SHS, 1993), pp. 239–72; Polvinen, Heikkilä, & Immonen, *J.K. Paasikivi*, p. 324; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta*, pp. 272–74; *Uusi Suometar* 13 November 1917.



declaration of Finnish independence. From the point of view of party politics, it regrouped the independence group and the Agrarian League into the ranks of conservatives and ended the traditional Old Finns' politics of co-operation with any Russian government.

The Revolutionary Council hesitated to give up the solemnly proclaimed takeover, because the encouraged Red Guards in Helsinki could have performed a takeover on their own, authorized by local radical assemblies.<sup>68</sup> Gylling, Kuusinen, and Wiik could prevent it in the last moment, seeing that continuing the strike would push the country into chaos. The socialists could not maintain power without arms and without a loyal bureaucracy. And what to do with a bourgeois state, now that the parliament had acceded to the reforms demanded? Nor did a Bolshevik victory seem to be confirmed yet. Maybe the time window was already closing? If the Finnish social democrats proceeded alone, they would gain nothing but lose their valuable organizations.

But ending the extra-parliamentary pressure offered no simple solution either. Without it, the bourgeoisie might reverse the new laws and take revenge on the Red guardsmen.<sup>69</sup> Strike activists feared revenge, should they return to work. To prevent it, the guardsmen seized the railway administration.<sup>70</sup> Now having breeched the limits of legality, the cost of retreat for the Red guardsmen rose. The parliament of workers' organizations in Helsinki, the main organ of the radical guardsmen, required dictatorship and socializing the means of production. Haapalainen, along with the Red Guards of the towns of Turku and Kotka, were ready to take over the government.

Matti Turkia, the party secretary formally responsible for all workers' guards, did not take the initiative because he was afraid of weapons managed by "hooligans," whereas Yrjö Sirola, faced with his own indecisiveness, "felt ashamed." The typical compromise offered by the social democratic leaders, a "decision" to appoint a socialist government under the precondition of a parliamentary approval, did not satisfy the radicals. The declaration of ending the strike presented such achievements as the implementation of the Law of Supreme Power, disintegration of the bourgeois militias, and the pending acceptance by

68 Ka, Old Workers' Movement Collection (Vanhan työväenliikkeen järjestöt), 1 A: the protocols of the executive committee of the workers in Helsinki, 14 November 1917 and the protocols of the worker organizations' parliament in Helsinki, 17 November 1917; Jussi Tuominen's memoirs.

69 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 80–84.

70 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 16–17 November 1917; VapSA, 2, Sirola's account on the activity of the workers' revolutionary central committee, pp. 52–56; Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, pp. 104–10.

Parliament for the dominant role of the Social Democratic Party in the government. The strike ended with some reservations: workers' guards and the strike machinery remained mobilized to guard the gains and exert pressure. The tension was not resolved, and weapons were not relinquished.<sup>71</sup> Sirola depicted this situation as an "armed truce in an ongoing class war," as if the politicians had lived faced with a "steam boiler ready to explode."<sup>72</sup> From now on, the social democratic leaders got more and more entangled in the militant rhetoric, the consequences of which were from time to time put off, to be realized by some representative assembly in the unspecified future; only collective responsibility in the distant future would free the executive leaders from the responsibility of making decision that would prove to be fatal.

### Bourgeois Fantasies: Children Usurping Parental Position

The socialist leaders did not avoid moral responsibility. In the fights and during the requisitions, 34 people had died.<sup>73</sup> This fact made a return to normalcy impossible. The socialists had got what they had demanded, but at the cost of building a united front against them. The agitated tone of the bourgeois press after the general strike corresponded to socialist wordings on the local level. Socialists were depicted as "blood guardsmen."<sup>74</sup> Both parties found the other guilty of invading homes and families: the socialists by their food and weapons' requisitions,<sup>75</sup> the bourgeoisie in their attempt to shoot Red guardsmen and restore the order by weapons.<sup>76</sup>

71 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 18–22 & 30 November 1917; Ka, Vanhan työväenliikkeen järjestöt, A1: the protocols of workers' organizations' parliament in Helsinki, 16–20 November 1917; the memoirs of Jussi Tuominen, p. 150; TA, 328 (471) 5, protocols of the Social Democratic parliamentary group, 20 November 1917, and its declaration for workers 23 November 1917; *Työväen Vallankumouksellisen Keskusneuvoston Tiedonantolehti* 18 November 1917; Ackté-Jalander, *Kenraali Bruno Jalanderin muistelmia*, pp. 219–21; Salomaa, *Yrjö Sirola*, pp. 209–17; Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisen sota*, pp. 99–103; Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, vol. I, pp. 248–52, 265–68, 272; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 158–65; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 190–99, 223, 251; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 55, 65–66, 71–72.

72 II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, p. 222–23.

73 Paavolainen, *Punainen terrori*, p. 76; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 187–88; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisen Suomen puolesta*, p. 277; see also Pertti Haapala's chapter in this volume.

74 *Uusi Päivä* 21, 23, 26, & 29 November 1917, 19 January 1918.

75 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 27–28 November 1917; *Uusi Päivä* 20–22 December 1917.

76 *Työmies* 1 & 9 December 1917.

Both the socialists and bourgeois nationalists shared the same ideal of human perfectibility through self-education, and, consequently, the reverse sides of the ideal met each other as well. Nationalist and reformist ideologies had defined self-restraint and the deferring of immediate gratification in favor of long-term achievements as basic preconditions of freedom. Egoistic needs were to be subjugated for the common good in both socialism and middle-class nationalism. Thus, both parties considered themselves as representing the voice of reason and accused their counterpart as not morally mature enough to repress egoism in favor of long-term solutions.<sup>77</sup>

Juhani Aho, a liberal-minded writer and one of the spectators of the turmoil in Helsinki, now saw the Workers' Hall as a castle of insatiable robber barons. Reforms apparently did not bring along any lasting satisfaction:<sup>78</sup> "Everything had to be obtained by force and extortion, as looted booty; only such results were appreciated among the Reds." Aho felt that the socialists had rejected any responsive approach and mutual attunement with the reformist bourgeois groups. They could no longer be acknowledged as part of the Fennoman heritage of civic self-education: "A mother did not acknowledge his son and the son did no longer recognize his mother."<sup>79</sup>

The effort-reward balance was upset in bourgeois fantasies concerning Red rule. While the socialists saw food jobbers controlling municipal boards, the bourgeoisie feared that "incompetent" and "irresponsible" elements would suck the "independent" citizens dry.<sup>80</sup> The fantasies of feasting among the Red Guards corresponded symmetrically to depictions by *Työmies* about the orgies of war speculators. The Red Guard leaders were served "their rice porridge cooked with cream," it was enjoyed with cream, and in addition to this cornucopia of fat they "covered their bread loaves with an inch of butter" and, finally, accompanied their meal with the finest wines.<sup>81</sup> The socialists tried by violent means to "steal for themselves privileges, advantages and property to which they were not entitled to according to the laws or morality." For undeveloped minds, a revolution promised an immediate access to "power and riches."<sup>82</sup> The confrontation was defined in moral terms, between those who were able

77 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 129–221; Siltala, *Valkoisen äidin pojat*; Risto Alapuro et al., eds, *Kansa liikkeessä* (Vaasa: Kirjayhtymä, 1986); Jari Ehrnrooth, "Kapinan ydin," *Tiede & edistys* 18.1 (1993): 62–63.

78 See the National Library (НУК), E.G. Palmén collection (V: 39, coll. 165.7), Palmén's notes from the time of rebellion, 1918..

79 *Helsingin Sanomat* 28 April 1918.

80 *Uusi Suometar* 17 July 1917.

81 *Uusi Suometar* 7 July 1918.

82 *Uusi Suometar* 27 & 30 April 5 May (quot.), 1918; *Uusi Päivä*, 25 April 1918.

to think clearly and manage realities, and the lunatics, who yielded to wishful thinking.<sup>83</sup> “Now, the cancer in society that has been growing in the minds has burst open in the general strike, revealing all the wide-spread pollution.” The general strike was directed against all such persons “whose industriousness, skill, self-restraint, frugality, virtuosity are so invaluable for our nation in coping with food shortage.”<sup>84</sup> In the descriptions of the bourgeois press, all the victims of food and weapons requisitions during the general strike and later on incorporated the highest ideals of self-initiating entrepreneurs and self-sacrificing reformers and educators. They represented law, because they had internalized it. Their killers, in contrast, obeyed the law only under force that now had lost its oppressive hold.<sup>85</sup> Consequently, the bourgeoisie represented adult self-constraint, whereas the rebelling masses represented lack of self-regulation, in regard to their abilities to subdue immediate impulses to some long-term good.<sup>86</sup> Social Democracy could be compared with a millenarian movement that did not take realities into account – it had taught workers to demand rights without assuming responsibilities at the same time.<sup>87</sup>

Red Guard attitudes showed how totally the social democratic leaders had failed as folk educators. “Those who should educate and refine the people’s character ended step by step as obedient implementers of street gangs, while the leading theories of Social Democracy were pushed aside.”<sup>88</sup> In their anxiousness to please the masses, the leaders showed their lack of moral character: they reminded of “immature teen boys,” who used their “reckless mouths” as their only means of coping.<sup>89</sup> The leaders revealed their lack of moral fiber when they hid in anonymous structures of their party apparatus and carried out the strike without making any man publicly accountable for the decisions.<sup>90</sup>

83 *Helsingin Sanomat* 13 November 1917; *Uusi Päivä*, 22 January 1918; *Hufvudsstadsbladet* 17 May 1918. Later, the psychopathological interpretations became entrenched: *Uusi Päivä*, 29 August 1918; *Hufvudsstadsbladet* 24 November 1917, 5 May & 8 June 1918; *Ilkka* 22 March & 8 May 1918.

84 *Uusi Suometar* 28–29 November 1917; *Uusi Päivä* 12–13 January 1918.

85 *Uusi Päivä* 8, 10, 12, 20–21, 27, & 29 November 1917, 11 January 1918.

86 *Ilkka* 6 & 13 February 1918; *Uusi Suometar* 15 August 1918.

87 L. Åström, *Valtiollisia seikkailijoita: Psykopatologista ja yhteiskunta-sielutieteellistä valaisua punakaartilaisliikkeestä* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918).

88 *Ilkka* 8 May 1918.

89 Volter Kilpi, “Vuoden vaihteessa: Mietteitä kansallisesta itsenäisyydestämme,” *Valvoja* (1918): 6–14.

90 *Uusi Päivä* 11–12 December 1917; Juhani Aho, *Hajamietteitä kapinaviikolta*, vol. I: *ensimmäinen ja toinen viikko* (Porvoo: Söderström, 1918), p. 13 (diary entry on 27 January 1918).

According to the bourgeois line of argumentation, the leaders of the SDP fuelled the demands of the agitated masses so that their ill-considered action “annihilated all creative work without which it was impossible to grow bread from the hard soil.”<sup>91</sup> Eero Haapalainen, the later leader of the Red Guards, argued that the guards would nourish themselves and the whole country. The bourgeois writers interpreted this as rhetoric meant to cherish the “vices and lusts of the masses.” Reality would ultimately teach that only honest work could nourish the country, not the confiscation from the rich.<sup>92</sup>

The takeover of municipal organizations almost amused some bourgeois spectators: “On the one hand, it aroused disgust and stressed one’s heart, on the other hand it made one cry but also laugh, when serious questions were rendered a carnival.”<sup>93</sup> Due to their lack of competence, the Reds needed an immense mobilization of people to get one bank branch closed.<sup>94</sup> The obvious lack of virtuosity of the Red guardsmen in handling rifles with long bayonets was easy to interpret as a display of immature masculinity with such a stolen phallus symbol – not quite convincing in front of women but dangerous for passers-by.<sup>95</sup> Red commanders eagerly mounted noble horses, pretending to be officers.<sup>96</sup> Such episodes convinced the bourgeoisie of the ridiculous attempt of the Reds, as minor children, assuming the roles reserved to mature adults, even though they could not yet take care for themselves, never mind the whole of the society. Among the Reds, the body seemed to take over of the head.

“They were Finnish men. And, however, they were neither Finnish nor even men,” lamented Juhani Aho, who could not discern anyone among the Reds corresponding to the national self-image of a true Finn. Reds were obviously so deeply infiltrated by Bolshevism that they already acted and reacted in a Russian way.<sup>97</sup> Even after the obvious crimes during the general strike, the party leaders did not distance themselves from the terror perpetrated by their guards and Russian soldiers. They left the nation suffering from “anxiety and shame,”

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91 *Uusi Päivä*, 17 April 1918.

92 *Uusi Suometar* 1 May 1918.

93 *Ilkka* 22 March 1918.

94 *Uusi Päivä* 20 November 1917.

95 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 20–21 November 1918; *Uusi Päivä* 20–21 & 29 November 1917.

96 Kimmo Lehtimäki, *Verner Lehtimäki – punapäällikkö* (Jyväskylä: Revontuli, 2005), pp. 31–33.

97 *Helsingin Sanomat* 25 May 1918.

caused by the fact that Finnish society was unable to react in a sane way against such phenomena.<sup>98</sup>

Such a demise of moral character could have been caused only by foreign pollution. In the most sexualized fantasies of national merger, the socialist leaders were imagined to be the passive participant in sexual intercourse. “A Finnish man, be it Tokoi,<sup>99</sup> hugged a Russian man and the Russian man kissed that Finn in a passionate way.” But – the fantasy went on – the Finnish bear got awakened and could sniff the flavor of illicit sexuality and began to roar. The “bloody, wild wedding ceremony” revealed that the once so proud Finnish nationalists in the workers’ movement had turned into “corporeally abused, mentally degenerated Russian matushkas.”<sup>100</sup> Needless to say, the beast was determined to exact revenge for such bestiality.

Social democratic policy could have been criticized without sexual imagery, too. The sexualization of politics revealed how closely the bourgeois nationalists felt the body politics of the national state to represent their own corporeal existence and psychic boundaries. From now on, the adversaries became dehumanized into aliens. For the educated class, the period 1917–18 repeated the experiences from the years of Russification acts and the constitutional infighting: working-class people seemed to prefer material gains over altruistic commitments. Socialists had blamed food jobbers for the same reason. Accordingly, both parties understood their own actions as merely situational reactions to threatening behavior of the other, caused by their malevolent dispositions.

### Agency Transfers and Reflex Actions

The party assembly of the Social Democratic Party at the end of November concluded that the party would stay protected from revenge only by taking defensive actions against the approaching reaction. Now, the dogmatic Kuusinen was ready to bend his theories so that a republican revolution and a provisory extra-parliamentary government would be necessary to guarantee the reforms and prevent a violent collision between the avenging employers and Red guardsmen. Other “tolerable” exits were beyond his imagination: options

98 *Helsingin Sanomat* 24–27 November 1917; *Uusi Päivä* 28 November & 19 December 1917 & 11 January 1918.

99 Oskari Tokoi had been the first social democratic “Prime Minister” when he headed the Senate after the February Revolution and saw through the declaration of the Law of Supreme Power.

100 *Ilkka* 26 April 1918.

were reduced to two, to either lead the masses or get trampled underfoot. Assuming their inevitable role, the best the social democratic leaders could do was to rescue the unity of the workers, the workers' organizations, and their personal positions.

Red dictatorship was considered only as a pre-emptive measure. Violence could only be allowed "in order to stop the violence directed against the workers." This formulation institutionalized the Civil War within the republic, especially when the constitution to be defended was the Law of Supreme Power. The moderates achieved a provision for eventual parliamentary co-operation. What the moderates did not attain, however, was the disarmament and subjugation of the guards under the control of the party. Gylling predicted that "the revolution may be coming but it could not be performed." In conclusion, Kullervo Manner called for unity in the moment when the bourgeoisie sought to "crush the workers' movement in its entirety." By delegating the decisive position to the bourgeois camp, the moderates and radicals within the party were able to play a common melody.<sup>101</sup>

In this party assembly, much was said about changes, in order to prevent anything from changing. Mere being together in unisonous mood replaced action. There exists evidence that a group under stress often reacts by seeking to preserve itself as unchangeable while awaiting a redeemer or solution from the outside. The role of the party as a group bonded together by emotions rather than achievable goals was emphasized: the "leader" of a group that exists for emotional fulfillment can only allow and confirm the expectations of the group's members, not deny them anything. Belonging to this kind of group relieves one from isolation and fear of anxiety. A thrust forward is dictated not by interest calculus but by the need to preserve unity.<sup>102</sup>

101 TA, 329:5 (471), protocols of the extraordinary party assembly of the Social Democratic Party, 25–27 November 1917, the account by Anton Huotari on the same meeting, p. 22, and the decision on the ways of action; KA, Crimes against the State, prosecutor files (VRO-syA), Ca 9:1, the draft of the party assembly protocol, p. 13–20; K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 25 November 1917; Evert Huttunen, *Mietteitä nykyisestä tilanteesta* (Helsinki: Edistysseurojen kustannus, 1920), pp. 80–87; Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, vol. I, p. 248; Lehen, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, pp. 108–14; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, 239–49, 333; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 56–57; *Työmies* 28 November 1917.

102 See Chassequet-Smirgel, *La maladie d'idéalité*, pp. 70–83; Heikki Sarmaja & Matti Virtanen, "Hulluuden hetkiä," in Vilma Hänninen & Oili-Helena Ylijoki, *Muuttuuko ihminen* (Tampere: Tampere University Press, 2004), pp. 75–104; Claudio Neri, *Gruppenprozesse: Theorie und Praxis der psychoanalytischen Gruppentherapie* (Giessen: Psycho-Sozial Verlag, 2006), pp. 56–57, 135, 211–13; and Roth, *Fühlen, Denken, Handeln*, pp. 558–60. Rational interests can be defined as long-term egoism, irrationality as short-term. Daniel



Unity was dictated also by the fear that, without a common thrust forward, the masses could disown their leaders. “The dissatisfaction directed towards the bourgeoisie can be directed also against us, if we do not decisively assume the leadership of the rising mass movement,” warned the editor-in-chief of *Sosialisti*, the party newspaper in radical Turku.<sup>103</sup> *We demand* worked as an ultimatum also for the social democratic leaders: they could not retreat, because otherwise “the workers would shoot us,” as Gylling explained.<sup>104</sup> The sensitive ideologist Sirola could not understand why the bourgeoisie scolded the social democratic leaders who had to receive all the pressure and contain it.<sup>105</sup>

The seven weeks of teetering on the verge of peace and war after the operatively successful but strategically underutilized general strike were enough to close the window of opportunity opened up by the Bolshevik revolution and tilt the balance of power to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. At the end of the general strike, workers’ guards had obtained c. 5000 rifles from the Russians, whereas the arms acquired by the bourgeoisie, supplied by activists from Germany, were concentrated on the west Coast and had not yet been delivered to bourgeois civil guards in southern Finland. In seven weeks, however, the civil guards, either as municipal organizations or as private associations, outnumbered their counterparts in men or were tentatively united under a military organization. Meanwhile, the workers’ guards were, too, formally organized as an army and acquired more weapons from Petrograd and the departing Russian troops.

Out of 213 bourgeois guards, 166 claimed the reason for their existence was to guard the social order, help authorities in law enforcement, and protect property rights. Only a minority of the guards mentioned national independence or the prevention of the Russian scorched-earth policy among their goals. Of course, these motives could have motivated guards that did not explicitly state it, perhaps concealed because the Russians were still present. Nevertheless, as Harri Korpisaari has stated, it must be noted that the activist military plans to chase the Russian military away with the help of German intervention accompanied with a local popular rise in arms were eventually im-

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Kahneman, “New Challenges to the Rationality Assumption,” in Kahneman & Tversky, eds, *Choices, Values, and Frames*, pp. 758–61, 773–74.

103 TA, 329:5, protocols of Social Democratic Party Council, 30 October 1917.

104 Ackté-Jalander, *Kenraali Bruno Jalanderin muistelmia*, pp. 189–90.

105 Salomaa, *Yrjö Sirola*, p. 212: “We have faced the masses who have been enraged by being prevented from cleansing thoroughly once the action had started.” II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, pp. 222 (Sirola, 26 November 1917).



plemented for reasons other than initially planned.<sup>106</sup> At this point, the activists officially renounced their plan of a war of independence that would have united different strata of society by excluding the socialists from their guards – until then formally eligible – and now prepared the guards to fight against both the Russians and the socialists.<sup>107</sup>

Bolsheviks urged their Finnish sister party to make a revolution in order to secure Petrograd against the counter-revolution from the Northeast, promising weapons but leaving the decision for the Finns. Stalin and Leon Trotsky did not understand the hesitation of their Finnish comrades towards a *coup d'état* that would have, in their experience, been easily carried out by a resolute minority, and they scorned the procrastinating strategy of the Finns evidenced in preparing organizations instead of seizing their historical moment.<sup>108</sup> During the decisive seven weeks following the general strike in Finland, the Bolsheviks, in turn, had to manage their few reliable troops in the railway war in southern Russia, while the old Imperial Army practically dissolved and its peasant soldiers returned to Russia to participate in land reforms. The Brest-Litovsk negotiations with Germany and its aim to include the Baltic area into its sphere of domination limited Russian support for the Red Finns as well.<sup>109</sup>

The general strike with its violence had chased the Agrarian League and the independence activists away from the social democrats, with whom they until then had been able to agree at least on the matter of national independence. Now, the bourgeois parties found a common denominator in distancing themselves from a Russia that apparently threatened to engulf Finland into chaos, whereas the social democrats now resorted to the new Russian rulers and did not hasten the evacuation of the remaining Russian troops from Finland (by the end of 1917 they had been reduced to 40,000 from 125,000 in the summer).

106 Korpisaari, *Itsenäisyyden puolesta*, pp. 126–27, 156–69, 266–70, 279–92; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. II, pp. 408–09; Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy,” pp. 310, 331, and “Kaartit vastakkain,” pp. 346–47, 351, 372–92.

107 Hersalo, *Suojeluskuntain historia*, vol. I, p. 167; Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy,” pp. 317–20; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisyyden puolesta*, pp. 256, 278, 282–83. Martti Ahti, *Ryssän vihassa: Elmo Kaila 1888–1935, Aktivistin, asevoimien harmaan eminenssin ja Akateemisen Karjala-Seuran puheenjohtajan elämäkerta* (Helsinki: WSOY), p. 73.

108 Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi*, vol. I, pp. 130–31, 200, 216–18; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 180–202, 239–42, 247–68; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 23–30, 57–62, 91–96; Manninen, “Kaartit vastakkain,” pp. 390–91; TA, 329(471) 5, the report by E. Salin, E. Huttunen, and K. Manner for the social democratic parliamentary group about the negotiations with Lenin and Stalin; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 27–28 & 31 December 1917.

109 Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2007), pp. 16–33.

This series of events made it possible to later forget how opposed the majority of the responsible bourgeois politicians had been to the youthful dreams of national independence as long as Russian demand fuelled the Finnish economy.<sup>110</sup>

*Uusi Päivä* (“New Day”), the voice of the independence group within the Old Finns, depicted the situation with images of overwhelming tides, storms, and breaking dams, fantasies of inner and external chaos, and building a wall against it. The “deep” and unbelievably “firm” liaison between the Finnish socialists and the Russians obliged all the bourgeois parties to consolidate a “male front” against them.<sup>111</sup> Their sense of being exposed by external forces was forged into a sense of agency, “into a conscious battle to achieve something.”<sup>112</sup> Out-group hostility proceeded hand in hand with unifying the in-group.<sup>113</sup> Freeing Finland from the deadly embrace of Russia was now equated with relief from inner psychic tensions as well. Moreover, the social conflicts of interests could now be imagined to be external “contagion” from the demoralized Russians.<sup>114</sup>

Lack of mutual trust became evident in the formation of the government: attempts to form an overarching coalition foundered on the fact that the Red Guards did not free Governor Jalander, the symbolic hostage of the workers’ guard in Helsinki. This powerful unit had, during the strike, not only waged a class war of its own but also had attempted to dominate other workers’ organizations.<sup>115</sup> A bourgeois-majority government was established on 27 November, explicitly aimed at restoring the order by means of new police and armed forces. Under Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, an unbending representative of law-and-order thinking and constitutional resistance against Russification, it now assumed the highest power, until then fiercely disputed. The fantasy of an avenging bourgeoisie, following the pattern set by the violent restoration of order after the Paris Commune that had circulated among socialists already during the fall, was obviously coming true like a self-fulfilling prophesy. And the socialists, in turn, played their own role in this very same fantasy, playing

110 *Suomen Vapaussodan Historia*, vol. I, pp. 295–96; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 164–66, 209–16; II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, pp. 185–223; Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy,” “Kaartit vastakkain,” & “Tie sotaan,” pp. 255, 371, 409, respectively.

111 *Uusi Päivä*, 13 November 1917, 3 & 20 December 1917, 19–22 January 1918.

112 *Uusi Päivä*, 10 November 1917.

113 Boris Bizumic & John Duckitt, “What is and is Not Ethnocentrism? A Conceptual Analysis and Political Implications,” *Political Psychology* 33.6 (2012): 890–903.

114 *Uusi Päivä* 28 November & 12–13 December 1917.

115 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. II, pp. 177–78.

the aggressor in their planned takeover of power, officially rationalized as a pre-emptive measure to constrain the blood bath.<sup>116</sup>

Socialists experienced the writings of the bourgeois press after the strike as “humiliating”: they interpreted the critique as non-recognition of their urgent needs.<sup>117</sup> Workers’ guards stayed mobilized in order to prevent the revenge and to further “supply” food for the masses.<sup>118</sup> In Turku, power actually did not even formally return to the local government, as the workers’ guards retained it. When the local government did not pay for the Turku militia, the militia went on strike, allowing “hooligans” to loot shops on 15–17 December 1917. This kind of local battle between competing police forces went on in many towns, often ending in parliamentary compromises.<sup>119</sup>

From November until January, the bourgeois and socialist camps in municipalities closed their minds against any contradictory evidence, distrusting everyone outside their own group, preparing for the worst, and accusing each other of preparing proscription lists<sup>120</sup> and “tingling in their hunger for weapons,” as teacher Otto Puronkari – a quite typical organizer of bourgeois militia – in South-Savonian Kangasniemi defined it.<sup>121</sup> As mutual contacts ceased and reality testing was blurred along with the shattered everyday normalcy during the strike, it became easier to remodel reality according to fears and wishes.<sup>122</sup> Some individuals on both sides were able to express views that differed from

116 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 86–87.

117 *Työmies* 21, 24, & 26–27 November 1917.

118 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, p. 273.

119 KA, VapsA 774, protocols of the Social Democratic municipal organization in Turku, 18–21 November & 4 December 1917; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 63–65; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 274–80; Manninen, “Kaartit vastakkain,” pp. 349, 354, 365–69.

120 *Työmies* 26–27 October 1917; *Uusi Päivä* 3 November 1917; *Helsingin Sanomat* 22 November 1917, *Uusi Suometar* 27 July 1918; KA, SVI C 9 12/II, memoirs from 1917–18, fol. 3, no. 22 (pp. 29–30), fol. 4, no. 48 (p. 2), 49 (p. 2), 53 (p. 3), & 69 (pp. 31–32), fol. 5, no. 80 (p. 13), 96 (pp. 2–3), 82 (p.2), 99 & 102 (p. 10); Supreme Court for the crimes against the State files (VRYO), 7973, character statement on Ida Jokinen by the staff of the Civil Guard in Rantoo, Sääksmäki; VRYO 23927, statement by the Civil Guard staff in Eräjärvi, 7 June 1918; KA, VRYO 23168, testimony by Emma Anttila against Matilda Krapp, Sahanlahti, 3 May 1918; Paavolainen, *Punainen terrori*, p. 245; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 230–31.

121 KA, SVI C 9 12/II, fol. 4, no. 40 (p. 8, quote) & 4 (p. 7), file 5, no. 103 (pp. 1–2) & 114 (pp. 4–5). See also Manninen, “Järjestysvalta järkkyy,” pp. 310–11.

122 Slovic et al., “The Affect Heuristic,” pp. 397–400; Schwarz, “Feelings as Information,” p. 536.

the dynamics of mutually reinforcing projections, but most often only the adversary was accused of being stricken by paranoia.<sup>123</sup>

Every time the adversary made a move, an automatic, reflex-like reaction in self-defense was felt to be justified.<sup>124</sup> As the bourgeois press accused the socialist leaders of having “over-strung the bow” or when these accused leaders appealed to the masses to prepare for a volcanic eruption, “booming under the earth,” they both rationalized their own acts as something determined only by the necessity. Revenge fantasies were depersonalized as forces of history or development on both sides, even the product of determinism.<sup>125</sup> For the bourgeoisie, the formation of a bourgeois government with a broad base promising social order seemed to open up more mental space for agency and making responsible initiatives: “[...] an escape from the plague-filled cave to under a higher roof and with more light,”<sup>126</sup> but the divisive atmosphere in Parliament let no one relax yet.

Even the formal declaration of independence on 6 December did not unite the nation behind one central question but – on the contrary – seemed to show to the outside world how unprepared the Finns were to assume full self-responsibility. The image of one nation under a common self-ideal had been fragmented, and the personal selves of the nationalist bourgeois people seemed to dissolve, too: it was as if the personal and integral identity had leaked away along with the fragile national image, evidencing a most humiliating demonstration of lack of self-restraint. Metaphors such as being “wet” everywhere, “being tainted in shame,” or being suffocated in the darkness were repeated again and again in private documents and in the press in late 1917 and early 1918. Suspicions about the viability of the nation as an independent state haunted many a citizen. Being paralyzed in its national disunity and emptied of ideals, Finland was isolated from all the good, united with the “sick” body of

123 *Työmies* 28 November 1917; TA, 329.5 (471) social democratic student association to the party assembly, 25 November 1917, as a protocols attachment; *Uusi päivä* 12 & 20 November 1917, 13 January, & 20 April 1918; *Uusi Suometar* 27 January 1918; Aho, *Hajamiettiä kapinaviikoilta*, vol. I, pp. 30–31, 48, 133, & vol. II, pp. 16–17; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 147, 157, 233–34.

124 See Jaak Panksepp, “On the Subcortical Sources of Basic Human Emotions and the Primacy of Emotional-Affective (Action-Perception) Processes in Human Consciousness,” *Evolution and Cognition* 7.1 (2001): 137, and “The Neuro-Evolutionary Cusp Between Emotions and Cognition: Implications for Understanding Consciousness and the Emergence of a United Mind Science,” *Evolution and Cognition* 7.1 (2001): 154–55.

125 *Ilkka* 22 November 1917; *Uusi Päivä* 22 November 1917; *Työmies* 14 August 1917.

126 *Uusi Suometar* 25 (quot.) & 28 November 1917.

Russia, and exposed to the contagion of deadly diseases.<sup>127</sup> The qualities of dark, cold, wet, pressure, strangulation, fragmentation, and shame surfaced in the socialist press too, although the bourgeoisie was more prone to express abstract dichotomies with organic metaphors.

From the viewpoint of organically fathomed nationalism, the middle classes perceived the socialists as malfunctioning parts of the national body, unable to inhibit the impulses of the masses. This entailed a narcissistic insult in the bourgeoisie and evoked disappointed rage.<sup>128</sup> On the basis of the fusion of national and individual boundaries into a bodily whole in the political discourse and even in deeper fantasies, it was no wonder that the following cleansing was expressed in medical terms.<sup>129</sup> As detailed elsewhere in this volume, for the bourgeois camp, and especially for the independence movement, the turning of the dysfunctional citizens from the body politic into a foreign anti-body, classifying the “Russianized” or “poisoned” socialists as representatives of an external chaos, offered an escape from internal tensions between national ego ideal and contradictory realities.<sup>130</sup> This, to be true, would be painful, because they had to amputate half of their fellow citizens from their cherished national self in order to rescue its unity; the inevitable cut was compared with cardiac surgery.<sup>131</sup> The irreversibility of a bloodbath and a battle for national rebirth out of the mess of 1917 became self-evident first for some novelists, then in the larger press. Kyösti Wilkuna, an activist novelist, dreamed of wiping the mob out of the street by artillery in order to overcome his apathy depicted as “grey, penetrating wet and mud.”<sup>132</sup>

127 *Uusi Päivä*, 12 & 21 November 1917, 5 December 1917, & 7–9, 15, 22, & 30 January 1918; *Uusi Suometar*, 16 May 1918; Aho, *Hajamietteitä kapinaviikoilta*, vol. I, p. 78. On the shame caused by the leaking body image, see Robert Culbertson, “Embodied Memory, Transcendence, and Telling: Recounting Trauma, Re-establishing the Self,” *New Literary History* 26.1 (1995): 169–95.

128 Siltala, *Valkoisen äidin pojat*, pp. 622–46, and *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 320–48.

129 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 320–48. On porous boundaries as a threat to the national body, see Laura Otis, *Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science, and Politics* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 7, 18–36.

130 *Uusi Päivä* 20, 24, 26, & 28 November 1917, 3–4, 10, 21, & 29 December 1917, 26 January 1918, 15 April 1918, & 7 May 1918.

131 *Uusi Päivä*, 20 April 1918.

132 Literature Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKSA), Kyösti Wilkuna to V.A. Koskenniemi, 13 December 1917, mf. 67:12; see also SKSA, Juhani Siljo to Wilkuna, July 9, mf. 67:13. Further on the images of Russians, the functions of Russophobia, and the role of the authors during the Civil War, see Tuomas Tepora’s chapter *Mystified War* in this volume.

The independence of a nation would remain unreal and the nation not aware of itself as a separate being as long as the new state was not yet purified with the unified effort of its citizens and their blood. This sacrifice would help the nation regain its agency by getting rid of the Russians and “Russianized” Finns.<sup>133</sup> This recategorization of the social opposites into national ones was completed also by the formerly reformist Old Finns (the Fennomans) and the Agrarians alike in the months following the general strike.<sup>134</sup>

As the bourgeois camp was busy in creating a united front in action and on the level of fantasies, the socialists were hindered by their internal indecision but maintained formal unity in letting their radicals act in the name of the whole camp, thus relieving the reluctant majority from acute responsibility for the moment. Workers’ guards decided to stay formally under the leadership of the Social Democratic Party but practically undertook to organize themselves from local pickets into a centralized battle organization in order to receive arms from the Russians.<sup>135</sup> The party ideologists Kuusinen and Sirola prevented the moderates in the party leadership from condemning hooliganism in Turku. They saw that the workers’ movement could not turn against its own force without emasculating itself.<sup>136</sup> Even the best half-hearted measures by the SDP, however, brought about real consequences, as the bourgeois parliament majority, reacting to the events in Turku, authorized the new power of order.<sup>137</sup>

Namely, Svinhufvud’s government decided on 9 January 1918 to replace the militias in towns with a loyal police force and buy arms from Germany.<sup>138</sup> The bourgeois proposals in Parliament to create strong, independent armed forces under the government due to the continuing dual power situation had already after the strike been taken as a declaration of class war by the social democrats.<sup>139</sup> Emil Eloranta, a member of the radical grouping in the Social Democratic Party, imagined the bourgeoisie acquiring explosive bullets to restore

133 *Uusi Päivä* 12 & 19 January 1918; KA, Mf. 2370, Lauri Ingman collection, Lauri Ingman diary, 30–31 January 1918 & 5–6, 12, & 14–15 February 1918.

134 Santeri Alkio, *Mielialoja: Eräitä päiväkirjamerkintöjä helmikuulta, Taistelun jälkeen* (Tampere: Santeri Alkio, 1918), p. 83.

135 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 252–67, 284–303, 334, 346–54.

136 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, November 1917; *Työmies* 8 & 15–16 January 1918; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, p. 64.

137 Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 67–68; *Uusi Päivä*, 17 December 1917.

138 Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 227–30.

139 II parliamentary protocols 1917 I, pp. 292–93, 601–19, 659–99, 713–14, 728, 843–94, 902–44 (literally articulated by Airola, 12 January 1918 (p. 944)).

their order.<sup>140</sup> The plans forged under General C.G.E. Mannerheim, appointed to lead the Military Committee of activists on 15 January 1918, entailed limited police operations in the biggest towns and driving out the rest of the Russian troops.<sup>141</sup>

In order to keep the initiative of socialists without committing themselves personally, the Social Democratic Party leadership decided from 13 January on to let the party be drawn into the looming armed conflict between the guards. It required the abdication of the government but presented only a moderate reform program instead. The radical Red Guard in Helsinki, meanwhile, had independently taken over the headquarters of the workers' guards and insisted on 15 January on making a revolution. The party council hovered on the verge of division on 19 January, as the majority opposed to establishing a revolutionary council, even though they stated that the situation was critical. To resolve tensions, the party council authorized a committee consisting of the most radical guardsmen to decide the moment when the revolutionary action should take place. By means of psychological splitting and externalizing the decision to create this Military Committee on the one hand and delegating final responsibility for decisions into a forthcoming party assembly on the other, the legally chosen party managers tried to keep the party united but distance it somehow from the risks that the radicals would take. All this happened in a covert way, in order to avoid criticism for their alleged embourgeoisement.<sup>142</sup>

Gradual assimilation of the parliamentary party with the radical guards now proceeded unimpeded, driven by the logic of practical management. As the workers' guards had been authorized to acquire munitions, they should – consequently – also protect their supplies against eventual capture by the civil guards. From the beginning of January 1918, the opposing guards attempted to seize each other's arms and got entangled in mutual shootings in many localities, the most serious of them being the attempted conquest of Vyborg by local rural civil guards and the ensued general strike in the town, accompanied by the intervention of pro-Red Russians. In the bourgeois camp, the civil guards and the participants of provisory officer courses in Ostrobothnia on the west-

140 *Työmies* 16 January 1918.

141 Hersalo, *Suojeluskuntain historia*, vol. I, pp. 198–99; Manninen, “Tie sotaan,” pp. 403–04; Korpisaari, *Itsenäisyyden puolesta*, p. 291.

142 *Työmies* 11–12, 15, 22, 24, & 26 January 1918; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 11–16 & 20–21 January 1918; TA, 329:5, 328, protocols of the social democratic parliament group, January 13, protocol of the Social Democratic Party council, 19–22 January 1918, and agenda for the forthcoming party assembly, 24 January 1918; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 362–65, 372–87; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 70–80, 89; Manninen, “Tie sotaan,” pp. 405–20.



ern coast openly planned a march to southern Finland to prevent the socialist revolution. In Karelia, the civil guards encircled Vyborg and tried to cut off railway lines to Petrograd. These measures reinforced the impression already prevailing among the Red guardsmen that the bourgeoisie was now moving on to the offensive. In practice, the Civil War was already going on without any declarations.<sup>143</sup>

The Svinhufvud Senate negotiated a non-intervention agreement with the representatives of the Russian military soviets in Helsinki and declared on 25 January the white troops based in Ostrobothnia as the state's army. Civil Guards had been acknowledged as a part of state machinery as early as 18 January. From now on, eventual Russian intervention would endanger the truce negotiations between Germany and Russia in Brest-Litovsk and taint the non-imperialist image of the Bolsheviks. They – to be true – had a little earlier urged the Finnish social democrats to overcome their majoritarian scruples and follow the Russian example, as long as the Russian soldiers were still present to provide weapons, although the war-weary soldiers themselves were not interested in entangling into any real warfare more.<sup>144</sup>

Meanwhile, two simultaneous processes had already started on 23–24 January that caused an ultimate collision of antagonist forces; the alleged threat of an intervention by the Russian troops accelerated in Ostrobothnia Mannerheim's operations to disarm the Russian stationary troops there. The operation had been first canceled but then became irrevocable by the logics of voluntary action. The Civil Guards had been focused on action since 21 January. On the Karelian coastline by the Gulf of Finland, a train filled with weapons was expected from Petrograd towards Helsinki to complete the armament of the workers' guards. To protect the transport, the Red Guards mobilized themselves and declared a regional general strike from 25 January onwards. This meant a full-fledged military operation likely to cause counter-measures from their adversaries, and demobilization could no longer be imagined. Workers' guards were far from operative, but – after the maneuvers conducted by the

143 Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 369–71; Manninen, "Tie sotaan," pp. 398–404; *Suomen Vapaussota*, vol. II, pp. 25, 95; Hersalo, *Suojeluskuntain historia*, vol. I, pp. 470–75.

144 Polvinen, *Venäjän vallankumous ja Suomi*, vol. I, pp. 130–31, 200, 216–18; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 180–202, 239–42, 247–68; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 23–30, 57–62, 91–96; Manninen, "Tie sotaan," pp. 407, 414, 424–29; TA, 329 (471) 5, the report made by E. Salin, E. Huttunen, and K. Manner for the social democratic parliamentary group about the negotiations with Lenin and Stalin; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 27–28 & 31 December 1917.



Civil Guards – cutting off the line to Russia and being crushed by the further mobilizing Civil Guards loomed as another option.<sup>145</sup>

The *fait accompli* drove the leading committee of the SDP to declare a seizure of power in the night 27–28 January, officially as a reaction to the recognition of Mannerheim's army as Finland's official army a day earlier. The measure was conceived to be an inevitable consequence of "scarcity" and "longing for justice"; it should consist only of defense of reforms and carrying out further reforms, even social security and progressive taxation, to be later submitted to a democratic parliament. Sirola, Kuusinen, and their ilk understood themselves to be provisional placeholders taking care of the everyday routines and avoiding any crimes, let alone violence; still, they tried to make an *as if* revolution.<sup>146</sup>

The unity of the workers' front was formally sealed on the eve of war, as the Helsinki Red Guard ultimately engulfed the party.<sup>147</sup> While the socialist party leaders escaped into civil normalcy consisting of everyday chores, Eero Haapalainen, the commander-in-chief of the Red Guards, confronted them like a haunting alter ego with some torturous realities, such as the necessary distribution of weapons and allowing the guardsmen to shoot with these weapons – or arresting the government and dangerous counter-revolutionaries.<sup>148</sup> It could be expected that this divided state of the socialists' minds delayed the imprisonment of central bourgeois politicians by a rather decisive day, letting the targets escape and unite the government majority in Vaasa, in Ostrobothnia.<sup>149</sup>

At the moment of the simultaneous disarmament of Russian troops in western Finland and the declaration of Revolution in Helsinki 27–28 January, the 375 Red Guards possessed c. 10,000 rifles, the 415 bourgeois Civil Guards a little less.<sup>150</sup> Many guardsmen still saw themselves either as members of local civil

145 Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 247–49, 254–57, 270–71; Jussi T. Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vol. I (Helsinki: VAPK, 1981), pp. 31–40; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 368–72, 382–84; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 89–90; Manninen, "Tie sotaan," pp. 403–04, 414–15, 420–31; KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary, 13, 18 & 24 January 1918.

146 TA, 323.2 (471), Sirola's memorandum "Tilanteen arvioiminen ja toiminnan määrittely"; Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, pp. 260–61; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 106–21, 151–58, 280, 310–30; *Työmies* 29 January 1918.

147 Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vol. I, pp. 47–48; Salkola, *Työväenkaartien synty*, vol. I, pp. 388–89; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 180–90.

148 KA, VROSyA Ca 9, VRYO 25066, 25078 & 15472, investigation protocols of Yrjö Mäkelin, Edvard Salin, A.J. Vidgren, & E.A. Metsäranta.

149 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 119–20.

150 Manninen, "Kaartit vastakkain," pp. 394–95.

guards to maintain the order or members of the still existing organization of the general strike. As a matter of fact, the Red military organization was based on the machinery of the November strike, with its local strike committees that had replaced the bureaucratic administration. They had no further strategy than to occupy the central towns in southern Finland and keep them under their control. They did not try to protect the scattered Red towns in northern Finland or create anything like a front line. The line from Pori in Satakunta in the west to Karelia in the east remained porous for a month but became gradually consolidated.<sup>151</sup> This could happen because the White troops, too, were far from ready to take initiative outside their base; to be operative, they should be trained, organized, and armed from the beginning.

A common experience of being driven or falling towards an inevitable struggle for purification can be sensed in the bourgeois press during the last weeks before the outbreak of open war and in the descriptions of the outbreak.<sup>152</sup> Forging separate guards into a unified army “energized” the posture of the bourgeoisie, “rejuvenated” their blood, and “brightened” their eyes, as if they had lived under the spell of some huge force beyond their conscious imagination. The approaching solution “absorbed the [bourgeoisie] minds,” motivating them to focus on finding a solution. Light was finally glittering at the end of the long, dark tunnel.<sup>153</sup>

As open hostilities broke out and the antagonists gradually declared war, order replaced chaos, the sky was seen to clear again, and individuals took deep breaths of relaxation, the press wrote. Consolidation of the fronts and the chance to finally do something removed the shame of being helplessly victimized.<sup>154</sup> The enthusiastic atmosphere in Finland at this moment can be compared with the first month of World War I in the European capitals.<sup>155</sup> For many socialists, too, the movement towards the war was like a stream, and the outbreak of the war opened a bright sky after darkness and the feeling of suffocation. Socialists cultivated fantasies of being redeemed by their own blood

151 KA, K.H. Wiik collection, Wiik diary 25–26 January 1918; Lehén, *Punaisten ja valkoisten sota*, pp. 165, 176–78; Lappalainen *Punakaartin sota*, vol. I, pp. 34–35; Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta*, pp. 97–106; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 118–19; KA, SVI C 9, memoirs nos 25, 35, 40, 53, 69, 96, 102, 111 & 116.

152 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 29 November 1917 & 26–27 January 1918; *Ilkka* 13 February & 28 April 1918; *Uusi Päivä* 10, 24, & 26 January 1918.

153 *Uusi Päivä* 26 January 1918. Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Männerphantasien*, vol. I: *Frauen, Fluten, Körper, Geschichte* (Stroemfeld: Verlag Roter Stern, 1977), pp. 45–54, 74–108.

154 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 255–354.

155 Emilio Gentile, *L'Apocalypse de la modernité: La Grande Guerre et l'homme nouveau* (Paris: Aubier, 2011).

to achieve rebirth of the society and overcome strangulation.<sup>156</sup> For many a bourgeois citizen, so long accustomed to think in idealistic abstractions, the exit out of the mess of egotistic materialist antagonisms went through a sacrificial ritual: young men and boys should sacrifice their individual lives for the common good; and because of their heroism, the country deserved to live, leaving behind all internal cleavages between classes, parties and individuals.<sup>157</sup>

The sudden change of normalcy in Finland into a mental state of distrust and civil war during 1917 is a textbook example of how impending losses and fading of unifying positive goals affect human psyche. As defensive goals prevailed, the atmosphere in both political camps was like being suffocated by internal tensions and being isolated from all the good. Prevention of further losses dominated thinking, giving way under intolerable frustration and resentment to risk-taking. As the paralysis caused by frustrated aggression and embarrassment changed into active construction of military fronts, victimization was replaced by a sense of physical relief and that one was once again master of one's own life, although risks were estimated to be unaffordable.<sup>158</sup> Thus, the move away from a mood of anxiety became a goal in its own right.

Returning servicemen from the World War were not needed to turn the civil associations into militarized subcultures, as elsewhere. Sooner than expected, usual brutalization suppressed civilized conduct in a country that had not been involved in the Great War and whose citizens until then had shared the same ideals of moral perfectibility through self-education.<sup>159</sup> The Finnish Civil War was not predetermined by the actually existing interest conflicts but was caused by over-politicization of them in a power vacuum. The military solution teetered into a series of day-to-day reflex actions designed to manage the

156 II 1917 parliamentary protocols 1. Sirola in parliament, 8 November 1917; *Työmies* 12 January & 30 March 1918; *Kansan Lehti* 22 March 1918; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 274–80.

157 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 355–429. For more on the notions of sacrifice and the youth during the Civil War, see Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War" in this volume.

158 See Tory E. Higgins, Heidi Grant, & James Shah, "Self-Regulation and Quality of Life: Emotional and Non-Emotional Life Experiences," in Daniel Kahneman, Ed Diener, & Norman Schwarz, eds, *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2003), pp. 248–63.

159 See Robert Gerwarth & John Horne, "Paramilitarism in Europe after the Great War: An Introduction," William G. Rosenberg, "Paramilitary Violence in Russia's Civil Wars, 1918–1920," & Pertti Haapala & Marko Tikka, "Revolution, Civil War, and Terror in Finland in 1918," in Robert Gerwarth & John Horne, eds, *War in Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Europe after the Great War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 2–3, 11, 23, 31, 77, 84.

stress felt by the mutually consolidating parties. Neither party got the war they had imagined.

### Summary

Finland had no army of its own and had participated in the Great War only by making profits as a supplier of war goods to Imperial Russia. In 1917, the collapse of the Tsarist regime left behind a power vacuum, although it restored Finnish autonomy. As the Russian war effort ceased, the isolated Finnish industrial sector lost its only remaining market, causing mass unemployment in towns during the summer of 1917. Grain imports failed, while black-market and war inflation quadrupled food prices. At the same time, social polarization between haves and have-nots in the countryside became acute, as the situation finally seemed to allow far-reaching reforms on the basis of majoritarian parliamentary rule.

In the power vacuum left by the Tsarist regime, the Social Democratic Party sought a solution in empowering the democratically elected Parliament as the successor of the Tsar. With such an authorization, their simple majority could undertake reforms, such as municipal democratization and, along with it, fair food regulation, regulated prices, and an eight-hour working day. As bourgeois groups obstructed this in July 1917 with the help of the Russian Provisional Government and as the socialists lost their majority in the new election, the system lost legitimacy among the socialists. The raised political expectations for sudden relief were channeled into a general strike on 14–21 November 1917. It aimed to prevent oppression by bourgeois guards, mobilized to replace workers' militias as a policing force, and press through the Law of Supreme Power with all its blessings.

The strike led to local takeover by workers' guards and searches for weapons and food stores. The social democratic leaders did not believe in revolution in such an undeveloped country or in their practical abilities to hold onto the power; they ended the strike, despite encouragement by the newly established Bolshevik government in Russia. The only strategy of the socialist leaders was to further press the bourgeoisie to carry out reforms and in no case let them annul any of them. This solution did not relieve tensions but, instead, let them build up further.

Workers' guards did not disarm themselves, but the bourgeois civil guards soon outnumbered them, acquiring arms mainly from Germany. Red guardsmen feared revenge for the violence during the strike; the bourgeois faction feared further violence with the help of Russian weapons. After the strike,

conservative businessmen, until then unwilling to abandon the profitable Russian liaison, joined the independence adherents in their fear of the Bolsheviks.

Both parties saw in each other uninhibited rage, greed, and debauchery. Both believed themselves to represent the common good against individual vices. The Manichean view of the opposite political parties stemmed from the same sources: nationalist idealism, reformist zeal and constitutionalist divisions under Russification policies. During the two months preceding the outbreak of the war, the ossification of minds into opposite warring camps occurred in almost every municipality. Both parties prepared to prevent an alleged massacre planned by the adversary. Creating a police force and then changing it into the army of the state was seen as a final declaration of war by the socialists. Both guards glided gradually into operative moves and captured their adversary's arms supplies in January 1918. The outbreak of open hostilities, on 23–28 January in Karelia and Ostrobothnia, was experienced on both sides as a long-overdue relief for psychic pressure, "light at the end of the tunnel."

The socialist leaders betrayed themselves by pretending to go on with their general strike policy in arms and holding onto power only to offer it back to reformist bourgeoisie. They let the radical guardsmen act in the name of the party. Red Guards had no other strategy than occupy the towns in southern Finland and wait. The Whites, for their part, had expected only a militarized police action in the biggest towns, not a full-scale frontal war. The unwanted and unplanned war can be seen as a showcase of unintended consequences, day-to-day balancing of minds amidst of contradictory pressures, and the prevalence of short-term identity maintenance in comparison with long-term utility calculations. Thus, the war was both inevitable and unintended at the same time.

## Warfare and Terror in 1918

*Marko Tikka*

On Monday, 22 January 1918, the police chief of Lappeenranta, a small town in Eastern Finland, reported to the county governor that a shooting incident had taken place the previous night in the nearby country parish of Luumäki; two people had been killed and several wounded. A few days later, the governor of Vyborg County was sent detailed information about the “Lappeenranta Red Guards’ weapons search, during which they threatened and arrested peaceful people at gunpoint, and about a manslaughter near the Taavetti railway station.”<sup>1</sup> During the last week of January 1918, isolated and confusing skirmishes like this fused into a power struggle between the Reds and the Whites. Official documents describe well the confusion and uncertainty into which the weak administration of the newly independent country drifted as a result of skirmishes between armed political groups, soon to escalate into one of Europe’s bloodiest civil wars in the 20th century. The beginning of the war has been dated to the last days of January, when the White Civil Guards began to disarm Russian military units in several municipalities in southern Ostrobothnia and Karelia and the Red Guards occupied Helsinki and seized the power in southern Finland.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 The Leningrad Oblast State Archive in Vyborg (LOGAV), rural police chief Vladimir Kiiveri to Vyborg county governor 22 January 1918, Delo 8, Opis 10, Fond 1, and bailiff Oscar Cajander to the governor 24 January 1918, Delo 9, Opis 10, Fond 1.
  - 2 On the Finnish Civil War in English: Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution (1917–1918)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980); Richard Lockett, *The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement and the Russian Civil War* (London: Longman, 1971), pp. 131–53; C. Jay Smith Jr., *Finland and The Russian Revolution 1917–1922* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1958); Tuomas Hoppu et al., eds, *Tampere 1918: A Town in the Civil War* (Tampere: Tampere Museum, 2010). The most important general presentations of the warfare include Sampo Ahto, “Sotaretellä,” in Ohto Manninen, ed., *Itsenäistymisen vuodet 1917–1920*, vol. 11: *Taistelu vallasta* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1993), pp. 180–445; Jussi T. Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vols 1–11 (Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus, 1981); and Tuomas Hoppu, “Sisällissota,” in Pertti Haapala and Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), pp. 92–223. The Finnish Civil War has also been analyzed within a European context: Risto Marjomaa, *Maailmanvallankumouksen liepeillä: Vertaileva tutkimus Suomen sisällissodan kansainvälisistä*

## The Nature of the War

The Finnish Civil War was essentially a *domestic war*, as the principal parties were the Finnish Red Guards and the White Army. Both the Reds and the Whites were able to gather armies of untrained, mostly civilian combatants. These armies by the end of the war reached almost 100,000 soldiers respectively, although the active forces were significantly smaller, with a maximum of 80,000 Reds and 60,000 Whites.<sup>3</sup> In various stages of the war, the Red Guards received support from some 2000–3700 revolutionary soldiers of the former army of Imperial Russia; it has been noted that for the Reds, material and educational aid from the Russian revolutionaries was more significant than any military support as such.<sup>4</sup> The Whites received support especially from Sweden, with a maximum of 1100 voluntary fighters.<sup>5</sup> In the final stages of the war, 14,500 men of Imperial Germany's Baltic Sea Division supported the Whites.

Neither side suffered from a lack of arms, since both the Red and the White armies made use of weapons received, bought, or stolen from the 52,000 Russian troops still deployed in the Grand Duchy of Finland in the fall of 1917 as a consequence of World War I.<sup>6</sup> In the fall of 1917 the demoralization of the Russian troops stationed in Finland evidenced itself in the form of weapons trade: individual soldiers of the disintegrating Russian army troops and local soldier committees sold weapons to the Reds and the Whites alike. Later, in January 1918, Russian Bolsheviks supported Finland's revolutionaries with arms, mainly infantry rifles and machine guns. The Germans, for their part, supported the Whites by delivering arms and trained soldiers. Since 1915, Germany

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*lottuvuoksista*, with an English summary: A Comparative Analysis of the Finnish Civil War in 1918 (Helsinki: VNK, 2004).

- 3 Tuomas Hoppu, "Taistelevat osapuolet ja johtajat," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 128–29, 136–38. The 80,000 Reds represent the total number of men and women in arms during the entire war period, not the actual fighting force at any given time; see Aapo Roselius, *Amatöörien sota: Rintamataistelujen henkilötappiot Suomen sisällissodassa 1918*, with an English summary: *An Amateurs' War* (Helsinki: VNK, 2006), pp. 151–60.
- 4 Aatos Tanskanen, *Venäläiset Suomen sisällissodassa vuonna 1918* (Tampere, Tampereen yliopisto, 1978), pp. 205–09; Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980) pp. 296–97; Ohto Manninen, "Taistelevat osapuolet," in *Itsenäistymisen vuodet*, vol. II, pp. 141–42.
- 5 Tuomas Hoppu, "Ruotsi ja Suomen sisällissota," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, p. 130.
- 6 Pertti Luntinen, *The Imperial Russian Army and Navy in Finland 1808–1918* (Helsinki: SHS, 1997), pp. 324–29, 343–57; see also Turo Manninen, "Venäläinen sotaväki ja suomalaiset vuonna 1917," in Ohto Manninen, ed. *Itsenäistymisen vuodet 1917–1920*, vol. I: *Irti Venäjältä* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1993).



had trained 2000 Finnish separatists who formed a Jäger battalion, including some 900 officers (NCOs) who were sent to help the Whites in the winter of 1918.<sup>7</sup> With the help of these officers, the Whites could boast a military leadership significantly better trained than that of the Reds. Decisive support for the Whites also came from independent farmers, who formed about one-quarter of Finland's population and made up a very important segment of autonomous Finland's population. The Whites were also able to organize extensive conscription in northern Finland, and these conscripts made up a significant part of their fighting force.

Finland's Civil War was exceptionally brutal, as no less than one per cent of the population of Finland, some 36,000 people, perished in the battles and in the terror and POW camps, all this within a period of seven months. One-third of the casualties, some 11,000 persons (including a few hundred women), lost their lives as result of Red or White Terror. In a war fought between factions of the same people, soldiers could not rely on uniforms to tell friend from foe, and so the warring armies resorted to systems of surveillance, segregation, and even killing when the situation warranted it. Terror, guerrilla warfare, and violent reconnaissance missions also became essential parts of the war. The so-called flying squads carried out military reconnaissance and protection of the areas behind the frontlines on both the Red and the White sides.<sup>8</sup> Usually being small strike units on skis or horseback, these troops easily resorted to senseless violence in order to protect themselves and frighten their adversaries.

In World War I, civilian populations became parties in the war during battles for towns and small communities, and this pattern continued also in the Finnish Civil War.<sup>9</sup> Although Finland was largely a rural country, the Red occupation of southern Finnish towns, especially Tampere, Helsinki, and Vyborg, resulted in modern urban warfare where artillery was used. The battle for the industrial town of Tampere in early April was particularly fierce: the Whites

7 Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkäriliikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2000).

8 Marko Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet: Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918*, *Bibliotheca historica* 90, with an English summary: *Court-Martial without Law: Punitive Measures in the Finnish Civil War of 1918* (Helsinki: SKS, 2004). On the Red Terror, see Jaakko Paavolainen, *Politiittiset väkivaltaisuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. I: *"Punainen terrori"* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1967).

9 This has been pointed out by, e.g., Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle: Dokumentoitu kuvaus Tampereen anatautumisen johtaneista sotatapahtumista Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1993).



shelled the town extensively. Entire areas of the town caught fire, and by the end of the war nearly 126 buildings and 500 apartments had been destroyed.<sup>10</sup> Effective, state-of-the-art arms emphasized the modern nature of the Civil War; the adversaries also boasted armored trains, airplanes, and powerful handguns. The most important tool of war proved to be the machine gun, which represented the modern, easily transportable, and effective weaponry of the time. The machine gun had a terrorizing effect on attacking troops, who often did not know how to protect themselves against machine-gun fire.

Railroads played an important role in the Finnish Civil War, as they did in the Great War and the Russian Civil War.<sup>11</sup> An exceptionally extensive railroad network had been built in the Grand Duchy of Finland in the latter half of the 19th century, linking the large country together from south to north and west to east.<sup>12</sup> In the Civil War the railroads were essential for successful military actions. The war was fought during a snowy winter and spring, when frost heaves made the roads of the Grand Duchy almost impassable, so trains were the only way to transport significant numbers of troops and arms quickly from one place to another. The logistics of troop movements as well as the distribution of arms, ammunition, and rations depended on railroad transport. Therefore, it was necessary to control the railroad network. Whether or not the control of the railroads was a conscious strategic goal, at least the Reds aimed for it right from the start. The fact that the Red Terror in the Civil War was the most systematic and effective at two major railroad junctions – Toijala in Häme and the Kouvola region in the Southeast – attests to the importance of the railroad network control.

The first goal of the Reds was to secure the central railroads from west to east and thereby protect the Red Guards' supply lines. Especially important for the Reds were the St Petersburg-Vyborg-Kouvola-Lahti-Riihimäki-Helsinki railroad, the Toijala-Turku-Riihimäki route, and the Tampere-Pori railroad, going through the Grand Duchy from east to west. The east-to-west railroad from Pieksämäki-Haapamäki-Seinäjoki to Vaasa up north remained in White control throughout the war.<sup>13</sup> Even that one route was enough, however, because troops and equipment could be transported across Finland via that railroad.

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10 Sami Suodenjoki, "From Ruins to Reconstruction," in *Tampere 1918*, p. 166.

11 See Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), pp. 16–30.

12 Seppo Zetterberg, *Yhteisellä matkalla: VR 150 vuotta* (WSOY: Helsinki, 2011), pp. 31–61.

13 Zetterberg, *Yhteisellä matkalla*, pp. 107–10.



MAP 3.1 *The Finnish Civil War.*

### The War Breaks Out

On 12 January 1918, the Svinhufvud Senate gave the Civil Guards organized by the military command orders to restore “strong law and order” to the country. In this way, the bourgeois Civil Guards officially became the army of the bourgeois government, later to be called the White Army. After some hesitation, the Military Committee in charge of organizing the Civil Guards appointed as the commander of the White Army a former officer of the Russian Army, Finnish-born General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, who had commanded Imperial troops in World War I.

In the beginning of the war, the White leadership avoided fighting in southern Finland in order to save their own troops, as it was known that the massive force of the Red Guards in southern Finland could easily take command of the industrial towns. This forced the Reds to advance into the part of Finland already occupied by the Whites. This strategy resulted in a swift and secret concentration of southern Finland's Civil guardsmen in the "North." The escape of the Whites from the areas occupied by the Reds took place more or less without bloodshed during January and February. Individual White troops nevertheless stayed in areas in southern Finland. The reverse situation happened in the North: at the beginning of the war, the Reds controlled towns and industrial centers in the northern parts of the country, such as Oulu, Kuopio, and Varkaus.

Southern Ostrobothnia, the region on the west coast of central Finland, became the key support area of the Whites early in the war because the region had strong and well-organized Civil Guards and overwhelming manpower in comparison to the Red Guards. In terms of the creation of the support area for the White front, it was also crucial that the Russian troops located in Ostrobothnia be swiftly disarmed, after which the region came under White control.<sup>14</sup>

During January 1918, isolated skirmishes between Red and White Guards had already occurred in several locations. The situation became particularly serious in Vyborg, Eastern Finland's most important industrial town near St Petersburg. The Civil Guards of the surrounding countryside were summoned to help the town guards in Vyborg in late January, and the White Guards tried to seize control of the town. Pressured by the large local Red Guard, the Civil Guards fled to Venäjänsaari Island off Vyborg and from there fought their way north to Antrea, where they established a White center – later the headquarters of the White Army's Karelian front.

The Helsinki Red Guard, one of the largest revolutionary army units in Finland, occupied the capital city on 27–28 January 1918. During the previous night, the Reds had lit a red lantern in the tower of the Workers' Hall, signaling the beginning of the Revolution. Guardsmen gathered to the Hall and marched across the narrow strait from the working-class district into the bourgeois part of the city, starting to occupy the Railway Station and communication centers. The Reds set up a revolutionary government, the Delegation of People's Commissars of Finland (*Suomen kansanvaltuuskunta*), who urged local guards to take control around the country. Seizing power meant taking control of militarily and socially important targets such as railroads, telephone networks,

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14 Tuomas Hoppu, "Sisällisota," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 103–10.



FIGURE 3.1 *Civil guardsmen from Närpiö (Ostrobothnia) leaving for battle in early 1918.*  
PHOTO: G. CARLSON, MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

government establishments, and factories. This *coup* in itself happened mostly without bloodshed because the White officials and leadership of industrial plants had already gone into hiding or fled to northern Finland.

The instructions issued by the People's Delegation included arresting, but not killing, counter-revolutionaries. But the Reds did resort to killing to consolidate their power in January and February; by the beginning of February, 88 people had been killed in areas occupied by the Reds, some five per cent of the wartime total of Red Terror victims.<sup>15</sup> The Red revolution took place south of the line through Pori-Tampere-Lahti-Lappeenranta-Vyborg, leaving the majority of the geographical area of the country for the bourgeois occupation.

But while the Red revolution became a reality in the South, the Whites secured their backs by disarming Russian troops in southern Ostrobothnia and Karelia, the areas of strongest White support. Although disarming a well-equipped military could have led to massacre, the White losses were few. It has been noted that in several cases the officers of the White Finnish troops were able to convince the Russian army officers to voluntarily give their arms to the Whites – the Russian rank-and-file soldiers were demoralized by the Russian

15 Paavolainen, *Punainen terrori*, p. 94.

revolution and were already becoming a threat to their own officers.<sup>16</sup> In the armed conflicts that did occur during the disarming process, the most common casualties were the Russian rank-and-file soldiers. Known Bolsheviks among the Russian soldiers were also deliberately shot during the disarming. A total of some 60 Russians lost their lives in Ostrobothnia during the disarming in the initial phase of the war.<sup>17</sup>

### Consolidation of Power

The Red government tried to stabilize its power in February–March, not through political purges but through setting up local and national administrative systems in the areas they occupied. Taking on this project as their first action makes the revolutionaries appear almost absurd, but it illustrates their aims. Quite obviously they did not initially pursue a violent revolution but wanted a new and slightly naive, democratic redistribution of power. The Reds' political army, the Red Guard, obviously did include revolutionaries who were eager to fight and turn the social structure upside down. Moreover, the nationalization of the industries realized by the Reds was anything but naive.

The Reds formed their own municipal administration, courts that were named “revolutionary courts,” and police in almost all of the areas they occupied in southern Finland. The Reds also replaced the old provincial administration in Turku, Hämeenlinna, Helsinki, and Vyborg. The revolutionary government, the People's Delegation, sat in Helsinki. The Reds' many-layered administrative system occupied much of their manpower, although it was necessary from the point of view of controlling the occupied areas. Anthony Upton has justifiably commented that the Reds transferred the well-developed bureaucracy of the labor movement to their revolutionary regime.<sup>18</sup>

The People's Delegation, led by Kullervo Manner, was divided into 11 subcommittees corresponding to different ministries. Most of the 15 members of the Delegation represented the social democrats. Among them were many members of Parliament elected in 1917 and earlier. Four members of the Delegation represented the leadership of the Red Guards.<sup>19</sup> In this way, the armed

16 Lars Westerlund, *Venäläissurmat Suomessa vuosina 1914–1922*, vol. 2.1: *Sotatapahtumat 1918–22* (Helsinki: VNK, 2004), pp. 89, 141–44, 180–84.

17 Westerlund, *Venäläissurmat Suomessa*, pp. 172.

18 Upton, *Finnish Revolution*, p. 353.

19 Osmo Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena* (Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus, 1986), pp. 158–60.

power of the revolutionaries played a significant role in creating a distinctly revolutionary government. This situation did not please all factions within the labor movement: Finland's Social Democratic Party was divided in relation to the revolution. A number of key social democrats, among them MP Väinö Tanner, the post-1918 leader of the social democrats, turned their backs on the revolution. The prominent revolutionaries among the leaders of the party were MPs Otto Wille Kuusinen, Edvard Gylling, Kullervo Manner, and trade union leader and the commander-in-chief of the Red Guards Eero Haapalainen, who all escaped to Soviet Russia in the end of the Civil War. In Soviet Russia they established the Finnish Communist Party, and especially the first two of them made illustrious political careers in their new homeland.

In southern Finland, the local “workers’ parliaments” – meetings of local workers’ associations – placed local administration in the hands of the revolutionaries. Also the other central towns of southern Finland – Vyborg, Hämeenlinna, and Turku – became centers of Red provincial administration, with power transferring from state officials to leaders of the workers’ associations.<sup>20</sup> The bureaucratic revolution happened fast: in addition to taking over provincial administration, by the end of February the Reds had established their own local administration in almost all southern Finland municipalities, 142 in all. The Reds took over local peacekeeping, general municipal decision-making, and food distribution in particular. The World War had made it more difficult to get food supplies, and the municipalities had been forced to assume responsibility for food security during the winter of 1916–17. The transfer of municipal power and food security to the revolutionaries constituted a concrete revolution for many civilians who had supported the White cause and remained in southern Finland, especially since the Red regime began to order men to join the Red Guards and to strengthen the Red Guards’ logistics through various expropriations.<sup>21</sup>

The Worker’s Council (*Suomen työväen pääneuvosto*) – comprised of leaders of the labor movement, trade unions, and Helsinki Red Guards – corresponded to the revolutionary parliament. The Worker’s Council and the People’s Delegation not only managed to set up their own state administration but also to pass almost 50 laws. These new statutes freed the sharecroppers, did away with tithes, and set up a number of new administrative organs in the regional and

20 Juhani Piilonen, *Vallankumous kunnallishallinnossa* (Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus, 1982), pp. 84–88.

21 Piilonen, *Vallankumous kunnallishallinnossa*, pp. 89–106.

local administration. The People's Delegation also decreed the formation of revolutionary courts in all municipalities.<sup>22</sup>

In spite of their name, the revolutionary courts established by Finland's Red regime were not designed to legitimize violence, as were their counterparts in Russia as it tumbled towards civil war. Instead, they mainly mirrored normal civil courts of the countryside and towns. It has been noted that they did not fundamentally differ from the discontinued (bourgeois) court system. The revolutionary courts handled normal crime cases and differed from ordinary courts only inasmuch as they also handled counter-revolutionary crimes. Even in those cases, the revolutionary courts were not permitted to deal out punishments more severe than fines or imprisonment.<sup>23</sup>

The interrogation and punishment of "counter-revolutionaries" was generally delegated to local Red Guards with a mandate to apply harsher measures. The Red Guards had their own intelligence units and courts-martial, which arrested, tried, and executed individuals who had worked on behalf of the Whites. Possibly one-third of the Red Terror casualties (some 500 out of about 1500 executed Whites) died as a result of this planned purging.<sup>24</sup>

Ostrobothnia became base for the Whites. The headquarters of the White Army was located in Seinäjoki until it was moved to Mikkeli in southern Savonia in April, and the "refugee" White Senate operated from Vaasa. In the beginning of the war, the Finnish Society for Civil Servants discontinued municipal and state administration in the areas occupied by the Reds and ordered all civil servants to leave their posts. In the end, the administrative structures set up by both the Reds and the Whites had little impact on how the war unfolded, although both administrations did attempt to control the guards and the armies and the measures of terror. But in practice, the power in the country was in the hands of the armies fighting for it.

During February, the Reds and Whites mainly strove to strengthen their positions in the areas they had occupied, and the front line ran along the Pori-Tampere-Lahti-Lappeenranta-Vyborg axis. Troops were concentrated mainly along the railroads and road crossings. "Front line" is a misleading expression, as wide no-man's-lands separated the battle zones. The White Army was divided into four sections, and their staff manned four headquarters: Karelia's Antrea in the East; Mikkeli in Savonia and Vilppula in Häme on the middle part

22 Rinta-Tassi, *Kansanvaltuuskunta punaisen Suomen hallituksena*, pp. 151–58, 560–61.

23 Jukka Siro, *Tuomiovalta kansalle: Vallankumousoikeudet sisällissodassa vuonna 1918*, Suomalaisen lakimiesyhdistyksen julkaisu A-sarja, 295 (Helsinki: Suomalainen lakimiesyhdistys, 2009) pp. 345–46.

24 Tikka, *Kenttöoikeudet*, pp. 82–113.



of the front; and Kankaanpää in Satakunta in the West. The Red front was divided into three main parts: eastern, central, and western. The staff headquarters for these fronts were located in Vyborg, Kouvola, and Tampere.

Tampere became an important center for the Reds' "Northern front." The Reds supported their operations in the North through Tampere, and weapons and ammunitions as well as men streamed to the front through the city where command decisions were made. The city became the most important inland center of Red Finland. After it turned into a battlefield towards the end of March, Tampere also became an important symbol for Red Finland. The collapse of Tampere's defense spelled the Reds' defeat in the Civil War.

During February, the Whites had eliminated Red resistance on the northern side of the front, where battles had been fought in the most important industrial centers in northern Finland – Kemi, Kuopio, and Varkaus. According to the Reds' estimates, 14,000 Red Guard fighters were positioned behind White lines in northern Finland, but they could not operate without support from the revolutionary Russian militia. The Whites, for their part, had intimidated the Russians by disarming Russian troops in southern and central Ostrobothnia.<sup>25</sup> In practice, the conquests of the industrial towns deep in the rear of the White front happened almost without bloodshed. Nevertheless, the captured Reds faced court martial, the outcomes of which were often very bloody indeed.

For the Whites, the most challenging operation in the early stage of the war was the occupation of the industrial center of Varkaus in Savonia. As the Whites strengthened their grip on the areas surrounding the factory district of Varkaus, the Red Guard defending the area withdrew into the confines of the factories, where the decisive battle for the control of the region was waged on 20–21 February. Having threatened the Red Guard troops defending the factories with artillery fire, the Whites forced the surrender of the 1200-strong Red Guard of Varkaus and the surrounding areas.

Some 20 Red and White soldiers died in the battle itself, but during the punitive measures following the surrender, 170–80 Reds were killed.<sup>26</sup> The battle of Varkaus was important to the Whites. After the battle, all of northern Finland came under White control: the last Red bastion behind the White lines had

25 Hoppu, "Sisällisota," pp. 153–56; Ahto, "Sotaretkellä," pp. 188–96, 235–37.

26 Ahto, "Sotaretkellä," pp. 238–44; Hannu Itkonen & Hannu Levänen, "Vallankumous Varkaudessa," in Hannu Itkonen, ed., *Varkaus, Suomi ja vuosi 1918: Kansallinen ja paikallinen vallankumous* (Varkaus: Varkauden museo, 2000); Marko Tikka, "Vallankumoukselliset tuomiolla: Varkauden kenttäoikeus ja sen tuomiot," in Ulla Aatsinki & Johanna Valenius, eds, *Ruumiita ja mustelmia: Näkökulmia väkivallan historiaan*, Väki voimakas, 17 (Nokia: TPHTS, 2004), pp. 9–27.



fallen. In the beginning of February, the Whites had seized control of Kuopio and Oulu, both boasting a strong Red Guard, after only a short exchange of fire. The operation of late February 1918 was important to the Whites in many ways. With the help of a poorly trained volunteer group, the Whites succeeded in seizing control of the significant industrial center in only a few days of battle. The Whites also captured a large number of prisoners for the first time: after the fighting was over, more than 1000 Red Guard members who had defended the factories were taken as POWs.<sup>27</sup>

In Red-controlled southern Finland, some areas of weak White resistance remained. The battles of Kerava near Helsinki and Sigurd Manor in Kirkkonummi proved bloody for the Whites. In the aftermath of the Kerava battle, the Reds killed their White prisoners. In all, the Reds executed some 80 White POWs after the battles in Uusimaa province.<sup>28</sup> A week after the battles in Kirkkonummi, 467 civil guard members surrendered to the Reds; they were taken to Helsinki, where they remained prisoners until the end of the war. In the early stages of the war, these skirmishes in Red-controlled southern Finland led to more than 60 casualties, more than half of them Whites.<sup>29</sup>

The operations carried out by the Reds – particularly compared to the warfare waged by the Bolsheviks in Russia – were fumbling and, luckily for the Whites, conservative. However, particularly in the initial stages of the fighting, the Reds killed their prisoners after battles in several locations, among them Kerava in Uusimaa, Pori in Satakunta, and Suinula near Tampere. These incidents understandably caused outrage behind the front lines in White Finland, and the White press described the killings in an openly propagandistic manner.

During March, the Red attempts to push north were halted, and the war turned into trench warfare. On the orders of General Mannerheim, the Whites did not try to push forward either; the intention was to conserve their strength and gather more troops for a decisive strike. After Imperial Germany sent back Finnish volunteers trained in Germany – the so-called *Jägers* – serious efforts to form a proper White Army began. Conscription was conducted everywhere in White Finland. The conscripts were organized under *Jäger*-trained troops, the so-called *Jäger* brigades. They fought side by side with Civil Guard troops. In addition to increasing the number of soldiers in the army, the draft was a deliberate strategic move to create a disciplined army in place of volunteer

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27 Ahto, "Sotaretkellä," pp. 238–44; Hoppu, "Sisällissota," pp. 156–57.

28 Paavolainen, *Punainen terrori*, p. 103.

29 Hoppu, "Sisällissota," pp. 157–61, Roselius, *Amatöörien sota*, p. 93.

civil-guard troops. In the end, two-thirds of the White Army was composed of draftees.<sup>30</sup>

Thereby the Whites were able to create a fighting force based on a draft. Still, they needed to find professional soldiers to lead the army, and here the Finns who had served in the Russian army played a key role. Both sides had about an equal number of such soldiers, but almost all with officer training fought on the White side.<sup>31</sup> White leadership also came from Finnish Jägers trained in Germany, and during the war White Finland also organized officer schools to quickly train leaders for the their troops. In these ways, the Whites formed a more professional and better-led army than the Reds. Also, repression played an integral part in White warfare. The White Terror was an effective means of sapping the resistance of the enemy. Especially after the battle of Tampere, Red resistance was paralyzed when the interrogations and executions of Red prisoners became systematic.

### The Collapse of the Red South

In early April, the Whites launched an all-out attack in northern Häme towards the town of Tampere on the both banks of Tammerkoski rapids that ran through the town.<sup>32</sup> From the Whites' point of view, the occupation of Tampere meant a breakthrough in pushing forward to other southern Finnish towns. The operation to take Tampere had started on 15 March, when four attack groups pushed towards the town from the north, east, and west. In a little over a week, the Whites had reached the outskirts of Tampere. The Whites laid siege to the town, and the defending Red Guards pulled back to the city proper, which was now defended by 14,000 Reds, both men and women.

The White Army that approached the town numbered almost as many soldiers; their assault was strengthened by artillery shelling that set fire to the eastern parts of town. As the Whites strengthened their grip in the outskirts, the defensive struggle of the Reds became more and more furious, and finally the town became the site of brutal, street-to-street combat. Anyone trying to

30 Ohto Manninen, *Kansannoususta armeijaksi: Asevelvollisuuden toimeenpano ja siihen suhtautuminen valkoisessa Suomessa kevättalvella 1918*, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia, 95 (Helsinki: SHS, 1974), pp. 220, 243–46.

31 For details of volunteers in the Russian Army, see Tuomas Hoppu, *Historian unohtamat: Suomalaiset vapaaehtoiset Venäjän armeijassa 1. maailmansodassa 1914–1918*, Bibliotheca historica, 100 (Helsinki: SKS, 2005), pp. 317–18.

32 On the battle of Tampere, see Hoppu et al., eds, *Tampere 1918*; and Ylikangas, *Tie Tampe-reelle*.

surrender, Red or White, was usually killed on the spot. On 4 April, the eastern parts of the town were in White hands, and the White troops could attack across Tammerkoski to the western side of the town. At this point, the Red defense collapsed into confused resistance that ended when the Whites captured the entire the town on 6 April. More than 10,000 Red Guard members and their supporters were taken POWs; about 1000 members were able to escape the city by breaking through the White siege lines on the ice of surrounding lakes of Näsijärvi and Pyhäjärvi, already dangerously thin.<sup>33</sup> The battle for Tampere had been cruel: an estimated one out of three Reds was shot when they tried to surrender.<sup>34</sup>

The conquest of the city resulted in garish scenes: while parts of the city were still in flames, the White conquerors eliminated “the worst” Red Guard members by shooting them dead in the streets. The Whites took hundreds of Russians near the railway station, lined them up against the wall of a sheet-iron warehouse, and executed them without further ado.

Estimates of Russians casualties vary between 200 and 500; the dead included fighting revolutionaries as well as neutral Russian residents of the city who now had to pay for their nationality with their lives.<sup>35</sup> The same happened again a month later in Vyborg, where the Whites killed more than 300 Russians after they occupied the town; some 200 of them were killed in one mass slaughter.<sup>36</sup>

The hatred of the Russians acquired the flavor of ethnic purging; from the White point of view, the Russians were to blame for the rebellion. A popular explanation was that the Russians had brought the “Bolshevik plague” and rebellion into Finland. During the war, White leaders at the front gave orders to consider Russians encountered among the Reds as criminals; there was no need to take them prisoner.<sup>37</sup> This policy meant that all captured Russians were shot on the spot. The mass slaughter in Vyborg later led to extensive in-

33 Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle*, pp. 463–70.

34 Aapo Roselius & Marko Tikka, “Taistelujen jälkeen välittömästi paikalla ammutut,” in Lars Westerlund, ed., *Sotatapahtumat 1914–22 surmansa saaneet: Tilastoraportti* (Helsinki: VNK, 2004) pp. 107–14.

35 Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle*, pp. 436–38.

36 Lars Westerlund, *Me odotimme teitä vapauttajina ja te toitte kuolemaa: Viipurin valloituksen yhteydessä teloitettut venäläiset*, in Lars Westerlund, ed., *Venäläissurmat Suomessa 1914–22*, vol. 2.2: *Sotatapahtumat 1918–22* (Helsinki: VNK, 2004), pp. 97–189.

37 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa 1918* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1971), pp. 60–74; Ohto Manninen, “Sodanjohto ja strategia,” in Manninen, *Itsenäistymisen vuodet*, vol. 2, pp. 40–73; Outi Karemaa: *Vihollisia, vainoojia, syöpäläisiä: Venäläisviha Suomessa 1917–1923*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 30 (Helsinki: SKS, 1998), pp. 72–117.

quiries, but the purges in Tampere were not investigated at the time. For the White Army, the executions were only a part of the city's occupation.

Photographs taken after the conquest of Tampere bear witness to the brutality of the battles and the ensuing violence; corpses of people killed by grenades, gunfire, and execution lay on the streets of the city for several days after the battles were over. An estimated 2000 people were left homeless because of the destruction.<sup>38</sup> The victory of the Whites in Tampere was followed by a phase of White Terror in the town, during which up to 700–800 Finnish and Russian soldiers, medical personnel, and civilians were killed.<sup>39</sup>

The date of 6 April 1918 thus proved important to the Whites and fateful for the Reds. On that day, the Whites also gained an important victory in Rautu on the Karelian Isthmus at the Russian border. Throughout most of the war, Russian revolutionaries, rather than Finnish Red Guards, assumed responsibility for the front in Rautu. General Konstantin Yeremeyev, the chief of the Vyborg military district, led the battles of Rautu. Contrary to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, Yeremeyev strengthened the Russian troops in Rautu in March, fearing that the Finnish Whites would try to attack the center of the Russian revolution, Petrograd, along the Rautu railroad.

The White troops actually did attack, but their intention was to protect the White front on the Isthmus against pressure from the Russian troops centered in Rautu. The Whites launched a strong surprise attack on the local railway station in the early days of April to strike at the defense of the area centered there. Some 1200 Russian troops and supporting Finnish Reds were besieged. Trying to break out, they became targets for the Whites' murderous machine-gun fire. During the bloody battles that raged for only a few days, almost 800 Russian and Finnish revolutionaries defending the railway station were killed.<sup>40</sup> For the Whites, the victory in Rautu meant destroying a strong Red center on the Eastern Front; now the Whites could attack Vyborg, the center of the revolutionaries in Eastern Finland.

Approximately at the same time of the Red disasters in Tampere and Rautu, the German Baltic Sea Division landed in the town of Hanko in southernmost Finland and sealed the Red defeat. Representatives of the White Senate had negotiated with Imperial Germany late in the fall of 1917 to try to secure German military assistance should Finland choose to declare independence. After the Ambassador to Berlin Edvard Hjelt had delivered the White Senate's plea in

38 Sami Suodenjoki, "From Ruins to Reconstruction," pp. 160–69.

39 Jyrki Loima, "Tampereen valtaus: Taisteluja ja teloituksia vuonna 1918," in Westerlund, ed., *Venäläissurmat Suomessa 1914–22*, vol. 2.1, p. 224.

40 Ahto, "Sotaretellä," pp. 414–15; Hoppu, "Sisällissota," pp. 183–84.

February 1918, the Germans began to prepare the invasion of Finland. The detachment included three infantry regiments and an artillery regiment, all troops with battle experience on the Eastern Front.<sup>41</sup> After the peace negotiations in Brest ended in March in a truce between Soviet Russia and Germany, the Soviet Russian regime allowed Imperial Germany to expand its sphere of influence to Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, and Finland.<sup>42</sup> Now Germany could officially respond to the White Senate's request for help. The Baltic Sea Division, comprising three large naval detachments, landed in Åland Islands in March and continued to the mainland in early April. In exchange for its military intervention on the White side, the Germans required from the White Government economic benefits that strengthened its influence in the Baltic Sea region.

The peace treaty signed by Soviet Russia and the Central Powers had an immediate impact on Finland's position as one of the World War battlefields; a condition in the treaty stipulated that Soviet Russia would not support Finnish revolutionaries and would withdraw any remaining Russian troops from Finnish territory. Most of the former Imperial Russia's troops had already left Finland without participating in the Finnish Civil War in any way. It is true that, according to some estimates, as many as 10,000 Russians fought in the war, but that number has been criticized as too large. The more realistic number probably lies somewhere between 1500 and 4000.<sup>43</sup> The Soviet regime had indeed supported the Finns with arms deliveries, and also militarily, but the role of the Bolshevik Russian troops in the Civil War proved insignificant in the end. From March until the end of the war, only some 1000 Russians fought at the frontlines. The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk made it possible for Imperial Germany to openly intervene in the Finnish conflict. Germany quickly readied naval landing forces for the Finland operation.<sup>44</sup>

The Germans landed both west and east of Helsinki, respectively in Hanko on 3 April 1918 and in Loviisa on 7 April. The Hanko troops captured Helsinki on 13 April and started to push towards the north in two wedge-like formations from Helsinki and the Porvoo area. The trained and experienced army advanced swiftly in the beginning, but when the Germans threatened to block

41 Reino Arimo, *Saksalaisten sotilaallinen toiminta Suomessa 1918* (Rovaniemi: Societas Historica Finlandiae Septentrionalis, 1991), pp. 15–23; see also Hannu Rautkallio, *Kaupantekoa Suomen itsenäisyydellä: Saksan sodanpäämäärät Suomessa 1917–1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1977).

42 Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891–1924* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), pp. 548–49.

43 Karemaa, *Vihollisia, vainoojia, syöpäläisiä*, pp. 91–92.

44 Ohto Manninen, "Sodanjohto ja strategia," pp. 69–73.

the escape routes to the east, the Reds put up fierce resistance. After more intense fighting, the Germans reached both Hämeenlinna and Lahti around 25 April. Because of the east-west railroad connections in southern Finland, control of these towns was crucial in order to stop the Reds from fleeing.

With the escape of the People's Delegation and the Red revolution leadership from Helsinki to Vyborg, the Red troops remaining in Helsinki lost their leaders. They wavered between surrendering and defending the city and finally chose the defensive option. The main body of the troops of the German Baltic Division, under the command of General Major Rüdiger von der Goltz, attacked the city from the northwest on 12 April and took the downtown by the next morning. The professional fighting force crushed the amateur troops who tried to repel the attack. The last defenders entrenched themselves in the quarters around the Workers' Hall, which was heavily shelled by the Germans. A total of 400 Reds perished during the offensive, which lasted for three days. The losses of the Red defenders of the city were five times higher than of those of the attackers. Because the conquest of Helsinki apparently did not include the kind of cleansing of the surrendered adversaries that was carried out in the battle of Tampere, it has been assumed that the severe losses suffered by the defenders were mainly due to their amateurish skills and poor weaponry.<sup>45</sup>

The Red regime had started the retreat of the revolutionary troops eastward soon after the loss of Tampere. They retreated eastward from Uusimaa, Finland Proper, Häme, and Satakunta. This phase of the war in April 1918 also marks a significant wave of Red Terror; 670 people lost their lives at the hands of the Reds during this retreat, 40 per cent of all wartime Red Terror victims.<sup>46</sup> During the retreat, Satakunta and Häme were emptied of Red troops, as was Finland Proper. Not all the Red guardsmen escaped, however; some remained in hiding near their homes. The search for Reds hiding in the woods occupied the local Whites throughout the summer of 1918.

It has been estimated that in April 1918 some 40,000 members of the Red Guards were on the move eastwards in the area between the southern Finland towns of Hämeenlinna and Lahti and the Riihimäki railroad center. A column of the Red Guard members' families followed them, numbering in the tens of thousands. The objective of the Red retreat was to reach Soviet Russia; it did not seem to have any strategic dimension other than to escape the revenge of the Whites.<sup>47</sup>

45 Ahto, "Sotaretkellä," pp. 384–89; Tuomas Hoppu, *Vallatkaa Helsinki: Saksan hyökkäys punaiseen pääkaupunkiin 1918* (Helsinki: Gummerus, 2013), pp. 385–88.

46 Paavolainen, *Punainen terrori*, pp. 94–95.

47 Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vol. II, pp. 174–84, 188–94.





FIGURE 3.2 *Soldiers of the White Army after battle in southern Finland in the last days of the war.* PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

During the retreat phase, the Reds tried to protect the vital railroad connections and secure the escape route leading east. According to their instructions, the Red troops engaged in a retreat-and-destroy strategy to halt the Whites' advance. The retreating Reds destroyed traffic and communications routes and various production plants. The neighborhoods of the towns of Tampere and Pori as well as Satakunta province as a whole suffered especially from the Reds' scorched-earth tactics. The township of Vammala in northern Häme was almost completely destroyed. The collapse of the Red power brought with it an end-of-the world mentality; in the regions through which the Reds retreated, looting of shops and farmhouses became quite commonplace.

During the retreat, the Reds also killed counter-revolutionaries and hostages – people who had been marked by the Guards during the Red occupation or people who had been taken hostage during the retreat. For instance, in Metsäkansa south of Tampere, a group of Valkeakoski paper-mill leaders was

killed, and in the nearby railroad center of Toijala, a week-long wave of cruel Red Terror left dozens of known local Whites dead.<sup>48</sup>

The Whites succeeded in cutting off the Reds' Russia-bound retreat route east of Vyborg on 25 April. When the German troops cut the Reds' escape route by taking the towns of Lahti and Hämeenlinna, the Reds found themselves hemmed in by the White and German troops in Vyborg, in the Kymenlaakso region in the southeast, and in Lahti. Now the Red Guard fought to protect the civilians marching with the troops, and at last began negotiating surrender in the hopeless situation. A more extensive Red defense could be organized only in Vyborg, and a small group of the Reds' highest ranking leadership managed to escape to Petrograd by boat, including members of the People's Delegation.

The most extensive and severe individual mass slaughter of the Red Terror, the massacre of Vyborg province jail, took place in the final days of the war during the White siege of Vyborg. At the whim of a Red Guard leader and the former convict Hjalmar Kaipainen, a small troop of the Red Guard forcefully entered the Vyborg province jail on the evening of 27 April. The jail housed "individuals dangerous to the revolution." In a bloodbath, the guardsmen killed some 30 prisoners by shooting them or throwing hand grenades into their cells. After the Whites had taken Vyborg, a detailed investigation of the massacre was initiated. The investigation led to a court-martial that sentenced all of the guardsmen who had taken part in the killings to death by shooting.<sup>49</sup>

The Red troops surrendered early in May in a small village of Vesala near Lahti and in the Vyborg region. The fighting continued for a few days longer in Kymenlaakso, but the united Red Guard fighting troops had already been beaten. At this point, another kind of warfare began: the Whites began to hunt for dispersed, escaping Red groups and individual Red Guard members.

### White Terror, POW Camps, and the Establishment of the Political Crime Courts

By the beginning of May 1918, the White Army had captured tens of thousands of prisoners, but revolutionary fighters still lurked in the conquered areas. The

48 On terror in Toijala, see Marko Tikka, *Terrorin aika: Suomen levottomat vuodet 1917–1921* (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2006), pp. 81–100.

49 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. II: "Valkoinen terrori" (Helsinki: Tammi, 1967), pp. 162–64; Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet*, p. 262; Mirja Turunen, *Veripelot: Sisällissodan surmatyöt Pohjois-Kymenlaaksossa 1918* (Jyväskylä: Atena Kustannus, 2005).





FIGURE 3.3 *Execution of Reds in Varkaus (Savonia) in the spring of 1918.* PHOTO: IVAR EKSTRÖM, A. AHLSTRÖM COLLECTION, MUSEUM OF VARKAUS.

frontline battles gave way to the severest repressions of the Civil War; during a few weeks, the Whites tried nearly 5000 Red Guard members in hastily formed courts-martial and carried out their death sentences. This phase of Finland's Civil War continued until early June 1918, although the military activities were officially ended in early May, and the Whites organized a victory parade in Helsinki on the 16th of day of that month.

Even during the war, discussions had taken place about how to punish the revolutionary Reds. According to the White interpretation, Red Guard members were not soldiers of an enemy army but armed rebels whose legal position in the country was unclear and whose relationship to international treaties needed to be clarified. The leadership of the White Army, many of whom were former officers of the Imperial Russian Army, was aware of the martial law statutes in Russia; according to the Russian law, rebelling civilians could be sent to courts-martial and sentenced to death. Finland did not have such a law, since the Finnish political and judicial elite had vehemently opposed the introduction of such Russian laws into autonomous Finland at the beginning of the 20th century. Also the White Senate opposed the use of Russian legislation in suppressing the rebellion. This dispute between White politicians and the army was solved at the end of February with the creation of "Instructions to the Civil Guards on wartime legislation." These instructions appealed to justifiable defense; a person resisting or sabotaging the White troops could be taken prisoner or shot "on the decision of the commander." When, starting in April

with the offensive against Tampere, the Whites captured thousands of Red fighters, it became impossible to apply these temporary instructions. The White Army negotiated with jurists and eventually decided it had the right to apply Russian martial law even though the White Senate did not agree with the policy. In the end, the political responsibility for improvised justice remained unclear. In order to secure the areas taken from the Reds, the White Army during its advance set up courts-martial in almost all of the biggest towns in southern Finland to mete out immediate sentences to the rebels.<sup>50</sup>

Military governors were appointed to the occupied towns whose tasks included, among other things, organizing prisoners' interrogations. The prisoners were divided into three groups according to the level of their involvement in the rebellion. The first group consisted of all the Red Guard leaders, war criminals, murderers, looters and the main leaders of the revolutionary civil organs. They were usually shot. The second group comprised all other men and women in the Red Guard and those who worked for it. They were imprisoned in POW camps. The persons in the third group were categorized as innocent and released. The inquiry organization was massive. For instance, in Vyborg, more than 12,000 prisoners awaited sentencing at the turn of April and May. They were investigated by almost 50 inquiry commissions, aided by an extensive surveillance body. The highest number of executions was witnessed in Hennala POW camp in Lahti. Under the camp commander Major Hans Kalm, more than 500 prisoners were executed in only a couple of weeks; almost 200 of them were women.<sup>51</sup>

At the same time, the army instructed local Civil Guards in the countryside to use similar courts-martial when they searched for remaining Reds; as a consequence, by the beginning of May, this practice had spread everywhere in Finland. Local Civil Guard commissions gave more death sentences than the commissions of the White Army in the POW camps. At the local level, the prisoners were usually well known to the investigators, and the sentences were meted out without delay. The most intense terror was witnessed in Häme, a region where also the fiercest battles had taken place. The highest percentage of killings (five per cent of all men in the parish, all in all 185 persons) occurred in the parish of Sääksmäki, where local Civil Guards meted out sentences to Reds who were mostly workers of the local paper mill.<sup>52</sup> These acts of killing all over the countryside involved also local tensions and outright revenge for the

50 Tikka, *Kenttöoikeudet*, pp. 149–65.

51 Further on Red women, see Tiina Lintunen's chapter in this volume, and further on Hans Kalm, see Aapo Roselius' chapter "Holy War" in this volume.

52 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Valkoinen terrori*, pp. 78, 162–63, 170, 251.



FIGURE 3.4 *Red prisoners of war in Lahti POW camp in southern Finland.* PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

rebellion in the home region. This repression, which was later named the White Terror, ended in mid-May after Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim banned the legally more than dubious executions.

POW camps were formed in the early stages of the war. In northern Finland, the Whites launched systematic surveillance work to determine the number of Red Guard members in every municipality and the seriousness of the threat they posed. The local Civil Guard was to list all Reds and classify them according to the above-mentioned three categories.<sup>53</sup> This surveillance and classification system proved highly significant during the war, and, as seen, it formed the basis for the post-war punitive measures.

Extensive local purges started in early March behind the White lines. Untrustworthy and known socialists were arrested and placed in temporary POW camps. One of the most notorious localities of the White Terror in the bourgeois-occupied part of the country was Jämsä in central Finland. The infamous gang led by a local farmer Jalmari Saari, with the assistance of Civil Guard commander Veikko Sippola and guardsman Johannes From, hunted down and murdered 70 people during the hostilities. The estimation of the number of Saari's personal victims is at least 44; in reality, it was perhaps even more. None

53 Tikka, *Kenttöoikeudet*, pp. 118–25.

of these working-class victims had been convicted in an even improvised court-martial. It is fair to state that these victims, some of whom were not even active in the workers' movement, posed no realistic threat to the local Whites.<sup>54</sup>

One of the more dramatic and extensive mass executions of Red prisoners by local Civil Guards took place in Halikko in western Finland. Red guardsmen from the parish of Somero had been taken prisoner during the last battles in Häme and handed over to the Somero Civil Guard. After some weeks of waiting for their destiny, they were told that they would be taken to the POW camp in Turku. The long march of the 49 prisoners ended just outside Halikko, where the prisoners were taken in groups of ten to the nearby forest and executed.

The terror on the local level also reached the POW camps. Representatives of Civil Guards visited the camps to identify Red leaders, killers, and confiscators from their own municipalities. The fate of these prisoners was usually hard. In Helsinki parish (a municipality north of the city), the local police and leaders of the Civil Guard, who had been humiliated and violated during the long Red rule, systematically organized a vengeance tour to the major POW camps, carrying lists of the "worst hooligans of Helsinki parish." Ordered by Chief Constable Ernst Sohlman, a group of police officers and guardsmen arrived at Hämeenlinna POW camp on 20 May. Later that same day, camp officials registered that 18 prisoners from Helsinki parish had been shot. Similar visits were made during the same week to camps in Vyborg, Kotka, and Lahti. The visits resulted in the killing of approximately 100 Red prisoners from Helsinki parish, completed by the highest representatives of order and law in the parish. Ernst Sohlman, although he did not directly admit ordering the killings, did not see any problem in his actions:

While Helsinki parish was a nest for the worst kind of bandits and troublemakers, who from the fall of 1917 terrorized the community and made it impossible for the police force or other friends of discipline to reside in the parish, I wanted with these acts to extract the more guilty ones from the less guilty ones and thus give them a deserved punishment.<sup>55</sup>

The immediate predecessors of the POW camps were "temporary war prisons." After the Whites had occupied all of southern Finland, the number of POW camps increased to several dozen and the number of their inmates to tens of

54 Jukka Rislakki, *Kauhun aika: Neljä väkivallan kuukautta Jämsässä 1918*, rev. ed. (Jyväskylä: Ajatus Kirjat, 2007).

55 Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä: Valkoisten väkivalta Suomen sisällissodassa* (Tammi: Helsinki, 2007), pp. 252–67.

thousands.<sup>56</sup> After the end of the war in May-June 1918, temporary war prisons had been set up almost everywhere in Finland; it has been calculated that they housed up to 80,000 prisoners. Because the supervision of so many camps became difficult for the military administration, the prisoners were brought together from more than 60 different camps into 20 large prison camps in June-July 1918.<sup>57</sup> As a consequence of transferring and concentrating large numbers of people, various epidemic diseases spread from one group of prisoners to another. Inadequate food supplies and the lack of sanitary facilities as well as cramped conditions guaranteed the rapid spread of illness. The Spanish influenza brought to the country by German soldiers proved especially virulent; according to a number of estimates, it killed between 3000 and 4000 prisoners, maybe as many as one third of all people who died of disease in the prison camps in the summer of 1918.<sup>58</sup>

Medical authorities were concerned about the situation in the POW camps where the concentration of prisoners from many locations led to the mixing of strains of bacteria and epidemic outbreaks of illness. Prison camp food supplies and hygienic conditions were found totally insufficient on several occasions in the summer of 1918. Professor Robert Tigerstedt, an internationally prominent Finnish physiologist who wrote several reports on the circumstances in the POW camps for the White Army's POW camp department, played a key role in the mapping of the conditions in the camps. His son Carl Tigerstedt was the chief physician of the Tammisaari POW camp, so Tigerstedt had human contact with the reality of the camps as well as information that his official position afforded him. Like other camps, the Tammisaari camp had been established in the former Russian garrisons, built just before World War I but emptied during the winter and spring of 1918. By the end of May 1918 there were 7000 prisoners placed in the lice-filled barracks, and a total of 10,000 prisoners were kept in the camp, including 650 women. The first prisoners were to build themselves the barbwire fences, and inside the area, circumstances were chaotic. During the summer, an average of 30 prisoners died every day. In total, almost 3000 prisoners died and were buried in what would be the biggest mass

56 Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa*, pp. 16–37.

57 Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa*, p. 110.

58 Pentti Mäkelä, *Vuosien 1917–1919 kulkutaudit, espanjantauti ja vankileirikatastrofi*, with an English summary: Communicable Diseases, Pandemic Flu and the Aftermath of Civil War – High Mortality in Finland at the End of 1910s (Helsinki: VNK, 2006); Eila Linnanmäki, *Espanjantauti Suomessa: Influenssapandemia 1918–1920*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 95, with an English summary: The Spanish Influenza of 1918–20 in Finland (Helsinki: SKS, 2005).

grave in Finland, just outside the prison.<sup>59</sup> When professor Tigerstedt arrived to Tammisaari camp in the end of July, he made a blistering report which stated that the food rations were insufficient, diseases spread due to poor hygiene and overcrowding, and the mortality rate of epidemic diseases was high. The most extensive secret report, dated August 1918, unequivocally showed that the conditions in the prison camps were shocking in every way.<sup>60</sup>

When Finnish social democrats leaked Tigerstedt's report to the Swedish press towards the end of August, the readers were appalled. The papers widely cited Tigerstedt's observations, according to which "the mortality rate [in the camps] is unheard of" and "nothing like this could have happened in prisons even during the Tsarist rule."<sup>61</sup>

It has been assumed that information about the conditions in the Finnish POW camps that spread to the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain, and other countries as well, influenced negatively the general attitude toward acknowledging Finland's independence. According to a widespread rumor, in the late summer of 1918, the foreign powers demanded that Finland improve conditions in the camps; unless improvements took place, the foreign powers would postpone acknowledging Finland's independence. The international situation, especially the disintegration of Russia, however, influenced the acknowledgment of Finland's independence more than the country's domestic policy. Conditions in the POW camps improved, not so much because of foreign pressure but because the management of the camps was transferred from the army to the state's prison administration in September 1918.<sup>62</sup> Even if conditions improved from August onward, the death rate was still high: in Tammisaari, for instance, in the beginning of September an average of 20 prisoners still died daily.<sup>63</sup>

In the end of May 1918, legislation on political crime, or crimes against the State, was passed. The process outlined in the law pertained to the whole country. In practice, local repression continued, but executions stopped. Local Civil Guards began to interrogate the revolutionaries who were from their own parishes and to write accounts of their examinations for the lawful sentencing of the rebels. This official process led to interrogation of hundreds of people even in small communities. The process designed for dealing with political crime in

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59 Sture Lindholm, *"Röd galenskap – vit terror": Det förträngda kriget 1918 i Västnyland* (Helsinki: Söderströms & Proclio, 2005), pp. 305–17, 319.

60 Paavolainen *Vankileirit Suomessa*, pp. 217–19, 246.

61 Paavolainen *Vankileirit Suomessa*, pp. 317–20.

62 Paavolainen *Vankileirit Suomessa*, pp. 317–20.

63 Lindholm, *Röd galenskap*, pp. 305–17.



the special courts became a huge undertaking. It included searching for and arresting local Red Guard members, which often involved skirmishes, interrogations, arrests, and transportation to POW camps. Guarding the camps and officially interrogating prisoners ultimately became an immense ordeal for everyone involved: prisoners, local civil guard members, camp guards, examiners attached to the political crime courts (*valtiorikosoikeus*),<sup>64</sup> staff working at political crime court offices, prison camp staff, and so on. This post-war process of political cleansing arguably had a negative psychological effect on the population as severe as the war itself: for decades after the war, Finland was divided into those who were considered trustworthy in 1918 and those who were not.<sup>65</sup>

Altogether 145 separate courts operated in the political crime court system, and most of them were located in the biggest POW camps. The courts handled a total of more than 75,000 cases, and a total of nearly 68,000 accused were convicted and given prison sentences of varying lengths. Most of the convicted, some 39,800 in all, were sentenced to prison terms from one to three years for treason and property crimes. The courts passed more than 500 death sentences, but in the end executed only 113 people.<sup>66</sup> Most of the convicted were set free soon after sentencing, as Finland adopted a probation system in the fall of 1918: if the probationer broke the law soon after his release, he was sent to prison to serve both sentences.

Almost everyone sentenced in the political crime courts was finally pardoned, except those convicted of murder. The first general pardons came in December 1918. At the same time, a new statute became law. It directed that “individuals who have overstepped the line as regards suppressing the rebellion against the nation’s lawful order, stopping the rebellion from spreading, or restoring law and order ... should not be accused in court.” This statute was considered a direct pardon of those guilty of White Terror.<sup>67</sup>

The statute was linked to complaints the Attorney General received weekly from families of the victims of the White Terror. The official complaints consisted usually of a description of the event of terror, sometimes even in detail, mentioning names of the aggressors and requesting that the Attorney investigate the case and find the defendants guilty. Although the Attorney ordered some inquiries and although he admitted that “a lot of cruelty and needless harshness had been directed to rebels,” the inquiries carried out by the local

64 Literally, the Court on the Crimes against the State.

65 Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet*, pp. 130–46.

66 *svt XXIII Oikeustilasto 32: Tilastollinen tutkimus 1918 vuoden valtiorikollisista* (Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kirjapaino, 1923), pp. 14–17, 42.

67 Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä*, pp. 36–41.



police led nowhere. In Helsinki parish, the police reported after several delays and after being persuaded by the Attorney that they “had the privilege to announce that although profound investigations have been made there is no clarity in the case whatsoever.”<sup>68</sup> In another case, the Chief Constable in the parish of Pomarkku in southwestern Finland replied irritably to the inquiry requests that: “[i]f there should be a profound inquiry on the justification and the cause of death of every Red bastard who died in our district last spring it would be too much to handle for one man.”<sup>69</sup> Although the attitudes towards the defeated Reds among the victors were harsh in the aftermath of the war and although it can be argued that the White Terror on the local level was dependent on the support of the local communities, there were also individuals within the bourgeois who were truly shocked at what they were witnessing and were even ready to publicly protest. One of the most famous cases was Hjalmar Linder, once one of the richest industrialists and land magnates in Finland. In the end of May 1918, after having made a visit to the POW camp in Suomenlinna outside Helsinki, he wrote in the bourgeois Swedish language paper *Hufvudstadsbladet*: “What is happening in the country is terrible [...] The Red madness has in fact been succeeded by the White terror [...] in the POW camps prisoners are dying like flies [...] this will not be defensible in the future.”<sup>70</sup> His writings were condemned directly by the paper, and he left Finland for good only some days after.

Whereas in the early summer of 1918 there still could be heard voices approving the harsh treatment and the actual killing of Reds, soon the level of the human catastrophe caught up with reality. The pardons of Red prisoners followed one another, and after 1921, only those who had been sentenced to life terms in prison remained incarcerated. The last Reds convicted of actions during the war of 1918 were finally freed in 1927. As an ideological last remnant of the POW camps, the Tammissaari camp was turned into a penitentiary for political prisoners, which, during the interwar years, meant for communists.<sup>71</sup>

The White Terror became a taboo subject in the bourgeois society for decades to come and remained an untouched topic in the rich White literature of the war in the interwar period. People who had participated in the killings of the Reds underwent a collective amnesia, whereas the cases of the Red Terror

68 National Archives (KA), Procurator and Chancellor of Justice Bureau Files, AD 195/74 1918.

69 KA, Procurator and Chancellor of Justice Bureau Files, AD 37/9 1919.

70 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 25 May 1918; Lindholm, *Röd galenskap*, p. 302.

71 Joni Krekola, *Stalinismin lyhyt kurssi: Suomalaiset Moskovan Lenin-koulussa 1926–1938*, Bibliotheca historica, 105 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), pp. 78–83; see also Tauno Saarela's chapter in this volume.

were thoroughly documented, and its victims were commemorated as heroes of the nation.

### Summary: The Consequences and Total Casualties of the War

The Finnish Civil War was about building armies from scratch. It was a conflict in which the Whites would triumph in the end due to their relatively superior power and training compared to the Reds. However, the fighting, especially in the beginning of the war, was minimal, due to the limited qualities of the amateur armies. Both sides were keen to strengthen their ranks via volunteers, mainly from Russia and Sweden. After initial success for the revolutionary side, the Whites soon gained the advantage with a more effective army. Crucial for the outcome and length of the war was Germany's decision to enter into the Finnish conflict on the White side and the Russian Bolshevik regime's decision not to actively support the Reds. From the onset of the conflict, the terror on both sides had been part of the warfare. It partly compensated for the lack of effective military organizations and was, thus, strategic, although it partly at the same time was a result of the lack of control by the warring sides. The latter part of the war, with the rapid advancement of the White Army into southern Finland coupled with the obsession of the Whites to punish the rebels, turned the war into a mass killing of Reds that ended only weeks after the war. Months after the war, the disastrous conditions in the POW camps would contribute further to the high death toll.

As a result of the Finnish Civil War, some 38,400 people lost their lives. Some 36,000 of them were Finnish; additionally, some 2500 citizens of Russia, Germany, Sweden, and individuals from other countries died in the war or its aftermath.<sup>72</sup> Toward the end of the 1990s, the Finnish government launched an extensive research project to examine the fates of Finns who died in World War I and the conflicts following it. The project took as its special emphasis the study of victims of the Civil War of 1918 through creating a database of personal and death information for all the casualties. This research project titled "War Victims in Finland, 1914–1922" was able to account for the vast majority of the Finns who perished in the war, and also for the foreign nationals, excluding the Russians. Due to the insufficient sources available, only about a half of the nearly 2000 Russians who died during the Civil War have been identified.

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72 Online database *War Victims in Finland, 1914–1922*, <<http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmaetusivu/main>>.

In a nutshell, one out of three of the nearly 36,000 Finnish casualties died in battles, one out of three was shot during the terror, and one out of three died in POW camps. Some 27,000 of all the casualties were Reds. To elaborate, in the battles of the Civil War, some 9500 Finns lost their lives. This number includes those reported as killed in action, those who died of their injuries, and those missing in action. Some 3500 of the persons who fell in battle were Whites, and some 5700 were Reds. In addition, the list includes more than 300 casualties whose side has not been identified and fewer than 40 neutral individuals. An estimated 800–900 Russians, 345 Germans, and 55 Swedish volunteers died in the battles. In addition, some 60 Russians and 53 Germans disappeared during the war. Outside the battles, some 11,000 unarmed or defenseless Finns lost their lives. Of these terror victims, an estimated 1650 had White backgrounds and some 10,000 could be called Reds. The above-mentioned War Victims project name file recognizes 345 Russians who were shot after the battles. Other sources estimate the number of Russians executed at two or even three times higher than that number. The POW camp catastrophe was also very lethal: some 12,500 prisoners died in the camps from malnutrition-induced diseases, and an estimated 700 released prisoners died on their way home or soon after they had arrived at home. According to the information collected for the War Victims personal database, the Finnish Civil War left in its wake some 12,100 widows and 14,200 orphans.<sup>73</sup>

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73 Lars Westerlund, ed., *Sotaoloissa*; Marko Tikka, "Sodan kokonaistappiot," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, p. 221.

## Holy War: Finnish Irredentist Campaigns in the aftermath of the Civil War

*Aapo Roselius*

In the historical border area between Finland and Russia, close to the polar circle, small streams and rivers feeds a vast water system that ends in the White Sea. The 300-mile long waterway of lakes, narrow straits, and thundering rapids has formed for centuries the main path in a seemingly endless wilderness called White Karelia. In the beginning of the 20th century, the region was inhabited mostly by the Karelians, a Baltic Finnic ethnic group who were living archaically in pretty, gray timber houses that formed small villages along the waterway. Small scale farming, fishing, and hunting together with the harsh environment limited the prosperity of the region and made an effective buffer against the modernization and centralization efforts of the Russian Empire. However, in 1918, these remote backwoods in the margins of Europe became a scene of merciless warfare, with volunteer units of Finnish Whites fighting both Finnish Reds and Karelians while the Finnish Civil War extended into Russian territories.

The bloody encounters in the wilderness of White Karelia were only a prelude. During the next few years, not only White Karelia but also the whole stretch of land between the Arctic Ocean and the Finnish Gulf – including the regions of Pechenga, East Karelia, Ingria, and Estonia – would become a target for an aggressive Finnish irredentist policy that resulted in a dozen semi-official military campaigns between 1918 and 1922. The campaigns, involving more than 10,000 Finnish volunteer soldiers, were all directed toward areas with a Baltic Finnish population, with the goal of liberating the people from Bolshevik and Russian rule and integrating the areas into an entity named Greater Finland (*Suur-Suomi*), the main aim of an ideological vision called *heimoaate* (literally “Kindred Idea”). Already the contemporaries called the campaigns *heimosodat* (literally Kindred Wars, in this article translated as Irredentist Wars), a name emphasizing images of a romantic and even mythological national past with a timeless bond between the scattered Baltic Finnish peoples.

The Finnish irredentist wars and their associated ideology composed an indivisible part of the formation process of the independent nation, including the Civil War. For the victorious White Finland, military activity in neighboring

regions was merely an extension of the same struggle against the Reds and the Revolution that had started in Finland in January 1918. Although most of the campaigns failed, they became important narratives of Finnish nationalism during the interwar years and formed an integral part of the Finnish Civil War history written by the victors. The irredentist campaigns were children of their time, emerging from the upheavals caused by a disastrous world war and empowered by the belief in head-on action, violence, and the survival of the fittest. They were the result both of the romantic idea of the Finnic kin that was to be unified and return to its imagined ancient glory in a world where the past and present were entangled into a spiritual oneness and of a coldhearted Realpolitik with strategic reasoning aiming at strengthening the defensive and economic capacity of the newly independent nation in a chaotic post-revolution northeastern Europe.

### A Finnish Shangri La

The main target for the Finnish irredentist policy was East Karelia, a region also referred to sometimes as Russian Karelia or Far Karelia.<sup>1</sup> The more than 600-miles-long and 200-miles-wide area consisted of the historical regions of White Karelia in the north and Olonets Karelia in the south. In the west it bordered on Finland and in the east on the lakes of Ladoga and Onega and the White Sea. This vast, scarcely populated, and by any standards massively under-developed region had during the 19th century become an essential part of the flourishing Finnish nationalism (*Fennomania*). The nationalistic movements of the late 19th century emphasized, in the search for roots and national history, vernacular purity and produced ideas of vanished golden ages. The more ancient, original, and greater the nation was, the more powerful was its prevailing political position. Eyes were turned away from the emerging cities and industrialization to the more remote and archaic regions of the homeland. In Finland, the Fennomans regarded the more modern and ethnically heterogeneous coastal areas foreign compared to the inland's uncontaminated wilderness, which was regarded as the home of the Finnic culture. Of all regions, East Karelia was in purity and ancientness above all the others, paradoxically, though, because it had never been part of a the political entity of Finland. The idea of an unnatural border between East Karelia and Finland, which hindered

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1 Due to the fact that Karelia as a regional and an ethnic concept has always been politically divided between Sweden and Russia and later between Finland and Russia, there have been multiple subregions throughout the centuries, according to geopolitical fluctuations.

the creation of the natural Greater Finland, became more and more popular among Finnish nationalists. The romantic idea of a culturally and politically enlarged Finland sometimes included even the regions of Ingria, Estonia, and the Finnish-speaking areas in northern Sweden and Norway.<sup>2</sup>

The borderlands were a paradise for collectors of traditional Finnish oral poetry and played a significant role in the creation of the Finnish epic *Kalevala* by Elias Lönnrot in the middle of the 19th century. *Kalevala* became of major importance in the national movement not only as a collection of folk tales but also as a mythologized history of a golden Finnish past. The myth of *Kalevala* and the symbolic landscape of East Karelia would inspire several generations of artists, writers, linguists, and ethnologists. Thousands of people made their journey akin of a secular pilgrimage to the borderlands in the East, and the images of the region were reproduced in a vast amount of materials from pamphlets and articles, poems and novels, drawings and photography, to academic studies of the region's history, traditions, and geography.<sup>3</sup>

Especially for the generation growing up during the golden age of Finnish nationalism in the 1890s, devotion to Karelia was strong. For instance, the sculptor and political activist Alpo Sailo, who would later take part in the irredentist wars, found his mission of life in sculpturing as many East Karelians as possible, seeing them as the last generation still mastering the old poetry of *Kalevala*. A good friend of Sailo, the painter Carl Bengts, was devoted to painting the Karelian cabins, seeing them as national sanctums where the *Kalevala* poetry had been born and was kept alive. Bengts also participated passionately in the resistance movement before Finland's independence. The enthusiasm of the Finnish irredentism was for decades mainly of cultural and civilizing character, even though the utopia of a Baltic Finnish empire – Greater Finland – was raised already in the 1870s.

The Finnish irredentist question became part of the political discussion only during World War I. It first was introduced by the small but powerful resistance movement, which embraced the Karelian question and developed it into a geopolitical and modern direction. By the political spring of 1917, the entire political field had largely absorbed the question.<sup>4</sup> However, the national romantic approach, embedded so strongly in Finnish nationalism, still played an instrumental role, especially when the irredentist question and the prospect of a Greater Finland developed into a popular movement, engaging tens of thou-

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2 Toivo Nygård, *Suur-Suomi vai lähiheimolaisten auttaminen: aatteellinen heimotyö itsenäisessä Suomessa* (Keuruu: Otava, 1978), pp. 32–34.

3 Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, pp. 22–23.

4 Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, pp. 50–51.

sands of people and exciting the political and military elite. Half a century of cultural and scientific engagement in the kindred nations was successfully transmitted to the new politicized culture. With an independent Finland already at the reach, cadres of cultural workers, journalists, artists, and scientists were ready to mobilize the emotional package and promote the idea of creating a political unit of all the Baltic Finns in the form of Greater Finland. References to *Kalevala* even were used wildly in promoting the new policy of war. When deputies from all the parishes in White Karelia, referred commonly as the true “Songlands of the Kalevala,” assembled in the regional center of Uhtua (today Kalevala in Russia) in the summer of 1917, Väinö Salminen, a Finnish collector of traditional oral poetry, declared that the region had contributed to one of the most significant works in world literature and that now it was time for the Finns to pay back this debt by liberating the Karelians.<sup>5</sup> Sometimes the references to the epic could get quite surreal, as during the Karelian uprising against Soviet rule in 1921, when the commanders fought under the pseudonyms of Väinämöinen and Ilmarinen, two central heroic figures in *Kalevala*.

In the writings of the irredentist activists there was an ambition to discuss the subject and convince the reader with an extensive spectrum of arguments and facts. Due to the international context of the East Karelian question, there was also a need for the Finnish irredentists to convince an international audience. During the period of German influence in 1917, Dr Herman Stenberg, a veteran of the Finnish resistance movement and a member of the propaganda organization “Karelian Citizens League” (*Karjalan kansalaisliitto*), published the book *Ostkarelien im Verhältnis zu Russland und zu Finnland*; two years later, during the period of Allied influence, Stenberg and the Citizens League published in English the book *The Greater Finland: A Union between the Fennobaltic Lands*.<sup>6</sup> Dr Herman Stenberg justified the Greater Finland not only from the aspects of politics, language, and history but also from a geological, geographical, and even hydrographical aspect. The romantic and political approach was enriched with “neutral” scientific arguments launched in favor of the coming

5 *Karjalaisten Sanomat* 30 September, 1918.

6 Herman Stenberg, *Ostkarelien im Verhältnis zu Russland und zu Finnland* (Stockholm: s.n., 1917); Herman Stenberg, *The Greater Finland: A Union between the Fennobaltic Lands, On Behalf of the Carelian Citizens League 1919* (Helsinki: Carelian Citizens League, 1919). When the East Karelian question became part of the international political discussion concerning the future of northeastern Europe and was used to justify Finnish claims during peace negotiations with Soviet Russia in 1920, the Finnish Government published the booklet *Les Questions de la Carélie orientale et de Petchenga: Juin 1920*, written by Toivo Kaukoranta – one of the leading authorities on the irredentist movement. Toivo Kaukoranta, *Les questions de la Carélie orientale et de Petchenga: Juin 1920* (Helsinki: Finnish Government Press, 1920).



annexation of East Karelia, a mere re-establishing of the natural, historical, and ethnically logical and harmonic order. Similar arguments flooded the bourgeois newspapers during the heyday of the irredentist policy. For Stenberg, the Russian cultural and political impact on the people was only of minor concern; he argued that Russianness was so foreign for true Karelians that it would probably disappear naturally. For Stenberg and the like-minded, the wide range of arguments gave nearly unlimited possibilities to draw new lines in the ever-expanding map of the future Greater Finland. Even the Kola Peninsula and Finnish-populated regions in northern Sweden and Norway figured in the discussions.<sup>7</sup>

In most of the letters and diaries of the period, and later in the memoirs and interviews, the volunteers of the irredentist wars usually emphasized an idealistic and emotional explanation for their engagement in the military campaigns. Liberation of the kindred nations and humanitarian aims melded with praise for the mythical wilderness and its people. Many of the young volunteers reflected on the landscape and the people they met according to the traditional rhetoric in the rich East Karelian literature, consumed by multiple generations of Finns. The excitement over the archaic landscape and its inhabitants as well as a preaching for enlightenment and modernization could be heard, for instance, in the letters of Gunnar Fortelius, a medical student who took part as a volunteer in the campaign to White Karelia in the summer of 1918:

If this will be the future Finland it will for sure form the best part from where the greatest men and women come [...] I think the local people here have better possibilities to progress than the Finns. Lively and awoken, especially the women. From a humane manner it is our absolute responsibility to make them a happy people. Concerning the beauty of the nature I think there is nothing in Finland that can be compared.<sup>8</sup>

As time went by and the situation changed for the worse for the Finnish volunteers, Fortelius's observations of Karelia also were more negatively colored: "As much as I adore the nature of Karelia, I do not after all want to live here.

<sup>7</sup> Stenberg, *The Greater Finland*, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> KA, Pk 2052, Letters of Lennart and Kasten Fortelius from the Irredentist Wars 1918, The educational campaigns and especially organizing of schools were central in the Finnish discussion of East Karelia. In 1917, only some 10 to 15 per cent of Karelians could read. Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, p. 61.

I cannot agree with the Karelian people, they resemble too much the Russians, that is how it is.”<sup>9</sup>

During his time in the expedition, Fortelius was acquainted with Ilmari Kianto, a writer dedicated to praise of wilderness, especially East Karelia and its purity. In his writings and idealization of Karelia, Kianto did see the Finnish volunteer as a threat to the morality and the purity of the Karelians, especially the young females. The “contamination” of the Karelian virginity also concerned Toivo Kuisma, the commander of the campaign to White Karelia in the fall of 1918.

They are also sending there Swedish young men from Southern Finland who are not really able to treat the people correctly. It is also usual that we have been forced to send back half-gentlemen with venereal diseases. The sending of these men is a shame for Finland. It should be kept in mind that the women of White Karelia are the holiest in the world and I am afraid that our warriors might corrupt the ancient decency and purity of the people.<sup>10</sup>

The cultural fascination and sacred status of the backwoods of Karelia were reflected in the military campaigns, where honoring local traditions, habits, and property was never preached too much. Partly it was a matter of strategy, a charm offensive as a prerequisite for the success of the irredentist policy. Any inappropriate behavior from the volunteers towards the local inhabitants was condemned by the leaders of the campaigns and met with reluctance by other volunteers. Before entering Karelia, the young volunteers were indoctrinated with strict rules of behavior: not entering the houses before being invited, not mocking the religious traditions (which differed significantly from those of in Finland), not smoking in the buildings, and not upsetting the inhabitants in any way. The task to control the behavior of the soldiers was not always easy given the extraordinary circumstances of the semi-private wars. The commanders could fall back on a wide range of punitive actions, everything from reprimands to physical punishments and even the death penalty. The fact that the campaigns were unofficial and that the commanders and the soldiers were not officially part of the Finnish Army pushed the enterprises into a juridical grey zone, allowing commanders to exert extraordinary power. When a group of volunteers looted an Orthodox church during the Olonets campaign in 1919,

9 KA, Pk 2052, Letters of Lennart and Kasten Fortelius from the Irredentist Wars 19181.

10 KA, Files of the Irredentist Wars (HSA), Kuisman retki Vienan Karjalaan v. 1918, and Toivo Kuisma's letter to the General Staff of the Finnish Army, September 1918.

the commander of the campaign, Gunnar von Hertzen, ordered that one man be selected by lot and executed. A 16-year-old boy who had not even entered the church drew the lot. The boy was shot the following day, and though his parents tried to later prosecute the commander, the whole process came to nothing.<sup>11</sup>

The national romantic approach did not fade even after the unsuccessful campaigns and the failure of the irredentist policy. East Karelia and the other regions inhabited by kindred nations were seen as Finnish martyrlands rather than scenes of irresponsible, failed, and chauvinistic foreign policy. The irredentist campaigns of 1918–1922 were truly imagined by the volunteers as romantic wars, where they tried to fit into the role of a fearless soldier, with a high morale and an understanding of the educational and historical aspects of the project.

### Part of the Finnish Civil War

When World War I and the Russian revolution opened the path for Finland to strive for independence, it was almost inevitable that the East Karelian question would become part of the process. Turning the cultural interest into a policy of military annexations and an aggressively enlarged national program was simply too alluring in a world of possibilities opened up before of the Finnish nationalists. However, they were not alone. Prompted by the political spring in Russia, a lively discussion on the future status of East Karelia emerged among Russians and Karelians alike.<sup>12</sup> By 1917, the region had undergone a massive geopolitical change, when Russia, heavily subsidized by France and Great Britain, began in the early days of World War I the construction of a railway through the region. Building a railway connecting Petrograd with the ice-free coast of the Arctic Ocean was a massive enterprise made possible by tens of thousands of German and Austrian POWs, Chinese workers, and – among many others – also approximately 5000 Finnish workers. The Murmansk railway was opened in 1916 and assured a free passage mainly for allied supplies to the Russian war machinery. When Russia fell into revolution and civil war from

11 Jouko Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota: Suomen sotaretki Aunukseen 1919* (Helsinki: Otava, 1997), pp. 428–30.

12 Mauno Jääskeläinen, *Itä-Karjalan kysymys: Kansallisen laajennusohjelman synty ja sen toteuttamisyrietykset Suomen ulkopoliitikassa vuosina 1918–1920* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1961), pp. 61–66.

1917 onward, the northern railway offered both an exit from the chaos and an offensive channel straight into the heart of the falling empire.<sup>13</sup>

World War I broke the isolation of East Karelia in another way as well. In contrast to the situation in Finland, Karelian men were mobilized into the Russian Army, where they suffered misery and death and also were influenced by new ideas of the time. A growing political awareness could be heard in a number of meetings in East Karelia in 1917, with various future scenarios for the region on the agenda. In June 1917, more than 9000 enthusiastic delegates from most of the parishes of White Karelia gathered in the village of Uhtua, where they agreed on a statement declaring the autonomous status of the region within the post-tsarist Russian Empire. Half a year later, after Lenin's takeover in Petrograd, the representatives met again in Uhtua and agreed that, due to the new circumstances, East Karelia should claim full independence. At the same time, the bourgeois Government in Finland, without informing Parliament, authorized a delegation of three leading activists to represent Finnish claims in the Russian-German peace negotiations in Brest-Litovsk. The Finnish delegation presented to the Chancellor of the German Empire, Count Georg von Hertling, a request that the question of a Finnish enlargement to the East be seriously debated during the German negotiations with the Russians. The Finnish delegation, using its independent position and the growing turmoil in Finland to its favor, produced a memorandum that justified the integration of not only East Karelia but also the Kola Peninsula with Finland on behalf of national, economic, and strategic reason; the delegation tried to convince the Germans of the huge benefits this arrangement would produce to them. To the disappointment of the Finnish activists, East Karelia was not discussed during the German-Russo peace negotiations.<sup>14</sup>

The claims in 1917 show the discrepancy between Finnish and Karelian attitudes towards the fate of Karelia, causing tensions that would form a thorn in the side of the Finnish irredentist policy and force the official rhetoric into caution. The aspirations of an expansionist policy was turned instead into Karelian initiatives, real or not, of military protection and images of Finland acting on humanitarian grounds fulfilling its moral and humanitarian duty to stand up for a people on the verge of exhaustion. The fact remained, though, that

13 Jukka Nevakivi, *Muurmannin legioona: Suomalaiset ja liittoutuneiden interventio Pohjois-Venäjälle 1918–1919* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1970).

14 The Svinhufvud Senate regarded Finnish participation in the peace-treaty negotiations in Brest-Litovsk as necessary and was ready to form a delegation consisting of three bourgeois representatives and two socialists. Due to the growing unrest, the socialists were excluded from the delegation. Jääskeläinen, *Itä-Karjalan kysymys*, pp. 76–79.

even if there were Karelians who openly saluted the idea of the region becoming a part of Finland –and for sure the idea won more support after the success of the White Army in the Finnish Civil War – a portion of Karelia's inhabitants did not regard the Finnish volunteer units as liberators. From the very first expedition in 1918, it was quite clear that the agitators and lobbyists in Finland painted a too rosy picture of the Karelian question, with manipulation and disinformation as common threads.<sup>15</sup>

When the Civil War broke out, the Karelian question became of major interest for both Red and White Finland. To a great extent, the domestic war was a fight for state power, with both sides claiming they were the real representatives of a Finnish state and the Finnish people. Both sides therefore had to confront questions concerning the future of the independent Finland, including foreign policy. In the early days of the war, Red Finland gained the upper hand. Yrjö Sirola, commissar of foreign affairs in Red Finland, from early on linked the independence of Finland with the future status of East Karelia. In February 1918, the irredentist issues were discussed in the negotiations between Red Finland and Soviet Russia, and in the following treaty in March between the two revolutionary governments there was an agreement on Finland's gaining a port in the Arctic Ocean. The treaty strongly signaled a possible positive solution concerning the incorporation of East Karelia to the Red Finland.<sup>16</sup> The interest shown in the matter by the Red regime was due also to the fact that thousands of Finnish workers had, at the beginning of the Civil War, fled from northern Finland to East Karelia. During the spring of 1918, at the shores of the White Sea, the Finnish political refugees together with Finnish railway workers of the Murmansk railway formed a Red Guard of their own that, at least in theory, was under the command of Eero Haapalainen, the commander of the Finnish Red Guard. There were even plans to open a major front in the North to threaten White Finland in the rear. Although this was never fully realized, the activity and the Red policy in the North acted as a constant threat to White Finland and challenged the Whites to take actions at the northern border.<sup>17</sup>

15 Iivo Härkönen, ed., *Karjalan kirja* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1932), pp. 700–03.

16 Nick Baron, *Soviet Karelia: Politics, Planning and Terror in Stalin's Russia, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 24; Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, 56–57; Stacy Churchill, *Itä-Karjalan kohtalo 1917–1922: Itä-Karjalan itsehallintokysymys Suomen ja Neuvosto-Venäjän välisissä suhteissa 1917–1922* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1970), pp. 75–76.

17 Mirko Harjula, *Suomalaiset Venäjän sisällissodassa 1917–1922*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 1073 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), pp. 52–54.

The Red engagement and diplomatic success would soon be answered by White Finland. In late February 1918, General Mannerheim declared in his Order of the Day that he would not sheath his sword before Finland and White Karelia were freed from the Bolsheviks, and he proclaimed his firm belief in creating a mighty and great Finland, predestined by the blood ties.<sup>18</sup> These grandiose words, and the full backing Mannerheim had from the White Government, expanded the Finnish Civil War, at least rhetorically, into an international conflict. The rhetoric of the leaders of the White Finland was all but empty words, and in the spring of 1918 Mannerheim, in the middle of the domestic conflict, ordered the formation of three military expeditions that were to conquer East Karelia.<sup>19</sup>

The seemingly resolute and centralized irredentist policy by the government and the military during the Civil War should not obscure the importance of the local level. If anything, Finnish irredentism was a history from below, where private initiatives, conspiratorial plans, and public agitation outpaced governmental policy. Instead, the government was usually forced to react to a development already underway. The plans of the White Army in the spring 1918, for instance, were preceded by far-reaching private plans for military expeditions that aimed to conquer the Kola Peninsula, White Karelia, and Pechenga.<sup>20</sup> As the success of the White Army grew, it became more and more difficult to publicly take a negative or even a passive attitude towards the annexation policy. Demands in the bourgeois newspapers, countless delegations lobbying for resolute actions, and a growing interest and self-esteem within the military after the success in the war against the Reds all created pressure to act on the official level.

The actual fulfillment of the expedition of Pechenga in the spring of 1918 is a striking example of the more-or-less enforced decentralized and amateurish character of the White Army. The military leadership of the White Army in March had to face the fact that plans had been laid out for not only one but also two private military expeditions to the disputed region at the Arctic Ocean. Both expeditions were led by civilian doctors whose spirit was only exceeded by their military ineptitude. The expeditions were financed by

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18 The order of the day was probably written by the quartermaster of the White Army, Hannes Ignatius, who was a keen supporter of the idea of a Greater Finland. Jääskeläinen, *Itä-Karjalan kysymys*, pp. 182–83.

19 Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, pp. 56–58.

20 Jouko Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi": Valkoisen Suomen pyrkimykset Itä-Karjalan valtaamiseksi vuonna 1918, *Studia historica septentrionalia*, 17 (Rovaniemi: Pohjois-Suomen historiallinen yhdistys, 1988), p. 447.



MAP 4.1 *Finnish irredentist campaigns.*

Finnish businessmen and consisted, as was the case with most of the Finns in arms, of civilians with minimal military training. The two doctors combined forces, received official permission from the White authorities, and set off on the long journey. After skiing more than 300 miles through the Finnish



Lapland, a couple of hundred exhausted men finally came to the Arctic Ocean only to face the cannons of a British battle ship and a force consisting of 200 British marine soldiers, Russian Bolsheviks, and Serbian soldiers. The rather naïve Finnish volunteer force had stumbled right into World War I, where any national questions or historical demands from some newly independent country were quite irrelevant in the big picture. For the Allies, it was important to prevent Germany or any pro-German allies from reaching the shores of the Arctic Ocean, and for the small Finnish volunteer force there was nothing left but a fast retreat and the exhausting journey back home.<sup>21</sup>

The Pechenga expedition, even though quite a marginal affair, showed the risks of an adventurous irredentist policy. At the moment Finnish volunteers crossed the Russian border there was a growing risk for Finland to be drawn into a complicated international situation.<sup>22</sup> The threat of becoming entangled in the World War I in open warfare with the Allied forces and becoming a part of the ever-growing chaotic post-tsarist struggle in Russia could jeopardize the future position of an independent Finland. The fast-changing political and military situations both in Finland and in Eastern Europe were further factors that restrained a fully launched war abroad. Of the three campaigns planned to East Karelia in the spring 1918 by the Headquarter of the White Army, one was cancelled and the two others were pulled off with a minimum of engagement. The cancelled campaign had been planned to advance deep into the populous and strategically important southern parts of the region, called Olonets Karelia. It was cancelled only some days before its intended start, and the thousand-men-strong unit instead was sent to fight the Reds at the front in Vyborg. Also concerning the second campaign, aimed at White Karelia, General Mannerheim was about to cancel it, but by the time his orders reached the unit it had already crossed the border. The commander of the unit, Lieutenant Colonel Carl Wilhelm Malm, was definitely not to halt his enterprise.<sup>23</sup>

Lieutenant Colonel Malm in many ways was the archetype of an “irredentist warrior” (*heimosoturi*), whose engagement relied on a romantic and emotional approach. After decades in civil life, the former soldier, braced by an honorable family history, eagerly threw himself into the thrill of the Civil War. During the Finnish War 1808–09, Malm’s grandfather had organized Karelian and Savonian peasant units to fight the Russian Army, and later in the 19th century he was

21 Paavo Haavikko, *Suuri keinottelu: Pariisin maailmannäyttelystä Tarton rauhaan* (Helsinki: Art House, 1997), pp. 197–202.

22 Vahtola, “Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi,” pp. 212–13.

23 Vahtola, “Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi,” pp. 116–19.

made immortal in the hugely popular poems of Johan Ludvig Runeberg. In 1918, a century later, an aged and rheumatic grandson stepped into the shoes of his ancestor and imagined himself as the true popular leader of a peasant uprising in his beloved and mythicized Karelia. His appeal just before the campaign was full of belief:

Salute You brothers across the border! Salute You brothers in Arkhangelsk Karelia! The free children of the free Finland bring You their greetings. Now the new day dawns for the Karelian people to free themselves from a bunch of villains. Now is the dawn, when the entire Finnish tribe awakens, when the entire people of the Kalevala breaks their chains.<sup>24</sup>

The border crossings of his three companies in the end of March 1918 were highly ceremonial events with parades, pro-Karelian speeches, songs, and quotations from the national epic of *Kalevala*. However, the romantic aspect of the liberation campaign was soon dashed. In his reports to the White Army Headquarters, Malm had to admit:

The reality: The elderly are on our side, the younger ones adhere to those who have the power, the youngest i.e., the soldiers who have returned from the war [World War I] hardly manage to think, they only want peace and tranquility, nothing else matters. Not one man falls in. They tell me to be friendly and treat the people with gentleness. And I have tried. All the customs and practises of the people have been appropriately treated by my boys. All the speakers have talked themselves hoarse; in the bigger villages there have been meetings with speeches and singing, the enthusiasm has been great, but that is all.

The passivity of the local people and the overconfidence of the Finnish lobbying groups were characteristic of Finnish irredentist endeavors throughout the years. Usually the campaigns did not, to the surprise of the Finns, lead to any larger popular uprisings. Local Karelians, many of them well aware of the peculiar and unsure political situation of the region, were uninspired about going to war after years in the Russian Army, and they were suspicious towards the Finns and their capacity to live up to their great words. For most people, bread and peace was more appealing than a frantic Finnish irredentist activist. Even for the more pro-Finnish Karelians, a couple of hundred armed young

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24 KA, Files of the Irredentist Wars (HSA), Malmin retki Vienan Karjalaan v. 1918.

Finns were not enough to convince them of a possible Finnish-bound future.<sup>25</sup>

The reluctant reactions among the Karelians usually did not hinder the expeditions, nor did they change the hearts of the irredentists. For instance, the unit of Lieutenant Colonel Malm did, after all, continue the campaign in spite of the almost non-existent local backing. Even after his troops were beaten by a unit of Russian and Finnish Reds outside the town of Kem at the White Sea, they continued to occupy vast inland areas in White Karelia, believing in the power of agitation, propaganda, and education to change the mood of the locals.<sup>26</sup> However, the agitation usually worked only as long as the Finns could offer military security. Three months after entering White Karelia, Malm, who had seen the official support for his enterprise diminish, collapsed physically and was literally carried out of Karelia – the land of his dreams.<sup>27</sup> The expedition lived on, though, when new volunteers started to arrive in the summer of 1918 under the new commander, Toivo Kuisma.

Of the irredentist campaigns carried out in 1918, none resembled more clearly the Finnish Civil War than the campaigns of Jäger Lieutenants Oiva Willamo and Kurt Martti Wallenius. The latter became a legendary figure in the interwar period. Two years after the Civil War, Wallenius would command a small volunteer unit in Pechenga. He would reach the position of Chief of Staff of the Finnish Army in 1925–1930, before he became deeply involved in the activity of the extreme Right. In March 1918, Wallenius and Willamo organized two units in Finnish Lapland: the Kuolajärvi battalion and the Kuusamo battalion. These units of almost 1000 men were ordered by the White Army to try to proceed to the Murmansk railway and hinder the advancement of the Finnish Red Guards operating in East Karelia into northern Finland.<sup>28</sup> During a couple of weeks between March and April 1918, Wallenius's men clashed several times with Finnish Reds in the wintry White Karelia. The iconographic surroundings of Finnish romantic nationalism along Lake Paanajärvi and River Oulanka, visited through the pre-war years by thousands of artists and Karelia enthusiasts, became places of fierce fighting between Finns. From the first engagement, where a White unit encircled and executed a ten-man-strong

25 Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," p. 111.

26 The battle of Kem took place on 10 April 1918 between the 270-men strong unit of Malm and a unit of approximately 1000 Red guardsmen, of whom one-fourth were Finnish and the rest Russian. Harjula, *Suomalaiset Venäjän sisällissodassa*, p. 57.

27 Vahtola "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," p. 112.

28 Harjula, *Suomalaiset Venäjän sisällissodassa*, pp. 56–57.

Red patrol, the warfare showed the same brutality as the ongoing war in Finland. Prisoners were seldom taken, and summary executions were common.<sup>29</sup>

Wallenius's expedition never reached the railway. After heavy fighting in the early stage of the campaign, the threat from the Reds diminished rapidly in April 1918 when, according to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Russian Bolsheviks forbade all hostilities against White Finland. Wallenius's exhausted and sick troops were ordered to act as border guards, and they continued to occupy a small strip of land on the Russian side of the border. Later in fall, this last strip also was abandoned, and the troops were withdrawn to Finland.

The Finnish irredentist campaigns had to overcome not only the enemy but also the harsh conditions reflected in a report to the Headquarters of the White Army by the volunteer Holger Hongisto:

I arrived at 5.15 am to Mölköm after a straining march through the marsh. No roads not even paths. Left again, pulling the boat on the ice of Lake Vuoninen and then rowing at open water and pulling the boat over the ice blocks to Vuoksenlahti, from where I walked to Jyvälahti where I arrived at 3 pm. I left at 4 pm walking to Töllönlahti but again due to the ice barrier I had to turn back after hours of fruitless work, I arrived to Jyvälahti again at 4.20 am. This time I left directly over the ice pulling my boat at 6 am. I arrived to Uhtua after severe hardships at 12.15 pm.<sup>30</sup>

East Karelia was simply not suitable for large-scale warfare. The backwoods could hardly feed an invading army, and even though the Finnish units were small in size, malnutrition occurred among the troops of both Wallenius and Malm.<sup>31</sup> The infrastructure of the region was almost non-existent, effectively limiting the scope of warfare. The few roads were mostly useless during spring and autumn, whereas winter, with snow and ice, would have been a much more preferable season for warfare with regard to transportation.

The campaigns to East Karelia and the Arctic Ocean in 1918 can be regarded as part of the ongoing Finnish Civil War. The political leadership of the White Finland both during and after the Civil War largely favored the continuation of the campaign of the White Army into Russian territories. Both the Regent of Finland Pehr Evind Svinhufvud and Prime Minister Juho Kusti Paasikivi presented the irredentist program as a question of life or death for an indepen-

29 Mikko Uola, *Vallankumouksellisia, vakoilijoita ja aseveljiä: Myyttejä ja tosiasioita Lapin historiasta 1910-luvulta 1940-luvulle* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2010), pp. 95–103.

30 KA, Pk 1234, Files of Holger Hongisto.

31 The troops were also hit heavily by the Spanish flu.

dent Finland.<sup>32</sup> If looking solely on the military action, it is clear it was organized and fulfilled in an area best described as between private and official, a circumstance that would follow the irredentist policy until the end. In 1918, for instance, the soldiers were mostly volunteers, and the commanders, as in the case of Lieutenant Colonel Malm, were asked to resign from the White Army for the length of the campaign into foreign land. At the same time, the soldiers and commanders saw themselves as part of the White Army, and when the fighting ended in Finland in May 1918, the volunteers in White Karelia also insisted on going home. Furthermore, the whole concept of White Army was unclear, to say the least. Basically all persons and units who were to take up the fight against the Reds automatically became part of the White Army.

The idea of Finnish political and cultural expansion into a region that was pictured as the heartland of ancient Finnishness became an intimate part of the Finnish Civil War. Both White and Red Finland dreamt of a Greater Finland, with the annexation of East Karelia as the main focus. After the Red initiative was severely damaged by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and their military failure, the Whites gained an upper hand. Although the expeditions all failed in the end, it can nevertheless be argued that the irredentist campaigns and the idea of a Greater Finland formed an essential part of the ideological formation of White Finland.

The irredentist campaigns during 1918 hints also at the larger picture surrounding events of the Finnish Civil War. The seemingly domestic conflict and the Finnish annexation plans could be, and were indeed, linked with the big questions of the time: the faith of the Bolshevik state and the future of Russia and the whole of Eastern Europe. All these questions could still, in 1918, be converged in the quest for the metropolis of Petrograd. For General Mannerheim, the big question of defeating the Bolsheviks was always a top priority, and later in the Civil War plans were made in the White headquarters to aim the Army against the Russian capital as soon as the domestic fight was over. Mannerheim, who had made an outstanding career as a loyal officer of the tsar and who had arrived in Finland just weeks before the Civil War broke out, was, above all, a counter-revolutionary.

### Part of the German New Order

The Finnish irredentist policy during 1918 was strongly connected to the fate and will of Germany. The overwhelming military success of the Germans in

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32 Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," pp. 206–07.

Eastern Europe and the breakup of the Russian Empire encouraged the government of White Finland to commit itself in most aspects to the European superpower. Still, in the spring of 1918, most signs pointed toward a new German order in the East. The armistice in December 1917 between the Bolsheviks and Germany ended in February 1918 when the latter resumed hostilities and, virtually unopposed, advanced towards Petrograd. Under huge pressure, the Bolshevik regime signed finally the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in early March. German success between February and the summer of 1918 was truly spectacular, with German troops marching on the streets of Kiev, Odessa, Helsinki, Minsk, and Vilnius. However, they did not act in a political vacuum. The withering of the Russian Empire had vitalized national movements in the old borderlands, and an abundance of political claims from different ethnic groups filled the scene, among them also appeals from Ingrians and East Karelians.<sup>33</sup>

German policy in the newly occupied areas was outlined already in 1917: create political units of the former Russian borderlands that were to serve German needs both economically and politically. The new German rule was presented as a humanitarian project and the occupation as a grand-scale liberation campaign where Germany protected not only separate countries but also the whole of Europe from the horrors of the Bolshevik revolution. The policy was successful, though short-lived. According to the wishes of the German Crown Council, requests for protection and pro-German declarations poured in from newly settled national governments from the White Sea to the Black Sea.<sup>34</sup> Finland, who made her treaty with Germany in March 1918 and ratified it in June the same year, became a model pupil of the German exploitation-without-coercion policy.

The pro-German atmosphere in Finland was intertwined with the prospect of at least annexation of East Karelia to Finland. The government of White Finland was openly expansionistic and reckoned to get their aims either as a

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33 With the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk on 3 March 1918, Bolshevik-led Russia lost one-third of its population and railways and half of its industry. David T. Zabecki, *The German 1918 Offensive: A Case Study in the Operational Level of War* (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 92–94; Peter Simkins, Geoffrey Jukes, & Michael Hickey, *The First World War: The War to End All the Wars* (Oxford: Osprey, 2003), pp. 264–65.

34 In the Governorate of Estonia and the Governorate of Livonia, a united *Landesrath* declared the desire to be united in a personal union with the Kingdom of Prussia; in Lithuania, during the summer of 1918, a German prince was accepted to become King Mindaugas II; and in Ukraine, the *Rada* in February 1918 had agreed to fall back on German weapons in a situation where Bolsheviks had conquered most of the country. On 23 April an economic treaty was signed between Ukraine and Germany. Robert G.L. Waite, *Vanguard of Nazism* (New York: Norton, 1969).

diplomatic solution, in which Germany would safeguard the creation of Greater Finland, or a military solution, whereby Finns, hopefully with the assistance of the Germans, would incorporate the regions. Such was the importance of the Karelian question that many activists were ready to make far-reaching political concessions in the name of fulfilling the irredentist program with the help of Germany.<sup>35</sup> For a short period of time, the nationalistic aims of Finland seemed to parallel the greater plans of Germany, in which a Finnish expansion eastward would be used both as a counter force to the Entente presence at the Murmansk railway and as a support for a possible German offensive towards Petrograd.<sup>36</sup>

The threat of the Entente was a reality. The British had arrived at the shores of the White Sea in the spring 1918. The first part of their mission was to prevent the Allied war material, stockpiled in Arkhangelsk and Murmansk, from falling into the hands of the Germans or the Bolsheviks; the second part consisted of a plan for a possible resurrection of the Eastern Front, with the help of the Czechoslovak Legion and other anti-Bolshevik troops in Russia. Along the Murmansk railway, the British organized local units, including a regiment of Finnish railway-workers called the Murmansk Legion and the Karelian Regiment consisting of East Karelians. Both units were to fight against Finnish volunteers in the summer of 1918, with the latter almost annihilating the White Finns along the White Karelia waterway. Reflecting the complicated and somewhat paradoxical situation, both the Karelian regiment and the Finnish volunteers were killing each other under the slogan of "Liberty to Karelia." For the British, the Finns were nothing but German underlings, who had to be pushed back to Finland.

The German-Finnish collaboration did not bring the solution the White Finland had longed for, however. During the summer of 1918, it was increasingly clear that Finnish annexation policy was not in the interest of Germany, at least for the present. For instance, Germany opposed General Mannerheim's grandiose military plan of advancing with his victorious White Army against Petrograd and did not encourage any increase in military activity in the White Karelia. Having to yield to the terms imposed by the *Kaiserreich* actually contributed to Mannerheim's resignation in late May 1918.<sup>37</sup> A further disappointment for White Finland's political leadership was the German-Russo negotiations held in August 1918 in Berlin, where the eagerly anticipated East

35 Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," pp. 207–09.

36 Ohto Manninen, "Fredsvilja och våld," *Finland 1917–1920: Ett folk i kamp*, vol. 2 (Helsinki: Kansallisarkisto, 1995), pp. 470–72; Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," pp. 179–89.

37 Jouko Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, p. 17; Vahtola, "Suomi suureksi – Viena vapaaksi," p. 204.



Karelian question was not even officially discussed. Instead, Germany and Soviet Russia signed a supplementary treaty, which seemed disastrous for a Finnish irredentist policy. In the supplementary treaty, the Bolsheviks vowed to get rid of the Entente troops in the North, and Germany promised that neither they nor the Finns would advance into Russian territories, especially not Petrograd. For Germany, it had become essential to preserve at least momentarily the Bolshevik regime because of fears that another Russian regime would continue fighting alongside the Allies. With Finland's hands tied by German policy in the fall of 1918, Greater Finland, already on the horizon, seemed suddenly to be out of the reach.

When the people in Repola (Reboly in Russian), an East Karelian parish bordering on Finland, voted in fall 1918 in favor of becoming part of Finland (the decision included the requisite of getting food supplies and weapons), it was but cold comfort for the irredentists. The example of Repola did not encourage other parishes, and the overly optimistic hopes of having a chain reaction where region after region would join Finland were proven ill-founded. The exception was the neighboring parish of Porajärvi (Porosozero in Russian), whose inhabitants voted for unification with Finland in the summer 1919. Both Repola and Porajärvi were partly incorporated with the Finnish civic and military administration.

### The Irredentist Wars Turn into Popular Movement

During 1918, Finland had committed itself to Germany, believing it would bring along an expansion eastward. When the Finnish pro-German policy came to a definite halt with the collapse of the Imperial Germany in November 1918, however, it was not an end to the Finnish claims; rather the opposite. Irredentist policy would culminate in 1919, becoming an almost euphoric popular movement with thousands of Finnish volunteers heading into battle, first in Estonia and later in East Karelia. As had been the case during 1918 also, the new irredentist wave was closely linked with the international development.

After the Russian revolution and the collapse of Germany, the situation in northeastern Europe was chaotic, to say the least. The uncertainties surrounding the fate of the Bolshevik state, the possible extension of the socialist revolution, the resurrection of an Imperial Russia, and the establishment of nation-states in the old imperial borderlands created tensions that would last for years. For the victors of World War I, the most immediate problem in the East was the threat of the revolution. One result of the collapse of Germany was the renunciation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which allowed the Red Army to advance into former Russian borderlands. To hinder the expected

advancement and further the success of the Bolshevik revolution, the Allies turned openly hostile towards the Bolshevik state and became players in the Russian Civil War. The common enemy created a heterogeneous anti-Bolshevik front, including even German *Freikorps* in the Baltic under the command of Rüdiger von der Goltz.<sup>38</sup> For Finland, the fast-changing international situation was both appealing and threatening, but above all, it provided oxygen to a waning irredentist policy and created a perfect climate for paramilitary campaigns, hidden political agendas, and conspiracy.<sup>39</sup> Compared to the previous year, the Finnish irredentism of 1919 had to disguise itself as a merely anti-Bolshevik whereas the aspirations of a territorial expansion and the creation of a Greater Finland had to be hidden.

The one conflict that sparked new life into Finnish irredentism and took it to a level of popularity unseen before and after was the Estonian War of Independence. In November 1918, a year after the Bolshevik coup in Petrograd, the Red Army set off to retake the former regions of the Russian Empire, thereby bringing the revolution into the fringes of Central Europe. The Bolshevik offensives into the Baltic, Ukraine, and Belarus were met everywhere by hastily organized national forces. In Estonia, the Army of Leon Trotsky invaded a major part of the country in just a couple of weeks and was already threatening the capital Tallinn. The conflict in Estonia (and in Latvia) turned partly into an international anti-Bolshevik campaign, with the Allies trying to control the development. When the Estonian national government sent an official request to Finland for military and economic support, the Finns, anxious about the scenario of having a Bolshevik-ruled country as a southern neighbor, were ready to ship funds and weapons.<sup>40</sup> However, due to the threat of a possible Bolshevik attack on Finland, there was no direct military support in form of ordinary troops. The fear of a Bolshevik attack joined by thousands of former Finnish Red guardsmen who had fled to Russia in the end of the Civil War was very real in the last weeks of 1918. In the Finnish border regiments, soldiers were not

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38 According to the armistice, German troops could be removed from former Russian territory only when permitted by the Allies. William van der Kloot, *The Lessons of War: The Experiences of Seven Future Leaders in the First World War* (Stroud: Nonsuch, 2008), pp. 187–88.

39 When the Finnish Government took a positive approach to the campaign of Olonets, the main goal officially could be not the incorporation of the region but to fight Bolshevism. Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, 64–65.

40 Jari Leskinen, *Veljien valtiosalaisuus: Suomen ja Viron salainen sotilaallinen yhteistyö Neuvostoliiton hyökkäyksen varalle vuosina 1918–1940* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1999), pp. 14–15.

permitted to go on Christmas leave, and the commanders were preparing for a new war.<sup>41</sup>

The military threat from the Bolsheviks together with domestic political instability resulted in a strong patriotic movement in Finland among the non-socialists. It resembled the activity among the Whites a year earlier and resulted, for instance, in the successful establishment of the Civil Guards as a peacetime popular movement in interwar Finland.<sup>42</sup> The more immense result of the movement, though, was the widespread enthusiasm for and engagement in the Estonian cause. Estonia was both geographically and linguistically close to Finland, and during the most intensive nation-building process in the end of the 19th century, many contacts were created between the Estonian and Finnish cultural elites. Activists of the former Finnish resistance movement established, with the support of the Government and all the political parties except the social democrats, a Central Committee of Assistance to Estonia (*Viron Avustamisen Päätoimikunta*) with the intent to organize and send a volunteer military force to Estonia. From the end of 1918 until the summer of 1919, the Committee was a playground for conspiratorial activity and a channel for an alternative foreign policy that was too adventurous for the Finnish Government, no matter how tempting and attractive. The number of volunteers ready to join the Estonian campaign surprised all those involved. Whereas the campaigns of the previous year had attracted a couple hundred volunteers, now almost 10,000 young men followed the call and registered themselves in the recruitment offices established by the Committee in various regions. The number was five times higher than the Government and the Committee had agreed on, and in the end it was decided that only approximately 4000 volunteers would go to take part in the actual war, with the rest staying home as a reserve.

The popularity was not limited to the recruitment campaigns but could be felt throughout the country in pro-Estonia popular meetings, fundraising events, and first and foremost in the vast amount of writings agitating for the cause of Estonia. Although the bourgeois papers heralded the Estonian cause most vociferously, the main social democratic newspaper also took a positive stance towards engagement in the war, seeing it as a protective measure for the

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41 Vesa Vares, *Vanhasuomalainen Lauri Ingman ja hänen poliittinen toimintansa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1996), p. 193. The German *Ostsee Division*, which had been placed in Finland from the days of the Civil War, and hundreds of German military personnel constructing the Finnish military, were forced to leave the country.

42 For more on the establishment of the Civil Guards in the post-war Finland, see Aapo Roselius' chapter "The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards and the Veterans' Union" in this volume.

development of democracy but also referring to the romantic vision of the kindred nations.<sup>43</sup> Belief in the Finnish volunteers reflected in the writings seemed to be limitless. First, they had crashed the Red uprising on the home ground, and after that they had successfully fought the Bolsheviks in neighboring countries. The Finnish volunteers were “professional freedom fighters” who run to help their neighbors and were lauded by the world.<sup>44</sup> Although the Finnish engagement in Estonia did not involve explicit ideas of a Finnish territorial expansion, the campaigns were, to a great extent, built on the romanticized image of kin, blood ties, and the idea of a united Finnic nation.<sup>45</sup>

The character of the paramilitary campaigns and the popular movement surrounding them affected the volunteers and their commanders. The war-hungry young men were eager to fit into the role of undefeated heroes ascribed to them by the home front. The war propaganda portrayed the hated enemy – the Reds – as militarily incapable and unmanly, which stood as a clear contrast to the high morals and heroism of the Finnish volunteers. The message of the propaganda was transmitted into the battlefield, where excited volunteers rushed into the battle certain of their superiority. Sometimes the strategy was successful. During the Estonian campaign, a company of the First Finnish Volunteer Regiment managed to advance deep into the enemy territory and was on the outskirts of the strategically important town of Narva. Without hesitation, the company stormed into the town filled with Red troops, occupied the main square, created panic and chaos in the ranks of the enemy, and almost captured commander Leon Trotsky. In the aftermath of the battle of Narva, the Finnish volunteers executed without trial 27 captured Red Finns who had been fighting with the Bolsheviks.<sup>46</sup>

The quest for heroism was even more prominent in the Second Finnish Volunteer Regiment, led by the charismatic and impulsive commander Hans Kalm. In the battle of Paju in southern Estonia, the Finnish volunteers were engaged in fierce fighting with an enemy consisting mostly of Latvian riflemen but also Chinese and Red Finnish soldiers. The suicidal frontal attack of the White Finnish and Estonian troops developed into hand-to-hand combat with

43 Juuso Ylönen, “Sivistyksen etuvartio vai rosvojoukko – lehdistön suhtautuminen suomalaisiin vapaaehtoiseihin Viron vapaussodassa 1918–1919,” *Sotahistoriallinen Aikakauskirja* 30 (2010): 31–155.

44 *Uusi Aura* 26 January 1919.

45 The cultural ties between Finland and Estonia formed the basis for a more politically orientated approach in the years of turmoil 1917–18, sparking new life into the discussion of a possible Finnish-Estonian political union. Leskinen, *Veljien valtiosalaisuus*, pp. 17–19.

46 It was commanded by the Swedish officer Martin Ekström, a mercenary who had served in Persia and in the German Army before joining the White Army in the Finnish Civil War.

knives and bayonets before the Reds were beaten. The battle made Kalm's unit famous but resulted also in quite shocking casualties for the two engaged Finnish companies. The first had a casualty rate of 50 per cent, and the second lost one-third of its men.<sup>47</sup> The heavy casualties further triggered the beyond-battle killings and terror, and the Finnish volunteers in the Second Regiment were guilty of killing prisoners and civilians.<sup>48</sup> The commander of the Second Regiment, Hans Kalm, was a prime example of an irredentist warrior of his time. Kalm, himself of Estonian descent and a World War I veteran in the Russian Army, had become a ferocious counterrevolutionary, and during the Finnish Civil War he led a battalion famous for the use of terror and summary executions. After the war, Kalm and his battalion were responsible of the executions of some 600 prisoners when acting as guards in the POW camp in Lahti. As a charismatic leader he was idealized by his soldiers but drove his commanders insane by his refusal to follow orders. Excellent in inspiring the troops, merciless in his warfare, and possessing almost an outrageous belief in his own capacity, Kalm was perfectly suited to command paramilitary units. Kalm named his volunteers the "Lads of the North" (*Pohjan Pojat*) and had a banner made for the regiment with a picture of a polar bear. The departure of his troops from Helsinki, as well as their arrival in Tallinn, was accompanied by massive positive publicity, cheering crowds, and a ceremonial welcome by the highest Estonian politicians and military personnel.<sup>49</sup>

The ego-boosting military success, the adventurous life of the mercenaries, and the youthfulness of the volunteers (a majority of the Finnish volunteers were between 16 and 20 years old) characterized the Finnish campaigns. However, the same factors that contributed to the success also led to growing problems beyond the battles. Heavy drinking, rioting, looting, and fighting became part of the life of many of the Finnish irredentist warriors in Estonia.<sup>50</sup> Despite the bombastic approach by newspapers and the positive official image, the campaigns came to an early end when both of the Finnish regiments were sent back to Finland after just three months of service. It is true that the most urgent military threat from the Bolsheviks had by that time already been

47 The battle of Paju was the bloodiest single battle in the Estonian War of Independence. The legendary Estonian Kuperjanov Battalion was also engaged in the battle. Commander Julius Kuperjanov was fatally injured during the battle. The total casualty figure of the Estonian and Finnish troops was 156 dead.

48 Finnish troops executed 12 non-combatants who were hiding in the cellar of the manor of Paju. Later during the campaign, they killed 24 Chinese soldiers they found in a railway car.

49 Leskinen, *Veljien valtiosalaisuus*, pp. 11–14.

50 Juuso Ylönen, "Sivistyksen etuvartio vai rosvojoukko," pp. 131–55.

neutralized, but problems in payments and growing unrest among the volunteers also contributed to the decision. Whereas the Finnish volunteers were sent back home, the Estonian War of Independence continued officially until early 1920, although mostly as a low intensity warfare outside the ethnic boundaries of Estonia. In the spring and summer of 1919, the Estonian Army for a short while turned its focus on the German Freikorps then operating in Latvia and occupying Riga. Together with troops of the Latvian national government, the Estonians beat the German units of Rüdiger von der Goltz and ended German military influence in the region.

### The Children's Crusade

The success of the engagement in Estonia, the favorable international situation, and the overwhelming positive reactions among the public fed the hunger of the Finnish irredentists and encouraged them to turn their attention again towards East Karelia – the core of the idea of a Greater Finland. The focus was now on the more populous and strategically more important southern region of Olonets. In late 1918 it had come under pressure from the Bolsheviks, resulting in collectivization, political terror, and drafts into the Red Army. This led to more and more critical voices among the inhabitants. The Bolshevik activity in the region could be felt also in Finland, where during the winter of 1918–1919 both Bolshevik and Finnish units performed hit-and-run attacks across the border. One of these aggressive border patrols took place on 27 January 1919. Led by the Jäger captain Vilho Hämäläinen, 25 Finnish soldiers and 20 East Karelian refugees skied across the border to the village of Veskelys (Veshkelitsa in Russian), took the ten Bolshevik border guards as fugitives, skied back to Finland, and then executed seven of them without trial.<sup>51</sup> These kinds of extended border patrols showed the readiness of the military to get involved in a war with the Bolsheviks and the unclear situation between war and peace that would continue most part of the year 1919.

Plans for a Finnish campaign into East Karelia in spring 1919 was part of a process in which the anti-Bolshevik front seemed to be making the last move to move the Bolshevik state into the history books. After initial success at the end of 1918, the Bolsheviks had been hit by severe military setbacks on all fronts, and in the North it seemed to be only a question of when and who would conquer Petrograd. In addition to the plans of the Russian General Nikolai Yudenich, the British, and the German Freikorps, also the plan of

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<sup>51</sup> Jouko Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, p. 26.

then-Regent Mannerheim of marching against Petrograd with the Finnish Army was re-activated. As was the case a year before, also in 1919 the grand plans concerning the international scene were integrated with Finnish nationalistic aspirations. Mannerheim figured as a player on both of the scenes. For him, a true conservative cosmopolitan of the old regime, Finnish irredentism was the way to achieve greater goals, which were crushing the Bolsheviks and the revolution. In the spring of 1919, Mannerheim asked approval and backing of the Allied countries for a military campaign against the Bolsheviks. In these scenarios, the volunteer campaign to Olonets would back the main offensive against Petrograd. The historical opportunity for Finland to give the decisive strike on the revolution by conquering Petrograd seemed appealing and did at least not decrease the self-esteem of the irredentist movement.

The historical campaign against Petrograd that would have made General Mannerheim a major figure in international history never happened. The momentum disappeared in the fast-changing international constellations, and there was never enough backing from either the Allied countries or the White Russian coalition. Also in domestic politics, the plans for getting involved in a strike against Petrograd created negative emotions and fear of losing the national focus.<sup>52</sup>

The uncertainties around the campaign on Petrograd did not slow down the plans of an attack on East Karelia, however. Such was the positive attitudes towards military involvement that the question could be discussed openly in the government and Parliament. During some hectic weeks in the spring of 1919, negotiations were held between the government, the military, the Regent, and activist groups. The plans fluctuated between a major and a minor program, and Parliament even voted in favor of substantial economic contributions for a military involvement. Eventually the campaign was implemented according to the minor program: no permanent troops, a limited number of volunteers, and no formation of units on Finnish territory. Despite the limitations and the absence of a direct involvement by the government and the army, the Olonets campaign was as close to an official war as possible. The campaign received the support of the high command, Regent Mannerheim, of two successive governments, and the majority of Parliament. The government had its own representative in the campaign to lead the civilian development in the region of Olonets, and the General Staff demanded the right to appoint the commander of the campaign. The government even took financial responsibility. However, permanent troops were never sent to Olonets, and when the hero

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52 A Finnish-led strike on the metropolis was still on the agenda in late 1919 when Mannerheim asked President Ståhlberg to consider an attack together with the Army of Yudenich.





FIGURE 4.1 *Volunteers on their way to Olonets Karelia in the spring of 1919.*  
PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

of the Civil War (or the victors' War of Liberation), Colonel Aarne Sihvo, was appointed as the commander of the campaign in early May 1919, he was officially ordered by the General Staff only to "inspect the borders" in the eastern parts of the country.<sup>53</sup>

The high level of political involvement made it even more essential for the organizers to present the campaign as a humanitarian effort and more of a supportive mission for an East Karelian uprising. The leader of the campaign, Jäger Lieutenant Gunnar von Hertzen, declared during the negotiations with the government and the military that he would need only 1000 men to achieve the goal. In his calculation, thousands of citizens of Olonets would join the campaign, and also the Finnish Army would be involved in the end. To further legitimate the war on a political level, the activists orchestrated a demonstration in the village of Vieljärvi in East Karelia, where 100 demonstrators, claiming the need for Finnish protection from the horrors of the Bolsheviks, represented the popular uprising and removed the last political obstacle.

53 Jarkko Kemppi, *Isänmaan puolesta: Jääkäriilikkeen ja jääkärien historia* (Helsinki: Minerva, 1911), p. 103; Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 66–80; Vesa Saarikoski, *Keskustajääkäri Aarne Sihvo: Näkökulma aseellisen voiman ja yhteiskunnan vuorovaikutukseen itsenäistymisen murroksesta paasikiviläiseen toiseen tasavaltaan*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 25 (Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1997), p. 103–05.



FIGURE 4.2 *Volunteer nurses during the Olonets campaign in 1919. The original humorous caption in the back of the photo reads: "The Fall of Eves."* PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

Actually, the activity of Karelians was not totally absent. In the end, 1000 Karelians took part in the volunteer army, approximately one-fourth of the total manpower.<sup>54</sup>

The recruitment campaign to Olonets did not surpass the euphoric Estonian campaign, but there was no problem getting volunteers. Local recruiters or Civil Guards sent the volunteers to the town of Sortavala, close to the border. The town turned into a military camp, with hundreds of young men, Karelian enthusiasts, combatants of various background, Jägers, self-acclaimed officers, and adventurers – all united by an eagerness to go to war. Among the volunteers there were also dozens of women who joined the campaign and served as nurses, cooks, or clerks. Also volunteers from the Estonian war, seeing themselves as professionals of irredentist campaigns, started to pour into the town with exaggerated stories of their military achievements, usually linked with

54 Martti Ahti, *Salaliiton ääriviivat: Oikeistoradikalismi ja hyökkäävä idänpolitiikka 1918–1919* (Helsinki: Weilin & Göös, 1987), pp. 123–25; Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 61–62.

outrageous behavior.<sup>55</sup> The government had limited the recruiting to exempt men aged between 20 and 22, so they could fulfill their compulsory military service. As a consequence, youngsters aged between sixteen and eighteen were overrepresented among the volunteers. Although those under 18 had to have permission from their custodians, it was easy to falsify documents, and the organizers received lot of letters from angry and worried parents searching for their sons. The number of young volunteers, among them hundreds of children, later resulted in the nickname of “children’s crusade” and criticism of the leaders for letting children take part in the war.

From Sortavala, the boys were sent onwards to the border, and the campaign officially started on 21 April 1919 when 1000 men, divided in two battalions, crossed the border.<sup>56</sup> The optimistic approach of the leadership was mirrored in the agreements signed with the volunteers. Most of the agreements were signed only for a length of two months, the time thought enough to fulfill the military plan. Initially, the campaign was a success. The town of Olonets was conquered, and the avant-garde of the troops was already closing in on the River Svir, before the Bolsheviks managed to concentrate enough troops on the Karelian front. In the middle of May 1919, the Finnish volunteers were forced to withdraw, and the war halted in a stalemate for several weeks at the River Tuulos. The northern unit, under the command of Paavo Talvela, reached the outskirts of the town of Petrozavodsk at the Lake Onega in June before being stopped by the Bolsheviks. However, the achievements of the volunteer army were futile when the war did not enlarge to include the permanent Finnish Army. New volunteers were coming in during the summer of 1919, but in the end the troops were grossly out-manned by the Bolsheviks. With a total number of nearly 4000 volunteers, the Finns held on until August, when they finally withdrew from East Karelia. Almost 400 volunteers, ten per cent of the total force, had died on the battlefield.

### The End

The first half of the year of 1919 had turned the irredentist policy into a popular movement that engaged tens of thousands of people and received the backing of every respectable bourgeois politician and the military. In the summer of 1919, when the Finnish volunteers still waged a war in Olonets, a new irredentist campaign sprung up in Ingria – a region surrounding Petrograd. Ingrians

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55 Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 131–32.

56 Kemppi, *Isänmaan puolesta*, p. 103.

were ethnically and culturally the closest to the Finns of all the irredentist populations. As the descendants of 17th-century Finnish migrants, they had retained their Lutheran religion, for instance. In the northern parts of the region, a unit of 500 men under the leadership of Lieutenant Colonel Georg Elfvingren occupied a region that had been declared by Ingrian political activists as the Republic of Kirjasalo. The “republic,” an area of 12 square miles with a population of only 400, was meant to be the first step in a liberation campaign among the Ingrians. The situation was a perfect fit for the eccentric Elfvingren, who, after serving as an officer in the Russian Army in the World War and as a commander of the Crimean Tatars, had devoted his life to fight Bolshevism. Before being asked to take the command in Ingria he had successfully led the White assault on Rautu during the Finnish Civil War. Whereas the northern Ingrians put their faith to Finnish arms and hearts and accepted a future within a Greater Finland, the southern Ingrians supported the White Russian forces under the command of Yudenich, who was getting ready on Estonian soil with his 20,000-strong army to march against Petrograd.<sup>57</sup>

The irredentist fever soon came to an end, however. The disaster in Olonets was a huge military and political setback and meant the beginning of the end of plans for a Greater Finland. After the summer of 1919, no major military campaigns ensued and the political and the public engagement never again reached the levels of the spring of 1919. The North Ingrian campaign melted to a mere symbolic occupation of couple of villages on the Russian side of the border; in Olonets, the last occupied strip of land was abandoned by 1920. In the same year there was one more failed attempt to conquer Pechenga. In domestic politics, the nation became a Republic, and Regent Mannerheim lost the Presidential elections in July 1919 to Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg, who mistrusted the activists’ adventurous policy.

Internationally, the power vacuum and turmoil enabling the irredentist wars were coming to an end. The Allied forces left northern Russia in late 1919, and some months later the last White Russian forces were beaten by the Bolsheviks. Against all the odds, the Bolshevik state survived, and the neighboring countries had to accept it as a negotiation partner to end the turmoil. Still, when Finland started armistice negotiations with Soviet Russia in the summer of 1920, the Finnish delegation presented far-reaching claims in the spirit of a Greater Finland for which the activists had so eagerly longed. In the end, the Finns had to modify their claims radically and give up their expansionist thoughts. In the peace treaty finally signed in the end of 1920, Finland agreed to end the occupation of the East Karelian regions of Repola and Porajärvi, two

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57 Reigo Rosenthal, *Loodearmee* (Tallinn: Argo, 2006), pp. 396–400.

parishes that had joined Finland in 1918 and 1919 respectively, and they backed away from claims concerning East Karelia and the Kola Peninsula. The only territorial expansion took place at the Arctic Ocean, where the Pechenga district became part of Finland. As a countermeasure to the Finnish claims of granting autonomy or independence to East Karelia, the Soviet regime founded the Karelian Workers' Commune during the five-month-long negotiations. The Commune developed in 1923 into an autonomous district within Soviet Russia – the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – and its leadership was headed by Finnish emigrants, former Reds who now turned into nationally minded communists who, for instance, practiced Finnish language politics in the region. The Finnish leadership lasted until Stalin's purges in the middle of 1930s.

The Russian–Finnish Treaty of Tartu seemed to put a definite end to the irredentist policy, creating shock waves among those still living their dream of a Greater Finland. The treaty was seen as disgraceful by the activists and became a continuous matter of criticism for the radical right. The most famous protest against the treaty and the Finnish withdrawal from East Karelia was the suicide of Bobi Sivén, the bailiff of Repola. Sivén became a martyr of the patriotic youth of the interwar period and a symbol for a vast pro-East Karelia movement.

After the Treaty of Tartu, one more major clash that included Finnish volunteers occurred in East Karelia. The introduction of Soviet rule in White Karelia resulted in growing tensions and then in a resistance movement and an actual takeover of power by Karelians in the summer of 1921. The uprising was part of the last wave of resistance against Soviet rule, which included the more famous uprising of Kronstadt in spring 1921. The uprising in Karelia was for once a sincere Karelian enterprise, although it attracted for a last time the irredentist activists in Finland. Even though the prospects of the uprising were poor and the Finnish government took a reserved approach to any official actions, more than 500 Finns made the long journey during hard winter conditions to East Karelia and joined the locals. The Finnish Government did not stop the volunteers from crossing the border and even organized humanitarian aid to the rebels, causing a severe breach in diplomatic relations with the Bolshevik regime. After 20,000 Soviet troops reached the region in early 1922, the ten times smaller Karelian–Finnish force withdrew to Finland. The last of the irredentist wars ended in thousands of Karelian refugees crossing the border.<sup>58</sup>

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58 C. Jay Smith Jr., *Finland and the Russian Revolution, 1917–1922* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1958), pp. 201–04.

## The Jägers and the Civil Guards

The Finnish irredentist wars during 1918–1922 depended upon favorable external circumstances and on a political and ideological domestic backing. Nonetheless, the existence of an active executive level and a great number of men willing to go to war were also essential for fulfillment of the campaigns. The readiness of tens of thousands to accept the call and rally around the flag was partly due to the failed demobilization. Although the Reds had been defeated in the Civil War in May 1918, there were many people among the victors who considered the job only half done. Their goal was a militarily and politically strong and mighty Finland. Networks of the Finnish resistance movement were re-activated with new political agendas, and the core institution of the White Army – the Civil Guard – was re-established as a popular movement with strong local support only half a year after the Civil War.

Among these groups of not fully satisfied freedom fighters there was one above the others, considering the irredentist wars: the Jäger movement. The offspring of the Finnish resistance movement had not only produced high quality soldiers but also had, by the time of the Finnish Civil War, surrounded itself with images and ideas of a national mission, formed during the arduous years in the German Army. Perhaps more important was their strong self-image of themselves as the true leaders of the Finnish liberation movement. When the long-awaited exile ended and many of the Jägers were sent to Finland to fight on the side of the Whites, along with the military capacity arrived also the entire emotional, ideological, and political zeal attached to the movement, a concept that was strengthened during the war by the military contribution of the Jägers.

For the Jägers, the idea of a Greater Finland was central. Liberation of the fatherland was not enough in a world that was on fire and where disputes seemed to be resolved by the power of the strong. The Jäger movement was in the vanguard to perpetrate the idea of East Karelia as an absolute necessity for a future independent Finland, making it a question of life and death. The Finnish defense lines had to be as advantageous as possible, and the Lakes of Lado-ga and Onega and the White Sea (in the wildest plans even the Kola Peninsula) had to be incorporated into a Finnish wall against the hordes from the East and the inevitable future wars against Russia. The years of 1917 and 1918 turned the utopian dreams into realistic policy, and the lyrics of the *Jäger March*, composed already in the fall of 1917, hailed Estonia and Olonets as well as the rest of East Karelia as part of the Greater Finland that was suddenly within the reach.<sup>59</sup>

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59 Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, pp. 50–51.



After the Civil War, the Jägers, strengthened by a common destiny and a strong camaraderie, formed a special corps of national heroes, a brotherhood with a mission still only half-completed. Believing in the power of action, in their own overwhelming capacity, and eager to show their ability and take their role in the historical process, the Jägers became the main force behind the irredentist wars. A more suitable leadership of the campaigns is hard to imagine. Many Jägers had received military training that emphasized independent warfare with guerilla tactics and organizing popular uprisings. Further, for years they had followed the path of conspiracy and secrecy and were bound by camaraderie more than by orders of politicians or military personnel outside their own group. And last but not least, they were the subjects of public admiration, and their role as national heroes made them almost untouchable.<sup>60</sup>

Jäger officers took usually the leading roles in the planning stage as well as in the executive phase of the campaigns. Especially the most extensive of the irredentist wars, the Olonets campaign in 1919, was a true war of the Jägers. When the organizers of the campaign, Gunnar von Hertzen, Ragnar Nordström, and Paavo Talvela, called their brothers-in-arms to fight for Greater Finland, more than 130 answered and joined the campaign, serving mostly as commanders. The eagerness shown by the Jägers had a great impact on the image of the campaigns, the military credibility, and the success of the recruiting campaigns. Famous Jägers were able to gather units of young men eager to go to war. One of the most famous and effective recruiters was Antti Isotalo, who managed to mobilize hundreds of young men in his home region of Ostrobothnia to follow him to East Karelia.<sup>61</sup>

The reputation of the Jägers did not fade, although the campaigns ended in defeat. Usually military failures were seen as the result of the restrictive policy of the Finnish government, more of a failure of the irredentist policy than the failure of the soldiers on the battlefield. It was usually the strategy that was criticized rather than the personal bravery of the Jägers. And even the strategic failures could be seen as part of a heroic and mystified Jäger spirit. For instance, the heart and mind behind the Olonets campaign, Gunnar von Hertzen, who commanded the troops to march into East Karelia without any plans ready in case of defeat, could be blamed for foolishness but not for lack of courage.<sup>62</sup>

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60 For an in-depth analysis on the significance of the Jäger movement, see Anders Ahlbäck's contribution in this volume.

61 Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 40–41.

62 In 1920, the commander of the Olonets campaign, Gunnar von Hertzen, published his views as a book: Gunnar von Hertzen, *Den karelska expeditionen* (Helsinki: Söderström, 1920); Saarikoski, *Keskustajääkäri Aarne Sihvo*, p. 105.



If the Jägers offered a highly qualified military leadership for the irredentist wars, the Civil Guard movement offered the main network for recruitment of volunteers. The new movement, re-established after the Civil War, saw itself as the successor to the White Army and as guardian of the White victory of 1918. The Guards, often commanded by Jägers, formed an effective network across the country, perfect for the agitation and propaganda needed in any recruitment campaign. The portrayal of the irredentist wars as a continuation of the War of Liberation further lowered the bar to join. Opposed to the ordinary army, the Civil Guards represented a semi-official paramilitary movement with a certain room to maneuver. The independent role of the movement made it possible for those in charge of the irredentist campaigns to recruit already armed and uniformed men who had some sort of military training. The linkage between the Guards and the irredentist wars could seem so self-evident that the recruiting appeals from the organizers of the campaigns needed no justification or explanation. In Turku, the commander of the local Civil Guard received a request in May 1919 from the irredentist activists asking how many men and officers he could send to Olonets. The commander gathered the guardsmen, agitated in favor of the campaign, and presented the request. Immediately, more than 30 men enlisted for the war.<sup>63</sup> In other regions, recruitment bureaus were organized within the local guards. Usually groups of ten or more enlisted together, received a small amount of money and train tickets from the Civil Guards, and went off to the East. In some regions, as in the town of Hämeenlinna, for example, the departure of the volunteers turned into an impressive farewell ceremony with thousands of people gathering to see the young men take off.<sup>64</sup> During the Olonets campaign of 1919, there were even efforts to order whole units of the Civil Guards to enter the war. Though the commander of the Civil Guards, Colonel Georg Diedrich von Essen, forbade the request, he fully approved the engagement of the Guards as a recruiting base for the campaign.<sup>65</sup>

For the Civil Guards, the new campaigns offered an atmosphere of patriotic sentiments and paths to heroism through experiencing military threats. All factors contributed to the success of the movement itself. Many members of the Civil Guards, especially in the southern part of the country, did not have the experience of fighting during the Civil War, and the irredentist campaigns offered a second chance to take part in the War of Liberation, a possibility to reclaim manhood, national self-esteem, and patriotism lost in the passivity

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63 Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 110.

64 *Hämeen Sanomat* 31 May 1919.

65 Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, pp. 107.

during the Civil War. For instance, in the region of Häme, an announcement in the main newspaper claimed that “the honor of Häme cannot afford to let the Ostrobothnians and Savonians to bleed alone, when a Greater Finland is created.”<sup>66</sup> In many localities, the campaigns contributed to the war experience and to the local war narrative. In Turku, a town that had been dominated by the Reds during the war, as many volunteers took part in the irredentist wars as had been in the White Army in 1918. The role of the Civil Guards was not limited to recruiting volunteers. The Guards regarded themselves as a home base for the volunteers, actively taking part in the homecomings and possible burials as well as in the commemoration during the interwar years.

### The Legacy

The Finnish paramilitary activity in East Karelia and other neighboring areas in the years 1918–1922 had a strong impact on the image of interwar Finland. The irredentist wars, although most of them ended in military defeat, were incorporated into the narrative of War of Liberation. On the local level, this was exemplified by the position both the volunteers and those fallen received in the commemorations. In total, some 800 volunteers of the Finnish units were killed during the campaigns.<sup>67</sup> The “kindred nations wars” became part of what was called in the interwar historiography the “national struggle for independence.” The term included the actions of the Finnish resistance movement during World War I, the organization of the bourgeois Civil Guards, the “protection guards,” in 1917, and the War of Liberation in 1918, as well as the irredentist campaigns. Most notably, the campaigns were included in the extensive history books of the War of Liberation and, for instance, in the book *In the Memory of Our Heroes* (“Sankariemme muisto”), a grandiose work with short biographies and pictures of all those fallen on the White side. It is noteworthy that those who fell in the irredentist wars are included not as a special category but as equal to those fallen in 1918.

With practically no criticism from bourgeois Finland, the violent engagements that could have easily been problematized from a political and an ideological perspective were instead neutralized and normalized into the official history. The wider concept of the struggle for independence was to strengthen the narrative of White Finland and further justify the actions taken by the

66 *Hämeen Sanomat* 29 May 1919; Vahtola, *Nuorukaisten sota*, p. 116.

67 In the Estonian War of Independence, 147 Finnish volunteers were killed in action; in the White Karelia campaigns of 1918 the number was approximately 150; and in the Olonet campaign of 1919 approximately 400.

victors during 1918. Although there were Finnish Reds fighting the Finnish volunteers, the irredentist wars were by far less problematic than the Civil War. In the White narrative, the campaigns in East Karelia and Estonia proved irresistibly that the domestic war in 1918 was only a part of a greater struggle between barbarism and Western Civilization, a struggle in which the Finns were given a role of historical importance.

From early on, the irredentist wars were included in a renewed national history filled with warfare and active resistance. The popular images of ancient Finnish warriors in a Kalevala environment were not far from those of the modern-day irredentist-warrior. In the interwar period, East Karelia became a symbol of an internal struggle between the Finns and the Russians. Karelia was the sacred bloodland of a historical struggle and a national mission. The fact that the irredentist policy failed and East Karelia remained part of Russia in a way strengthened the image of a Slavic threat and the required alertness. The East Karelian people became martyrs who had suffered, not because of the neglect of the Finns but, rather, in spite of the military campaigns. It is important to note that the irredentist wars were not distanced from the official history, nor were they diminished as a policy of adventurers and fundamentalists. Instead, the irredentist wars became key events for interwar Finland and an important part of the fight for freedom.

The irredentist wars were incorporated into public memory and official history by a vast number of actors. On the local level, the Civil Guards were the main contributors to the commemoration of both the Civil War and the irredentist wars. Whenever possible, the Civil Guards organized funerals for the fallen, and it was not uncommon to lay the bodies in the same designated areas within churchyards as those Whites who had fallen during the Civil War.<sup>68</sup> The volunteers and especially the fallen were included in the heroic history of the local Guards that exemplified the patriotism and activity of the whole region.

The legacy of the irredentist wars found its place also in the Finnish Army in the interwar years. The successful military careers of many of the Jäger officers, of whom a great number had taken part in the campaigns to Estonia and

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68 The problem was that most of the irredentist campaigns took place in regions with quite horrible traffic conditions, and the warfare took place mostly during summer. This was especially true during the Olonets campaign. Transporting bodies for weeks in warm summer weather was mostly impossible. But when it was feasible and the bodies found their way to the home municipality, the Civil Guard was there waiting for them. Especially those fallen in Estonia were mostly buried in Finland. For more on the funerary practices and the importance of burying the fallen in the home parish during the Civil War, see Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War" in this volume.

Karelia, meant that the irredentist wars became a common experience and memory for the officer core. Instead of something to look down on or ignore, the paramilitary experiences became praised and commemorated within the Army. For instance, K.M. Wallenius, Chief of General Staff during the 1920s, had commanded irredentist campaigns in White Karelia and in Pechenga, and General Aarne Sihvo, Chief of the Army (1926–1933), had been in charge of the Olonets campaign in 1919.

The interest in the irredentist campaigns within the Army resulted in the 1930s in large history projects. Partly of strategic reasons, as the knowledge of conditions in a possible future war zone was of great importance, but mostly because of the historical value, the Army mustered all its personnel in a campaign of collecting memories from the War of Liberation as well as the irredentist campaigns. The strong legacy the irredentist wars and the ideology of Greater Finland had within the Army cannot be neglected when considering the development during World War II. When the Finnish Army participated in the German offensive against the Soviet Union and marched into East Karelia in 1941, many of the Finnish officers entered a holy land well known from two decades earlier.

The legacy of the irredentist policy was furthered also by civilian organizations. By far the most important was a student organization that was founded by three volunteers of the last irredentist campaign in 1922. The Academic Karelia Society (*Akateeminen Karjala-Seura*) consisted of radical and pro-irredentist students at the University of Helsinki. In just a few years, the all-male society became the main student organization, involving a great part of the politically active students and the future political elite, among them, for instance, the future president Urho Kekkonen, who himself had been involved in the volunteer campaigns in 1919. Throughout Finnish society, the legacy of the irredentist policy was regarded as sacred, with even a mystical flavor.

The commemoration of the volunteer campaigns resulted also in a great number of veteran organizations. In the early 1930s, the two Estonian expeditions each had their own organization, and veterans of the White Karelia expedition were organized a couple of years later. In 1933, a Union of Irredentist Warriors (*Heimosoturien liitto*) was founded; it included all volunteers in the campaigns between 1918 and 1922. The Union had local branches in most of regions and published a magazine called *Heimosoturi* ("The Kindred Warrior"). The Union had more than 4000 members. Its aim was to "uphold the aspiration of freedom among the Baltic Finnish peoples."<sup>69</sup>

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69 Nygård, *Suur-Suomi*, p. 200; KA, Pk 2112/8, Eero Kuussaari collection, Notes, writings and articles concerning the Irredentist Wars.

## Summary

The Finnish irredentist wars were part of the political chaos during and after World War I and the Russian revolutions. However, the roots of the irredentism laid deep in the Finnish national movement, where both a romantic and a scientific fascination of the “family” of Baltic Finnic peoples had been essential. The idea of Greater Finland – usually described as stretching from Finland to the Lakes Ladoga and Onega, the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean – became part of the Finnish resistance movement during World War I. The Finnish Civil War opened the ideological and political path for a war policy and lifted the radicals of the resistance movement to top levels in the state and army. During the Civil War, both Red and White Finland showed considerable interest, both in theory and practice, in incorporating East Karelia into Finland. With the White victory in the Civil War, the irredentist campaigns became part of and an enlargement or a continuation of the War of Liberation. Between 1918 and 1922, there were a dozen military campaigns into areas outside the Finnish border, mostly to East Karelia but also to Estonia (to fight the Bolsheviks alongside the national Estonian units), Ingria, and to the arctic Petchenga. The campaigns, due to their adventurous and opportunistic character and the fear of larger international conflicts, were more of a private nature, even if they were semiofficially supported by the government and the Army. Finnish officers, mostly Jägers, led the campaigns, and the volunteers were recruited mostly through the Civil Guards. The irredentist policy resulted mostly in military defeats, and the main goal of creating a Greater Finland remained a utopia. Paradoxically, whereas White Finland did not succeed in its policy, the refugee Finnish Reds were able to establish a Finnish-led state of East Karelia within the Soviet Union, viable until the mid-1930s. During the interwar period, the legacy of the Finnish irredentist wars was an essential part of the national history and the White narrative of the struggle for independence. The legacy was kept alive within both the state institutions such as the Army and popular organizations such as the Academic Karelia Society and the Civil Guards.



**PART 2**

*Cultural Contents and Wartime Experiences*







## The Mystified War: Regeneration and Sacrifice

*Tuomas Tepora*

It does not take a long time for a scholar of the Finnish Civil War to reckon that the word “sacrifice” held a prime position in the middle-class vocabulary in 1917–1918, in line with the European precedents set at the beginning of World War I. The rallying of the people around the flag and calling for sacrifice began in the fall of 1917. Both of the adversaries, the socialists and the non-socialists, shared the anticipation of the battle that would resolve the impasse in the society. The middle classes elevated this stage of uncertainty about the future into bloodbath fantasies. Blood sacrifice became a focal metaphor for the purification of the nation out of the damaging effects of “sibling rivalry,” materialism, and decadence – the perceived effects of the revolutionary year and imported vices of World War I. The graphic rhetoric tells us about the social psychological phenomena beneath the discursive surface. For the Whites, the essence of sacrifice meant specifically self-sacrifice, an offer to the nation. The Reds heralded the selfless sacrifice for the workers’ cause as well, and both sides resorted to violent fantasies and victimization of the enemy.

Many a theorist of modern war sacrifice has observed that willing sacrifices, which touch as many people in the society as possible and which are possible to engage with regenerative commemoration after the conflict form the most powerful bonds between people.<sup>1</sup> This is the way the most powerful collective identities are forged. This is also the way the most powerful cultural traumas or crippled collective identities are created. Sacrifice may have been the focal phrase in the White press in 1918, but it should not escape our understanding that the regeneratively used word masked the destructive violence between fellow citizens.

Obviously, historical events never perfectly fit into the confines of social theory, and when it comes to people’s willingness to sacrifice for their nation or ideology, we should be cautious. More often than not, the willingness ascribed to war sacrifices is more of an obligation or a demand of a correct manner of

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1 Ninian Smart, “Religion, Myth, and Nationalism,” in Peter H. Merkl & Ninian Smart, eds, *Religion and Politics in the Modern World* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); Carolyn Marvin & David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

commemoration and hegemonic interpretation set afterwards by the protagonists of a given memory culture.

However, voluntariness played a major role on the both sides of the conflict. Thus, concentrating only on the politics of memory practiced after the conflict may hinder our understanding of the experience of sacrifice and the feelings and the psychology behind the events of 1918. Namely, we may miss the contemporaries' overwhelming elation and a sense of living through some extraordinary times, which had a mythical aspect to them. The "myth" in this case, apparently, refers to the feeling of many White contemporaries that the War of Liberation retained certain aspects of a mythical structure. The mythical narrative the middle classes endorsed was not that of fratricide but self-sacrifice and regeneration.

Moreover, the White willingness to offer to the nation and the Red willingness to offer to the workers' cause, which will be discussed later, perhaps contributed to the bloodiness of the conflict. Violence was justified not only by the leading elites and propagandists but also, often, by the ordinary people, the amateurs in arms, who felt that the acts of violence outside the battles were justified, even though they had not participated in them themselves.

The emphasis on self-sacrificial thought perhaps strengthened the White side, made it feel intact and potent. An expression of self-sacrifice – rhetorical, before the war and concrete during the war – gave other people a signal of devotion to the common cause. Obviously, the idea of sacrifice did not denote passive victimhood; rather, dying for one's country was invested with agency of re-establishing one's own integrity as a nation and as individuals through the act of sacrifice.

During the year of the revolution, 1917, the middle-class press started a peculiar ritual of atonement. Finns had escaped the mass battles of the World War and therefore had not spilled any blood for their nation as had other European nationals. The bourgeois press shed light on the arguably rather general social psychological condition of nationalism in times of crisis. Finns had been able to prosper while others had sacrificed. The only battle the Finns had waged had concerned the eight-hour workday, which clearly denoted selfish materialism in contrast to idealistic sacrifice. The charge of materialism was not, however, directed only towards the working classes. The lack of selflessness haunted the conservatives at the same time as the idea of declaring independence crystallized in bourgeois-led government. It would probably be too bold to state that the War of Liberation was scripted into the bourgeois narrative already in December 1917, but looking at the atmosphere created by

literary bloodbath fantasies in the press, the freedom gained without a fight was deemed unworthy and undeserved.<sup>2</sup>

Already before the war began, the bourgeoisie wanted to see the anticipated battle predominantly as a fight for freedom from Russia. The Bolshevik revolution made the distinction between Finland and Russia look easy, but it should be noted that there were strong elements among the supporters of the White cause for whom the Era of Russification had formed the key experience in their lives. The policies of the late Old Empire had been proof for a number of activists that Russia indeed was the archenemy of Finland, as in the times immemorial that predated the Grand Duchy. The uncontrolled and disturbing *svoboda* – Russian for freedom – created by the revolutionary year of 1917 only convinced the middle classes of the importance of distancing Finland from the perilous effects of the freedom of the masses.

The socialists participated in the sacrifice rhetoric with slightly lower volume compared to the bourgeoisie. The difference between the two adversaries is perhaps possible to locate in their differing foundational idea of the enemy and ideology. The socialists saw the enemy within society, and for them, fighting it did not at first entail traditional romantic images and ideas. In fact, the socialists saw themselves as victims of social injustice and rationalized violence as necessary in the fight for improvements of their condition. Basic needs such as avoiding hunger and even a possible famine were politicized and used as rationalization and justification for violence. The socialists clung to the materialist explanation even when rallying people around the flag: “When there is want for everything, the red colors fly.”<sup>3</sup>

The Marxist ideology interpreted through Karl Kautsky and his Finnish followers considered the fight only as a necessary evil and, in the Kautskyan case, even rather avoidable. The romantic notion of sacrifice did not easily fit into the socialist ideology, which reduced the battle into a rather dispassionate struggle between the classes in a universal framework.<sup>4</sup> The war, however, was not only or even foremost about ideology, and supporters of the socialists became acquainted with the idealistic notions of sacrifice and determined to fight against the “bourgeoisie” as the conflict developed and dragged on. The

2 Juha Siltala, “National Rebirth out of Young Blood: Sacrificial Fantasies in the Finnish Civil War, 1917–1918,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 31.3 (2006): 290–307; Juha Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria* (Helsinki: Otava, 2009), passim.

3 Jussi Raitio in *Kansan Lehti* 6 February 1918. Quoted in Maria-Liisa Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat eli kirjallista keskustelua vuonna 1918*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 320 (Helsinki: SKS, 1976), p. 76.

4 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 48–53; Tuomas Tepora, *Sinun puolesta elää ja kuolla: Suomen liput, nationalismi ja veriuhri 1917–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011), pp. 72–73.

Red press manifested a new morality that differed from the exploitative parochialism of the bourgeoisie. The poor rose against the rich: “The bayonets of the Red Guards shall draw / a new law to Finland.”<sup>5</sup>

Although the Reds did not, especially during the months leading up to the conflict, as openly invest romantically and organically sacrificial rhetoric with various religious and quasi-religious overtones as did the Whites, they nevertheless manifested the importance of idealist sacrifice to the revolution and the selfless readiness of the workers to stand against the oppressors. The Lutheran tradition, however, did offer an all-encompassing context for emotional navigation. Implicit biblical and eschatological notions were coupled with socialist apocalypse, and these thoughts abounded in the Red vocabulary: the long wait for the revolution was about to be rewarded, and a new era was dawning. The ultimate and pure goodness in the society was an aspect of the enlightened working class. After the war, some Red writers and social democratic politicians resorted to images of the resurrection of the Red victims reminiscent of the wider European artistic trend in the wake of World War I. The only socialist member of Parliament (MP) whom the victors allowed to participate in Parliament sessions in the fall of 1918, Matti Paasivuori, explained to his bourgeois colleagues how the executed Reds were going to arise hand in hand for the Last Judgment.<sup>6</sup>

The wartime socialist version of sacrifice emphasized, nonetheless, a practical necessity within a broader frame of class-conscious work for the society. It downplayed individual heroism in favor of collective action. The people were the hero: “The blood on our chest is the price of freedom!”<sup>7</sup> Sacrifice as such was rarely regarded as a means in itself in resolving the impasse within the society, although the socialist press equally participated in war mongering with the middle classes in order to turn the social structure upside down. Moreover, the socialist version of sacrificial thought occasionally included an actively violent desire for rightful compensation, and the October Revolution and the ensuing power vacuum freed the expression of class hatred from its constraints. This strand of rhetoric called for purifying violence rather than self-sacrifice. It should be noted, though, that self-sacrificial rhetoric was not

5 Lauri Letonmäki in *Kansan Lehti* 16 February 1918. Quoted in Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 77.

6 Niko Huttunen, *Raamatullinen sota: Raamatun käyttö ja vaikutus vuoden 1918 sisällissodan tulkinnossa*, *Historiallisia Tutkimuksia*, 255 / Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia, 216 (Helsinki: SKS, 2012), pp. 57–65.

7 Excerpt from Jussi Raitio's eulogy in the Red funeral in Tampere in March 1918. Quoted in Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 120.

totally absent. The image of “redeeming oneself as a group” by spilling some of one’s own blood circulated in the press.<sup>8</sup> During the conflict, the precious socialist blood spilled on the snow-white ground and the blood-red roses that blossomed from the sacrifices became powerful metaphors of revolutionary honor and forthcoming freedom.<sup>9</sup>

Jari Ehrnrooth has aptly demonstrated that a graphic hate rhetoric towards the generic “bourgeoisie” lay underneath the objectified ideolog, and it had decades-long roots in Finnish socialist discourse.<sup>10</sup> The socialist experience leading to the war included a strong sense of victimhood. According to this reasoning – or a collectively shared feeling pushing for a rationalization – the working classes had already sacrificed in their daily lives for centuries, so they should not be held responsible for the conflict looming on the horizon. In hindsight, this tradition of “archaic” and “pre-Christian” animosity and rightful wrath and vengeance<sup>11</sup> has sometimes been interpreted as a script that ultimately led to the revolution. It certainly contributed to a culture in which revolution became a reality, but it hardly displaces reasons such as a power vacuum and the gradual erosion of social constraints discussed elsewhere in this volume.

When the Revolution finally started, the Reds inevitably took on some romanticized revolutionary elements that grounded it in the continuum of social revolutions. The headquarters of the Red Guards in the former residence of the General-Governor of the Grand Duchy was named Smolna after the Smolny Institute, the headquarters of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd.<sup>12</sup> The Finnish lyrics of the all-time revolutionary anthem the *Marsellaise*, a popular song among the social democrats and the liberal bourgeoisie during the February Revolution of 1917 that contained a bloodthirsty and widely used metaphor of the soil of the country drinking the blood of its enemies, illuminated the rhetorical warpath of the Reds.<sup>13</sup> If the Revolution should happen, it required impure enemy blood to appease its thirst.

It seems clear that many of the radical guard members bought into this propaganda, and generated it as well, but on the whole, the Finnish revolutionary

8 *Työmies* 30 December 1917; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 162–63.

9 *Työmies* 17 February 1918; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, p. 397.

10 Jari Ehrnrooth, *Sanan vallassa, vihan voimalla: Sosialistiset vallankumousopit ja niiden vaikutus Suomen työväenliikkeessä 1905–1914*, *Historiallisia Tutkimuksia*, 167 (Helsinki: SHS, 1992).

11 Ehrnrooth, *Sanan vallassa*, pp. 494–98.

12 Today the building is a governmental building used for ceremonial purposes, but interestingly, it has retained its revolutionary name and is still informally called Smolna.

13 *Työmies* 17 February 1918.

leaders cannot be considered particularly bloodthirsty levelers.<sup>14</sup> The Delegation of People's Commissars tried to control the acts of violence of the Red Guards, and the Red Terror aroused anxiety in the minds of the socialist leaders. "Is this a crime that stains the revolutionary flag?" asked the editorial of the *Työmies*, the leading organ of the Social Democratic Party, after 16 higher employees of Ahlstöm Corporation's ironworks had been murdered in March 1918.<sup>15</sup> It was as if the Red political leaders – dubbed in research the most reluctant revolutionaries in the world – seemed to be afraid of their own might once they had installed themselves in power. Throughout their months in the Senate House on the Senate Square in Helsinki, the People's Delegation worried about maintaining peaceful conditions within the civilian population and thus tried to justify their position as leaders of an independent socialist Finland.

The White press voiced its concern over the nature of violence between compatriots in the course of war as well. The easiest tactics for justifying the violence transformed the Finnish Reds into Russian Bolsheviks. It is a matter of debate how much of this widespread rhetoric was conscious propaganda controlled by the White Government or the White Army and what part of the rhetoric reflected a widespread belief and a more unconscious desire to believe it. The exaggeration of Russian involvement clearly emphasized the nature of the freedom fight from Finland's eastern neighbor and in the later phase of the war justified the German invasion of southern Finland. In any case, the dissemination of propaganda, mainly in the press, was only weakly centralized, and rumors added to the number and influence of the Bolsheviks in the Red Guards. The derogatory Russian ethnonym *ryssä*, "Russkie," became practically the synonym of the masses of lower status. The hateful rhetoric served as a means to externalize the internal nature of the conflict and transform it into the War of Liberation and an inherently ethnic conflict. As Juha Siltala points out in this volume, the Russianization of the Reds began after the general strike in November 1917 when the conflict started to escalate, which emphasizes the explanation that the Russophobia had psychological roots and was not instrumental. Sacrifice against the external enemy justified the Finnish independence led by the bourgeoisie and re-established its physical and psychic boundaries. Russians were described as "devils," "bloodhounds," and the highly charged "filth"; and the domestic Red Guards acted as their "bloodthirsty followers," "traitors"

14 See Juha Siltala's chapter in this volume.

15 *Työmies* 19 March 1918. The execution in question occurred on 10 March in Noormarkku, Satakunta province, in western Finland; see Jaakko Paavolainen, *Polittiset väkivaltaisuu-det Suomessa 1918. I: "Punainen terrori"* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1966), pp. 156–57.



and “hangmen of the fatherland.” The Red answer to these accusations was to name the Whites collectively “butchers” (*lahtari*, or *slaktare* in Swedish), a term that had been first used in connection with the “White Guards” already during the demonstrations in 1905.<sup>16</sup> It has since become notorious and has retained its echo until today, especially after the grim retribution in the wake of the Civil War gave it graphic substance. The demonizing of the Bolsheviks, whose participation in the Red effort in the Civil War was in any case significantly lower than propagated, could hardly disguise the ethnic hatred towards Russians in general. The “Russkie hate” (*ryssäviha*), which became a common and politically organized denominator of the Right in the interwar period, nevertheless had its centuries-old roots in the collective and cultural memories of the people. The Finnish Revolution and the Civil War aroused these dormant cultural traits, which had already been sparked by the imperial Russification policy.

As it is, some aspects of the propaganda sprang from the experiences of political oppression at the beginning of the century that, however, had not been brutal in terms of violence, and from the cases of a few notable public figures who spent time in Russian prisons and in Siberia. It should be noted, though, that the war of 1918 was not always portrayed as an ethnic conflict, as this would have been such an outright falsification of reality that it could not have been bought by even the most idealist White patriot. The war’s nature as a revolution and a counter-revolution became intertwined with the War of Liberation narrative from early on. One White enthusiast, the young author Juhani Siljo, for instance, understood the ongoing war in a newspaper article published in mid-February 1918 as a part of an international effort to stop the spread of Bolshevism and its criminal internationalism, which denied the right of existence of the nation-states. Even in the midst of the hateful warfare, there were moments of clarity in differentiation between being a Bolshevik and a Russian.<sup>17</sup>

Interestingly, the Russophobia may have been greatest in western Finland, especially in the White stronghold Ostrobothnia near the Gulf of Bothnia, the region which was the furthest from Russia. It is notable that the rural, conservative, and religious yet relatively equal Ostrobothnian small farmer communities experienced socialism as not only threatening but alien as well. The identification of the Finnish Reds as either “Russians” or, more commonly, rebelling under the influence of alien Bolsheviks and their domestic lackeys,

16 Pekka Rantanen & Ralf Kauranen, “Naurettava lakko,” in Pertti Haapala et al., eds, *Kansa kaikkivaltias: Suurlakko Suomessa 1905* (Helsinki: Teos, 2008), p. 281.

17 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 55–56.

the socialist leaders, became widespread. Ethnic hatred of Russians was not just rhetorical; it also manifested itself more concretely. This is clearly visible in, among other incidents, the grim fate of captured Russian soldiers killed immediately after battle in Karelian Rautu or in Tampere and also in a Jäger-initiated massacre of 200 Russian civilians in Vyborg near the end of the war. Being a Russian in the hands of the Whites seriously hindered one's chances for survival.<sup>18</sup>

The externalization of the internal enemy in the minds of the supporters of the Whites clearly lessened the burden of waging a war against compatriots. In their propaganda, the White Government emphasized the war's nature as an independence struggle from Russia, and when the White Army began conscription, the White military leaders highlighted the Russian leadership of the Reds.<sup>19</sup> Although a distinguished historian, Heikki Ylikangas, has suggested that due to successful propaganda the Ostrobothnian soldiers in the White Army believed they were in effect fighting Russians until the decisive battle of Tampere,<sup>20</sup> it is doubtful that the true nature of the conflict would have entirely escaped the comprehension of the White rank and file or the wider population in the White-dominated area for that matter, even in Ostrobothnia. In fact, during the first weeks of the conflict, the White press referred in varying degrees to the internal nature of the war before they shifted their focus onto the Russian involvement as propagated by the White Government. Moreover, the White papers in northeastern Finland saw the conflict mainly as a civil war throughout the tragic months, whereas the papers in western Finland, in line with their greater expressed Russophobia, gave more emphasis to the Russian involvement. Then, in late March, the initiative at the front shifted clearly in

18 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. II: "Valkoinen terrori" (Helsinki: Tammi, 1967), p. 133; Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution, 1917–1918* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), pp. 512; Marko Tikka, *Kenttöoikeudet: Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 90 (Helsinki: SKS, 2004), p. 266; Lars Westerlund, ed., *Venäläisurmat Suomessa 1914–1922*, vol. 2.1: *Sotatapahtumat 1918–22*, Valtioneuvoston Kanslian julkaisusarja, 2/2004 (Helsinki: VNK, 2004), passim.

19 Turo Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu, kansalaissota ja kapina: Taistelun luonne valkoisten sotapropagandassa vuonna 1918*, *Studia Historica Jyväskylänseksiä*, 24 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1982), pp. 164–79.

20 Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle: Dokumentoitu kuvaus Tampereen antautumiseen johtaneista sotatapahtumista Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1993), pp. 142, 144, esp. 329. This theory proposes, based on archival evidence, that the mainly conscripted soldiers of the White Army, many of whom were of lower-class background, would not have fought against fellow Finnish workers, therefore requiring the transformation of the enemy image.

favor of the Whites. This increased the anticipation of the forthcoming end to the war but also presaged the ensuing retribution. At this point, the civil-war nature of the conflict became impossible to disguise in the contemporaneous bourgeois press, although partly for the sake of international relations the involvement of the Russians was still vigorously exaggerated.<sup>21</sup>

Antti Rentola, a chaplain from Kuhmoinen, a site of a bloody battle and White purges in central Finland, expressed concern in the Ostrobothnian newspaper *Ilkka* over moral decadence connected to fratricidal violence. In line with the Red organs' concerns over the uncontrolled violence, he called for renewed chastity and thorough moral introspection within the White troops. Waging a just war for the freedom of the nation and sacrificing for the fatherland should not be damaged by ignorant behavior and drunkenness of the soldiers. These were the vices of the Reds, the "Red Russkies," as he still called them. In a telling passage he expressed concern over the anticipated retribution and called for moral purity and decency in the justifications. In an accurate fear of lawlessness, he stressed that any kind of torture of captive enemies should be avoided, as it would testify against elevated goals of the fight for freedom. It was customary that both sides accused each other of torturing the captives, although the actual cases of brutal torture remained much fewer than the fearful rhetoric indicated.

The most important aspect of Rentola's text, however, was the rather explicitly expressed anxiety over forthcoming vengeance of the local establishment against those who had transgressed ancient social boundaries. Everyone knew that transgressors of such an ancient boundary could not be anyone else than fellow parishioners in countless localities. The War of Liberation – a concept that was coined during the war to denote the freedom fight but that became the concept of choice only after the war – was clearly understood profoundly as a civil war in bourgeois press. In his conclusion, Rentola, like his socialist counterpart, imagined the metaphor of a flag, a pure and white one that now flew in threat of become stained.<sup>22</sup> In this same vein, it is illuminating that in late April, a liberal bourgeois poet, Eino Leino, appealed to the Reds in a socialist newspaper to put down their arms in order to prevent or hinder an uncontrolled vengeance after the then-obvious White victory.<sup>23</sup>

In spite of many differences between the adversaries of 1918, the anxiety of the self-possessed power over fellow citizens' lives seems to characterize the collectively shared feelings of both sides. It is perhaps possible to characterize

21 Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu*, pp. 172–74, 179, 221.

22 *Ilkka* 22 March 1918.

23 *Työn Valta* 18 April 1918. Quoted in Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 149.

these expressions of anxiety as, in fact, emotions elicited in people by the power vacuum and by violence unleashed from its former mechanisms of control. The imperial monopoly on violence had been sucked into the power vacuum caused by the Russian revolutions and the ensuing collapse of the Finnish society, and now the Finns had to struggle themselves to re-establish the monopoly.

Now we have established two distinctive but overlapping and occasionally symmetrical ideas of sacrificial thought during the Civil War. In spite of their different approaches to the notions of sacrifice, the approaches themselves did not make either adversary less bloodthirsty, as the annihilation of the enemy was expressed in both feelings and acts of the both sides. The bourgeois idea of sacrifice nevertheless understood it predominantly as self-sacrifice – the justified annihilation of the defiled enemy saved the nation from the imminent threat, but the nation's own precious blood rejuvenated the highly idealized nation. This sacrifice was imagined as a requisite element in gaining freedom, and the fallen were celebrated as national heroes. This idea was also inherently romantic and tells us about a society that had no first-hand experience of the devastation of World War I. It tells us also about concrete and corporeally expressed fantasies of redemption by blood. The role of Christianity here is obvious but not unambiguous, as we will see later in this chapter.

As far as the socialists were interested in explicit sacrificial rhetoric before the armed conflict, they understood the sacrifice predominantly as necessary and instrumental violence against the enemy. There was a strongly justified incentive to spill the enemy's impure blood, but the selfless work and the ultimate and heroic sacrifice for the revolution and the future socialist Finland was by all means not forgotten. In spite of symmetrical elements in other branches of propaganda of the adversaries,<sup>24</sup> it still seems not too far-reaching to conclude that the Red idea of blood sacrifice meant first the necessary killing of the brutal enemy and only second the dying for the workers' cause. These two became closely linked, however, and during the battles, self-sacrificial thought gained new momentum. Violence and battle were anticipated on both sides as resolutions to the escalating crisis, as we have seen elsewhere in this volume. However, in the Red case, sacrifice did not constitute an end in itself. The goal of sacrifice was set to the future, peaceful, and perhaps utopian time after the revolution – unlike with the Whites, who called for purifying sacrifice here and now in order to regenerate the nation.

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24 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 129–221; see also Juha Siltala's chapter in this volume.

In retrospect, one might say of these two ways of understanding the need for sacrifice that exactly their opposites proved to be true. The victors embarked on the path of retribution and on the eventually fateful mass imprisonment of the vanquished. Thus, they in effect sacrificed the Reds on the altar of the young republic in numbers that far exceeded their own, still rather numerous, sacrifices. The defeated, in effect, in the wake of the conflict had to find meaning to their thousands of sacrifices and resorted either to the victimhood strategy or denied it by claiming agency as trailblazers of the revolution still to come. Both sides placed strong emphasis on social agency in the act of sacrifice. In spite of many expressions of warrior symbolism and celebration of individual White heroes discussed elsewhere in this volume, images of omnipotent militaristic heroes were relatively rare during the war. Sacrifice and killing should benefit the society, and, perhaps in line with cultural and historical traits suppressing over-expressed individualism, the cult of individualistic war heroes did not take a proper flight.

### Heroes and Funerals: Celebrating Sacrifices

The Reds established a cult of revolutionary heroes (or “heroes of freedom,” *vapaussankari*, as they were called) during the three months of revolution. Socialist funerary practices commemorated democratic sacrifice, a group action that did not ideally endorse individual heroes over others. The Reds staged pretentious mass funerals for their fallen in big towns of southern Finland. These funerals gathered large crowds who followed the funeral procession across the urban areas. The Red military funerals obviously did not have many precedents from which to draw. The most obvious examples set in the recent past were the burials of the rebellious Russian sailors and the Finnish members of the Red Guards killed in the Sveaborg Rebellion in 1906, the mutiny that was connected to the Revolution of 1905, and, most recently, the funerals of the Russian navy heroes of the Glorious February in Helsinki. The funerals of the latter gathered a massive crowd, reportedly 100,000 people, and the revolutionary spirit of freedom permeated all walks of life.<sup>25</sup>

The workers’ symbols had a prime position in the funeral processions in 1918. Socialists and the middle classes alike lived through flag frenzy at the time. The Russian revolutions had made flying the flags on the streets free, and various colors were raised according to the flyer’s political beliefs and linguistic identifications. In Red funerals, flags and banners of trade unions and workers’

25 Juha Poteri, *Sankarihautaus vapaussodassa: Valkoisten kaatuneiden hautaaminen Suomessa vuonna 1918* (Helsinki: PK-Koulutuskeskus, 2009), pp. 24–25.

associations were carried by fellow members of the Red Guards and other workers. They followed the fallen and their relatives in processions and made the crowd look grand and assuring in their devotion. To the non-socialist beholder they might have looked intimidating because of the abundance of red color, which by now had established itself as the color of the Revolution and, for the Whites, the anarchist *svoboda*. It stood in stark contrast to the blue-and-white Fennoman colors, and even though the ancient colors of Finland were those of the red and golden from the coat of arms, colors that were cherished by the Swedish speakers and many of the liberals, for the majority of the White people, the red color had, since the Great Strike in 1905, come to raise feelings of anxiety, hatred, fear, and accusations of alien influence. Red was seen as a Slavic color invested with invading and intruding attributes and could not be associated with the peaceful Finns, was a frequently expressed opinion.<sup>26</sup> After the war and for decades to come, this White feeling that emphasized purity and innocence attached to the blue-and-white colors became a denominator of hegemonic Finnish national character.<sup>27</sup>

The Reds as well as the Whites repatriated the fallen to their home parishes whenever possible. In the Red case, however, many of the combatants killed in the later phases of the war were buried in the field. The socialist military leadership had initially designed field burials and planned a concentrated exhumation and reburial into a designated cemetery for revolutionary heroes to be established after the war, but the combatants themselves initiated an instant repatriation of the fallen to their home parishes. Although the initial idea of a glorious revolutionary burial ground and a sacrificial monument was abandoned, the Red funerals became focal revolutionary ceremonies during the brief conflict.<sup>28</sup>

26 The linguistic closeness of “red” (*krasnyi*) and “beautiful” (*krasivyi*) in the Russian language may have contributed to the White expunging of the red color from the ideal Finnishness. Interestingly, Swedish-speakers generally did not feel that much anxiety towards the red and regarded it as a part of the ancient and honorable colors of Finland.

27 On the flag debates and passions in regard to the power vacuum in 1917–18, see Tuomas Tepora, “Redirecting Violence: The Finnish Flag as a Sacrificial Symbol, 1917–1945,” *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7.3 (2007): 153–70; Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 37–113; on the importance and meanings of collective symbols in Russian revolutions, see Orlando Figes & Boris Kolonitskii, *Interpreting the Russian Revolution: The Language and Symbols of 1917* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 30–70; on the origins of “innocence” and its “adolescent” connotations in Finnish expressions of self-understanding at the turn of the 20th century, see Juha Ala, *Suomi-neito ja suojeleusikä: Sortovuosien psykohistoriaa* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 1999).

28 Jussi T. Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Valtion painatuskeskus, 1981), p. 201.





FIGURE 5.1 *Funeral of fallen Red guardsmen in the workers' festival ground of Mäntymäki in Helsinki shortly before the city surrendered to the Germans. PHOTO: PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.*

The most spectacular Red funerals were staged in cities and towns, although many Reds were buried in country parishes as well. In the bigger towns like the Red capital Helsinki or Vyborg on Karelian Isthmus, it was customary to bury many fallen at the same time in specifically designated burial grounds that were located in the areas already held dear by locals, such as workers' festival grounds. It made the ceremony even more festive and testified to the power of the crowd – unless, of course, the number of the fallen rose too high to bear. Sometimes the socialists painted the coffins of their heroes red. It was a powerful gesture that emphasized the heroes' quasi-religious status as surrogate victims of the workers' cause.<sup>29</sup>

29 *Työmies* 26 February 1918; *Työmies* 25 March 1918; Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 894 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), pp. 80–83, 86; Outi Fingerroos, *Haudatut muistot: Rituaalisen kuoleman merkitykset Kannaksen muistitiedossa*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 985 (Helsinki: SKS, 2004), pp. 344–45, 347–49; Kirsi-Maria Virtanen, *Vanhat tavat ja uudet aatteet: Työväestön osallistuminen maaseurakunnan*



Military funeral offered a suitable possibility for propaganda. In spite of the mournful situation, the funeral procession could strengthen the spectators' minds and offer proof of the necessity of the revolution and the fight. Even in the last stages of the battle of Tampere, the Reds used a lot of energy to organize a funeral procession that carried 23 fallen Reds through the streets of the town lined with mourning crowds and curious spectators. It goes without saying that these bodies represented only a small part of the casualties but in any case formed large enough a group to make the ceremony count as the last and loud call for the revolutionary spirit. The funerals had importance also in testifying to the Red willingness to sacrifice in the face of the middle-class civilians, many of whom stayed in Red-occupied towns.

Helsinki suffered the most in sheer number of victims. The rather spectacular processions led through town to the established festival ground of the social democrats in Mäntymäki. This was a wooded ground on the then-outskirts of the town, in between the working-class district and middle-class neighborhoods. Since the turn of the century, the workers of Helsinki had ended their May Day demonstrations that led through the town on this festival ground. Now it became a consecrated burial ground for the revolutionary heroes. Immediately after the Civil War was over, the victors exhumed the bodies of the Red combatants and had them transferred to a cemetery in a faraway suburb outside the boundaries of the town. The publicly given reasons of poor hygiene in the undedicated burial ground near living-quarters perhaps counted to some degree, although one is tempted to suspect that the decision was made easy by the desire to prevent the burial ground from becoming a place of revolutionary cult in close proximity to town. Similar reburials for similarly stated reasons took place elsewhere as well, notably in Tampere.<sup>30</sup>

A Red Guard commander and some other representatives of the workers' movement took the place of the clergymen in the Red funerals. The orators conveyed a message of fearless heroes in the service of the revolution. Red Guard commander Heikki Kaljunen was a frequent orator and a master of the ceremony in revolutionary funerals in Vyborg. This rather charismatic and notorious character left Finland after the war with a number of extra-battle victims and became the epitome of the Red terrorist in the White narratives.<sup>31</sup> He preferred to dress in pretentious attire that mimicked imperial officers and

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*toimituksiin punaisessa Viipurissa 1918* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Helsingin yliopisto, 2001), p. 89.

30 Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, pp. 80–89.

31 E.g., Eero Merimaa, *Karkuun Kaljusen kynsistä: Valkoisen pakolaisen muistelmia* (Helsinki: Minerva, 1919), pp. 36–52. Symptomatic of the nature of the horror legends circulated

proclaimed in a funeral that the grave held no fear for freedom fighters.<sup>32</sup> Usually the public mourning of the fallen did not include aggressive or hateful rhetoric. The speeches concentrated on crystallizing the goals of the fight. The war was not about “individual revenge,” as one of the orators proclaimed, but was one strand in the universal “fight between Capital and Labor.”<sup>33</sup> The interpretation of the ideology replaced the priestly interpretation of the Scripture. Nevertheless, on some occasions, the Reds struggled to find deep traditions on which ground their sacrifices.

The socialist worldview represented a novelty and did not offer much solace or transcendence for mourning. However, the continuum of romanticized revolutionary and even socialist milestones was already established, and the Finnish socialists were able to position themselves as riding the large revolutionary wave. Many times this was not enough, though. The majority of Red supporters were still accustomed to traditional ceremonies of life and death performed by the Church. In fact, there is evidence that some of the fallen Reds received Christian funerals in the countryside. Moreover, in some cases, relatives may have refused to bury their family members without a Christian ceremony.<sup>34</sup>

As for the lack of explicit Christian symbolism, the conscious part of the workers’ movement had traditionally opposed the Lutheran state church and wanted to see the state and the Church separated. Officially the socialists regarded religion as a matter of individual conscience, but in effect there were also emerging anti-religious attitudes in the party, which viewed the question of religion from a rather dogmatically materialist point of view. Although the major withdrawal of the workers from membership in the Church occurred only when it became practically possible in 1923, due to the decree of religious freedom, animosity towards the Church had been established before 1918. The Red government, however, did not even mention the position of the Church in its manifests, and acts against the clergy and the Church were rather few,<sup>35</sup> proportionally much less than, for instance, 20 years later in Spain.

The Civil War, however, resulted in increased disillusionment among the working classes when the Church stood for the White effort and the traditional

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immediately after the war, the author of the “memoir” writes in the foreword that he is telling the story he has heard from his brother-in-arms.

32 *Työmies* 26 February 1918.

33 *Työ* 25 February 1918; *Työmies* 26 February 1918.

34 Lappalainen, *Punakaartin sota*, vol. I, p. 201; Virtanen, *Vanhat tavat*, pp. 69–72, 89–90.

35 Kirsti Kena, *Kirkon aseman ja asenteiden muotoutuminen itsenäistyneessä Suomessa 1918–1922*, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia, 110 (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 1979), pp. 58–61.

social hierarchy. Some prominent clergymen changed their bands to a uniform, but overall participation by clergy in the battles remained low.<sup>36</sup> The Lutheran Church of Finland had been one of the cornerstones of the national movement in the 19th century, and by the beginning of the 20th century, strong elements of revivalist movements also became incorporated into the increasingly conservative national narrative. In fact, the largely Ostrobothnian and Northern Savonian pietistic revivalism called *körttiläisyys* became closely associated with the White effort and added to the perceived “spiritual” differences between the adversaries.<sup>37</sup>

It did not come as a surprise that the Church unambiguously and explicitly chose the middle-class side, although, as evidenced by the Christian rites performed for some of the Reds, not every clergyman harbored unbridgeable animosity towards the socialists and vice versa. For the Reds, the position of the Church nevertheless provided further evidence of the hypocrisy of the religious establishments and added fuel to the propaganda. It remained an indisputable fact that the Church belonged to the powers that be.<sup>38</sup>

All in all, the ordinary Red supporter often found traditional religious values close, but in official Red rhetoric and ceremonies, the religious verbal connotations were either alien or to be avoided. “The working-class has decided to sacrifice everything, even its life, against the bourgeoisie to avoid becoming a slave-class” proclaimed the journalist Artturi Aalto in Helsinki, testifying to the need to celebrate the idea of a secularized and collective self-sacrifice.<sup>39</sup> The rather utopian freedom of future generations that a successful revolution would provide gave Reds the transcendent, or time-lapping, component to their commemoration.<sup>40</sup> Longing for paradise was a patently Christian concept and in its vernacular form an important meta-ideological component of the Red thought.<sup>41</sup>

One element in celebrating the utopian goals were the workers’ anthems sung at funerals and other festivities that rallied people around the Red flag. In

36 Pertti Haapala, “Kun kansankirkko hajosi,” in Ilkka Huhta, ed., *Sisällissota 1918 ja kirkko*, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia, 212 (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 2009), p. 21; Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 90–91.

37 Ilkka Huhta, “Täällä on oikea Suomenkansa:” *Körttiläisyyden julkisuuskuva 1880–1918*, Suomen Kirkkohistoriallisen Seuran Toimituksia, 186 (Helsinki: Suomen Kirkkohistoriallinen Seura, 2001); Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle*, pp. 327–28.

38 Further on the relationship of the Finnish Lutheran Church to the Civil War, see Huhta, ed., *Sisällissota 1918*.

39 *Työmies* 25 March 1918.

40 *Työmies* 17 February 1918.

41 Ehnrooth, *Sanan vallassa*, pp. 44–53.

addition to international and established songs and marches such as the *Internationale* and the *Marsellaise*, which were often sung at the funerals with Finnish lyrics,<sup>42</sup> there were a few Finnishized, very popular labor marches introduced before the Civil War that celebrated the workers' cause. They were adapted mostly to the folk tunes of Nordic and Western European origin.<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, in addition to labor marches that celebrated romanticized freedom from oppression, bitter struggle, and the revolution, classical virtues of courage also offered a path for the Reds to overcome the gap between the non-transcendent ideology and a need for elevated sacrificial experience and rhetoric. For instance, the *Song of the Athenians* (*Ateenalaisten laulu* or *Athenarnes sång* in Swedish), a popular national-romantic anthem composed by Jean Sibelius in 1899, based its lyrics on the verses of the Swedish poet Viktor Rydberg which heralded the virtues of the Hellenic Athenians in defense of their nation against the Gothic invaders. The song celebrated the sacrificial ethos of the young men and the honor of dying for the fatherland.<sup>44</sup> It became a popular song of passive resistance against Russification efforts at the turn of the century. In the Finnish Civil War, this song seems to have been popular on both sides,<sup>45</sup> although in the Red case it did not surpass the elevation that the labor marches created. However, singing and printing the lyrics of Song of the Athenians offered the Reds a way to ground their struggle in the national narrative of resistance against the oppressor. The fallen Reds were literally the heroes of freedom, and this freedom concerned not only the working classes but also the nation under their leadership. As it turns out, classical virtues were highly valued on the White side.

Reds and the Whites also found another common symbol from their national history to which they both could adhere. Jaakko Ilkka, the executed peasant rebel leader against the repressive politics of the nobility in the late 16th century, was resurrected in spirit to lead both the White and the Red freedom fight.<sup>46</sup>

The White military funerals became synonyms for national ceremonies held in every locality. Due to the internal nature of the war, the front line not only

42 *Työmies* 26 February 1918.

43 Pekka Gronow, *Laulukirja: Työväen lauluja kahdeksalta vuosikymmeneltä* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1971), passim, esp. pp. 13–15.

44 Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, p. 72; see also Ville Kivimäki & Tuomas Tepora, "War of Hearts: Love and Collective Attachment as Integrating Factors in Finland during World War II," *Journal of Social History* 43.2 (2009): 285–305.

45 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, p. 388.

46 Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu*, p. 65; Sirkka Ahonen, *Coming to Terms with a Dark Past: How Post-Conflict Societies Deal with History* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 66–67.

physically cut through the terrain where the battles were fought but also mentally slashed every parish. The Whites treated the fallen as local and provincial sacrifices as much as national sacrifices. Men from local parishes north from the front line had sacrificed for the local communities and were revered – in contrast to local Red supporters, many of whom faced threats of violence had they not been able or willing to cross the front line to the Red-occupied area.

Aapo Roselius has demonstrated that dying for the fatherland indeed included elements of provincial allegiances as well. Different regions competed with each other in the expression of patriotism and the spirit of sacrifice, which was further emphasized by commemoration immediately after the conflict ended.<sup>47</sup> The Civil Guards, like the Red Guards in the South, not only formed local militias but also actively seized the monopoly on violence. They sought to establish a new order based on the traditional hierarchy that, until recently, had been guaranteed by the imperial authorities. The White sacrifices became expressions of the people's willingness to submit under the power of local civil guards who ruled under the auspices of the White Senate in Vaasa. Hence, the importance of expressing the willingness to sacrifice for local communities as much as for the nation proper became so important.<sup>48</sup>

Supporters of the Whites, without a doubt, regarded themselves as powers to be, and this added to the severity of the retribution after the battles. Many a victor experienced the Red rebellion as an insult and thus shot back with doubled effort. The fratricide was not recognized. In late May 1918, the White nation commemorated its 5000 war sacrifices – in itself a significant number within such a short period of time – as the price of independence, while at the same the Reds were executed and the POW catastrophe was about to begin to unfold. The Red victims of the purges were usually buried in mass graves in remote locations.<sup>49</sup> It goes without saying that the Red victims were displaced from the national narrative, and their sacrifices were not recognized. The struggle for recognition from the social democratic side and the defiant, albeit cripplingly persistent, cult of the revolutionary heroes from the Communist side formed the core of the Red commemoration in the interwar period.

White military funerals, along with other patriotic festivities in 1918, demonstrated the link between a rural town and parish with the wider national

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47 Aapo Roselius, *Kiista, eheys, unohdus: Vapaussodan muistaminen suojeluskuntien ja veteraaniliikkeen toiminnassa 1918–1944*, Bidrag till kännedom av Finlands natur och folk, 186 (Helsinki: Suomen Tiedeseura, 2010), pp. 37–41, 115–21.

48 *Ilkka* 24 April 1918; Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 66–70.

49 Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, pp. 189–220.

community. The national and newly invented local symbols, flags, and other emblems were consecrated in local ceremonies and symbolically demonstrated the link forged by blood between the nation and its loyal provinces. The age-old notion of chivalrous and romantic qualities between the flag and sacrifice was manifested forcefully in the spring of 1918. Newly invented flags of the Civil Guards or national colors were as important in White funerals as the Red flag and the trade union standards in socialist ceremonies – they became sacrificial symbols.<sup>50</sup> The abundance and emotional significance of flags reflected the experiences of other nationally formative civil wars such as the American Civil War.<sup>51</sup> The flag became a reflective symbol through which people communicated their feelings during the period of crisis. In spite of varying flag designs and without a standardized national flag, these various emblems brought mental structure to the chaotic environment. Indeed, the flags were *axis mundi* symbols, connecting the earth and the heavens and with roots in the underworld, the realm of the dead heroes. They added greatly to the sacredness of the sacrifices. Draping the coffins with flags, a gesture signifying regeneration, however, remained rare.<sup>52</sup>

White military funerals were not always as grand as the biggest Red funerals because many White soldiers were from rural areas, where the setting for the processions was more meager. Nevertheless, funerals in a rural setting often attracted a few thousand spectators. Agrarian traditions prevailed in the funerals, as hardly any military traditions had survived during the peaceful 19th century. The examples set by the funeral of Eugen Schauman, the assassin of General-Governor Bobrikov in 1904, as well as the funeral of the White guardsmen killed during the rebellion in Sveaborg Fortress in 1906 may have contributed to some of the ceremonies.<sup>53</sup> It should be kept in mind that many of the country parishes experienced only a handful of losses, although funeral ceremonies in the largest country towns could be as massive as those of their urban Red counterparts. The rather peculiar custom of organizing military graves for brothers-in-arms in local churchyards was initiated by White politicians and carried on by local Civil Guards.<sup>54</sup> The repatriated White fallen buried in parish

50 Tepora, "Redirecting Violence."

51 Robert E. Bonner, *Colors and Blood: Flag Passions of the Confederate South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

52 See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*, 1957, trans. by Willard R. Trask (Orlando: Harcourt, 1987), pp. 32–47; Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 65–68, 292–94.

53 Poteri, *Sankarihautaus vapaussodassa*, pp. 23–24, 33–34.

54 Petition to establish planned sections of military graves to churchyards, 5 March 1918, published in *Ilkka* 11 March 1918; Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, p. 68.

churchyards established – often very tiny – military cemeteries in practically every locality north from the Red-occupied areas and after the war in the South as well, when Southern Finnish fallen were repatriated if possible. More than 20 years later, during World War II, the precedent set during the Civil War – by both sides – became one of the major reasons for the Finnish military authorities to adopt an internationally exceptional practice of evacuating all the fallen soldiers to be buried in their home parishes and towns.<sup>55</sup>

The White military funerals usually were organized as part of Sunday services at the local churches. Chopin's popular Funeral March was often played in the processions from the morgue or the victim's home to the church, making it one of the only obvious linkages between the White and the Red practices. Otherwise, hymns prevailed in the White funerals. The clergymen held prime positions as masters of ceremonies in the funerals, underlining the close connection between the Church and the White effort. The Christian symbolism offered many paths to make the sacrifices transcendent, give them an otherworldly meaning. It is striking, though, that the religious ethos quite often utilized was the Old Testament tale of Abraham and Isaac, an ancient example of rather "primitive" and mythical demand of human sacrifice. The story celebrated not altruistic self-sacrifice of an individual but, rather, the willingness to submit to the Divine will and be able to offer to it even the most precious of lives.<sup>56</sup> The willingness to offer one's son to be sacrificed was, in fact, a widely interpreted and later ironized tale all over Western Europe during World War I.<sup>57</sup>

The Whites imagined themselves, at the dawn of independence and in the midst of the liberating war, as biblical Israelites who were led to the chosen land and redeemed by God.<sup>58</sup> Crusader rhetoric about fighting the infidels abounded. Clearly self-sacrificial Christian thought was utilized as well. The

55 Ilona Kemppainen, *Isänmaan uhrit: Sankarikuolema Suomessa toisen maailmansodan aikana*, Bibliotheca historica, 102 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), pp. 65–66.

56 *Ilkka* 18 February 1918; Poteri, *Sankarihautaus vapaussodassa*, p. 111; the biblical tale might, in fact, inform readers about the ancient abolition of human sacrifice, as Abraham sacrifices a ram instead of his son after God observed that Abraham is God fearing. The reality of the Finnish Civil War was, in this regard, more "primitive" than the ancient tale, as the parents, and especially the fathers who peacefully accepted the death of their sons, became highly regarded symbols of an ultimate sacrifice. See, e.g., *Savon Sanomat* 26 March 1918.

57 Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 220.

58 Miika Siironen, "Kurivallan koneistona: Suojeluskunta osana vuoden 1918 sodan voittajien hegemonista projektia," in Petri Karonen & Kerttu Tarjamo, eds, *Kun sota on ohi:*



innocence of the fallen, usually rather young soldiers, became a notable theme in the funerary sermons of the clergymen. Although it may not have been as popular to set the sacrifice of the fallen as a direct comparison to Christ, or *imitatio Christi*, as it was one generation later during World War II, this implied the position of the White heroes as surrogate victims of the nation and imbued its redeemers with Christ-like attributes.<sup>59</sup> Dying for one's country opened up a path to eternal life for the individual, but, most importantly, it testified about the sacredness and eternity of the nation as well.

In effect, Christian symbolism could not offer a definitive explanation for the sacrifices, as the adoption of the Old Testament tale of Abraham and Isaac and the unquestioned willingness to sacrifice suggests. The theologically suspicious notion of redeeming oneself by means of dying in battle in a Crusader fashion also suggests that the psychology behind the funeral speeches and sacrificial rhetoric in general pointed in directions other than conventional Protestant thought – the cult of the fallen had strong national or even “tribal” roots.

The Whites saw their sacrifices as a foundational offer to the nation. Indeed, they were mythical sacrifices that gave birth to a sovereign nation. As seen above, freedom without blood sacrifices was worthless or at least doubtful. This became an often-varied phrase.<sup>60</sup> Although individual heroes received more emphasis among Whites than among Reds, the White victims nevertheless testified specifically to the sacredness of the nation. This aspect of the sacrificial thought was remarkably “tribal,” or immanent. This aspect remained worldly and did not call for divine help or even justification. Namely, not only did the White sacrifices recreate, rejuvenate, or regenerate the nation; also, the nation that had lain dormant was born and created as if for the first time at the dawn of the War of Liberation. The White victims established a new sacrificial order, a cornerstone of civil religion that reigned until World War II.<sup>61</sup> According to this experience, the nation was not created from scratch in 1918, but its potential was released to roam from any restraints.

The immanent way of understanding the sacrifices has been common in national movements. Nationalism has been likened to tribal religion, which holds no universal truths and is bound to a fixed territory (“the promised land”)

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*Sodista seiviytymisen ongelmia ja niiden ratkaisumalleja 1900-luvulla*, Historiallinen Arkisto, 124 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), p. 177.

59 E.g., Huttunen, *Raamatullinen sota*, p. 191; on World War II, see Kemppainen, *Isänmaan uhrin*, p. 250.

60 *Kotimaa* 8 January 1918; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 357–58.

61 Theoretically, see René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, 1972, trans. by Patrick Gregory (London: The Athlone Press, 1995), pp. 39–88; in the Finnish case, see also Miika Siironen, *Valkoiset: Vapaussodan perintö* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2012), pp. 54–84.

and chosen peoples. It fathoms the nationally relevant time in more cyclical than linear terms. Of course, modern nation-states are products of a linear concept of time and modernization, but they also have retained aspects that remind us of traditional communities. Within nationalism, the nation worships itself as the deity.<sup>62</sup> In practice, these immanent aspects of not strictly secular but tribal nationalism infuse with transcendent religions and create a double guarantee against death. Transcendent belief may offer salvation to individuals, the immanent aspect of the national ethos makes the collective immortal, and the sacrifices enhance this sacred entity. Nevertheless, as the concept of “chosen peoples” suggests, transcendence may well be a collective attribute as well. In the Finnish case, the tribal and cyclical elements strengthened the otherwise modern nation in its quest to free itself from the shackles of alien power. The White as well as the Red experience emphasized agency in gaining freedom and saw freedom in a linear framework of national and revolutionary history. This linearity, however, included elements of timelessness. People lived through the myth as it was unfolding. Events in the spring of 1918 fit easily into categories of foundational sacrifice, heroic deeds, and the birth of the nation – not in a distant and mythical past but in the very present. The most obvious mythical concept arising from the Civil War, that of fratricide, became a term of choice in the POW camps and then in Red folklore.<sup>63</sup>

The tribal qualities in the Finnish Civil War were best visible in White funeral speeches given by local politicians and intelligentsia. Bodily metaphors and metaphors referring to natural phenomena abounded. The rhetoric evoked the changes in vernal natural environment and pastoral scenes to help to characterize the sacrifices. When the war neared its victorious end, the willingness to sacrifice equaled the “breech of the spring.”<sup>64</sup> Returning migratory birds

62 Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 77–78; Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 19–43; Smart, “Religion”; Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory: Ten Studies*, 2000, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), pp. 7–9.

63 Tuuli Kataja, “*Ruusun veri punaisen haudalle istuta*” – *punaisten laulujen ja runojen ideologinen identiteetti ja kuolemakäsitykset* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2002), pp. 86–87.

64 *Ilkka* 13 May 1918; on the prevalence of the contrast between pastoral imagery and industrialized warfare in World War I literature and contemporaneous experiences, see such established works as Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), pp. 231–69; and Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 58–68.

seemed to sing more beautifully in the spring of freedom,<sup>65</sup> when fellow citizen had been killing each other in the thousands. Obviously, the pastoral images served as a distraction from the harsh reality, but at the same time they conveyed an elevated and even joyous interpretation of the events. The bodies of the citizens fed the collective body of the nation, rather concretely. The mayor of Kuopio in Savonia proclaimed in April 1918:

The streams of blood are like the spring waters. They wash away all the filth and badness, which have accumulated during the long winter, from this nation. These waters prepare the Finnish people to be stainless and bold in the face of their duty as a free state, and Finland's ensuing summer as a nation.<sup>66</sup>

A eulogy combining Christian symbolism with tribal characteristics perhaps worked the best. The same orator as above had opined one month earlier that the material well-being that had prevailed before the turbulent year of 1917 and the Civil War had led to selfishness. He continued that materialism inevitably was bound to lead to crisis, because the people had to free themselves from its spoils. The sacrifice of the fallen freed the nation from materialistic sins and desires. The heroic deeds depicted in the tales and the poetry, the cultural memory, had come to resemble, or equal, the archetypal reality. They were an attribute not only of the few or the past but also of the whole nation here and now.<sup>67</sup>

It is always controversial to ascribe shared meanings to "collective" phenomena. The briefly shared experience is quickly bound to devolve into competing interpretations; shared experience does not automatically denote shared understanding of the event. Some key events in the narrative of any given community hold a prime position as keys to its collective remembrance. The War of Liberation was instantly established as the birth-of-the-nation myth, a widely shared experience that became memorialized and thus crystallized even before the battles were over. Local Civil Guards initiated memorials to commemorate the war for freedom in the winter of 1918 and preserved war memorabilia. Immediately after the battles were over, the authorities and publishers recruited notable authors to write histories and memoirs. Many writers who had participated in creating the wartime opinion published their wartime diaries soon after the war.

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65 *Ilkka* 3 April 1918.

66 *Savon Sanomat* 13 April 1918.

67 *Savon Sanomat* 26 March 1918.

### Propaganda, the War, and the *Literati* in 1918

Writers were in key positions to create wartime opinion and to reflect on the mood of the people. The pre-war struggle in the press was led by bourgeois writers and socialist journalists, and in more than one way, men and women of letters were in charge of creating and propagating images of the enemy. The elevated rhetoric of freedom and friendship between social classes and the peoples of Finland and Russia faded quickly after the February Revolution and gave way to growing suspicion between social classes as well as towards Russians in Finland. The summer of 1917 marked a crucial turning point even in the minds of liberal middle-class writers, like the poet Eino Leino and the novelist Juhani Aho. Their sympathies towards socialists faded at the same pace as suspicion towards the Russian military grew among the wider middle-class public and the socialists gradually became radicalized. The October Revolution and the ensuing general strike in Finland left the Finnish *literati* already sharply divided and on guard in literary trenches. The bourgeois authors failed to see the workers' radicalization in any terms other than as the result of influence from an inherently alien culture, Russia (which "anarchist" and "criminal" Bolshevism only highlighted). The socialist writers began to manifest openly violent threats against the "bourgeoisie" and also drew a clear line against writers who had been identified as liberal bourgeois.

In spite of the clear division between White and Red, it is possible to separate the right-wing supporters from the more liberal minded within the Whites. The former were more visible in wartime rhetoric and propaganda, and the latter, although adhering to the relatively explicit War of Liberation interpretation and identifying with the Whites, emerged after the war to contribute to public views on the conflict. Although in more popular memoirs the strictly White interpretation dominated, a number of works of fiction, notably by Frans Eemil Sillanpää and Joel Lehtonen, with a critical attitude to the events of 1918 emerged. They were more prone to recognize the inherently social and internal nature of the conflict. Their public considerations kept alive the interpretation of reciprocal national tragedy even during the immediate aftermath of the war, in spite of vigorous memory politics manifesting the heroic liberation and self-sacrifice.<sup>68</sup> After the war also, right-wing authors were forced to

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68 The most influential of these works became F.E. Sillanpää's *Meek Heritage* (trans. by Alexander Matson in 1938, original *Hurskas kurjuus*), written already in 1918 and published a little belatedly in the next year. The novel depicted the typical motivation of a Red combatant through the eyes of its crofter protagonist as rising from poverty and ignorance, coupled with abruptly raised expectations during the revolutionary year of 1917. This was

acknowledge that the Russian influence in the war had not been as great as propagated. Namely, the retribution and the White justice brought upon the Reds primarily concerned fellow Finns – with still suspiciously foreign looks. The denial of the war's internal nature had strong roots. Maila Talvio, a devotedly Christian Old-Finn writer and one of the best-known female authors of the time, for her part, acknowledged the fact of fratricide but professed escapism when she turned away from her pre-war social topics to individual psychology.<sup>69</sup>

Interestingly, many of the liberal bourgeois writers stayed in Red-occupied southern Finland during the conflict. This perhaps influenced their views on the Reds – and not necessarily for the worse. An illuminating example of the liberal approach was Juhani Aho, who belonged to the first generation of intellectuals who had received their education in Finnish. Nearly 60 years old in 1918, he felt his life-long ideals betrayed when the revolution began, but he could not whole-heartedly endorse the White war enthusiasm either. In his published diaries he drifted between hatred and fearful awe towards the Reds. When the repulsion took over, the “Bolshevist *svoboda*” and its red color made him feel sick. The Red ideology, its emblems, and the actions they epitomized and generated represented only materialist selfishness, shallow-mindedness, and outright Russian influence. At other times, especially towards the end of the conflict, he reluctantly started to understand the Reds' goals and efforts. For instance, during the spring in Helsinki, he realized that many of the Reds were truly committed to the fight. How could they fight for only materialist

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in stark contrast to the then-hegemonic middle-class interpretation of pure Bolshevik agitation. Moreover, Sillanpää portrayed many of the Whites, especially the Jägers, as almost merciless killers. Predictably, his portrayal did not match the self-portrait of either side and raised criticism. A notable work of fiction was also Joel Lehtonen's *Kuolleet omenapuut* (1918, “The Dead Apple Trees”), published shortly after the war, which incisively caricatured different White characters as opportunists and idealists, as shell-shocked and disillusioned. Lehtonen did not, by any means, accept the Red revolution, but he also acknowledged that the White victory inevitably divided the nation and that the White effort was anything but one-sided. Swedish-speaking author Runar Schildt accompanied Sillanpää and Lehtonen in publishing sharp and multifaceted short stories on the Civil War in *Hemkomsten och andra noveller* in 1919 (“Homecoming”, trans. in Finnish by Ilmari Ahma in 1922 as “Kotiinpaluu”). Another author who cannot be categorized in traditional political allegiances and who published critically on the Civil War in Swedish in the wake of the war was Sigrid Backman in her novels *Ålandsjungfrun* (“The Maiden of Åland, 1919) and *Familjen Brinks öden* (“The Fate of the Brink Family”, 1922). They have not been translated into Finnish.

69 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 87–88, 111, 126–27; see also Aapo Roselius's chapter “The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards and the Veterans' Union” in this volume.

and selfish gains if they seemed to believe in or even be fanatical about their rightful revolution? Perhaps the Civil War was a battle between two faiths after all? And if the war was a matter of faith, on what grounds could one make any judgments towards one or the other? Aho began to ponder the justifications of the war and violence, and, contrary to the general White opinion, he had difficulties assigning meaning to the White sacrifices – or the Red, for that matter.

In the end, Aho nevertheless felt compelled to choose his side definitively. As he himself stated, he felt he did not have the right to remain neutral in such a fateful situation to the fatherland.<sup>70</sup> Many liberal writers like Aho, Leino, and L. Onerva were also those who would revise their position after the war. For instance, Onerva publicly renounced the liberal politics she had supported before the war and looked for guidance from conservative values.<sup>71</sup> This phase, however, remained short, and at the turn of the 1920s the bourgeois literary front had broken into as many conflicting camps as before the war.

Writing being a bourgeois occupation and a privilege, there were few Red authors but, instead, many journalists creating the literary style of the Finnish Revolution. The most prominent author on the Red side was Algot Untola,<sup>72</sup> who was better known by his pennames Maiju Lassila and Irmari Rantamala. Especially in his case, one cannot truly speak of a working-class author, because almost all of his numerous books of a naturalist genre dealing with social issues and the poor of the countryside had been published before the middle-class intellectual leaned towards the socialists. The son of a farmer and a teacher by training, his political allegiance remained the choice of his background, the loyalist Old Finns until World War I. At first, the “left wing” of the Finnish Party with its emancipatory stand towards the ordinary people perhaps satisfied the social passions Untola harbored, but during 1916, the former agitator of the Old Finns left the party disillusioned and joined the socialists, although he was never officially in the Party. Untola was an oddball among the socialists. He probably never considered himself as an ideological socialist, at least in a conventional sense, but he held dear a fight by the people against elites of any kind. He quickly became one of the leading journalists in the socialist press and eventually, in 1917, an editor for *Työmies* (“The Worker”), the leading organ of the Party.

In this position he became perhaps the best-known, loved, and hated character of socialist propaganda before and during the Civil War. He remained

70 Juhani Aho, *Hajamietteitä kapinaviikoilta*, vol. III: *Loppuviikot* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1919), pp. 96–98.

71 *Helsingin Sanomat* 19 May 1918.

72 He was born as Algot Tietäväinen. Occasionally, his first name was spelled as Algoth.

truthful to the cause he had chosen to the bitter end and was captured in the newspaper's office upon the capitulation of Helsinki. He edited on his own the last issue of the *Työmies* after the other notable socialist leaders had fled the town. While the victors transported the most "infamous agitator" on a boat to execution in the POW camp established in the Sveaborg Fortress, only moments earlier renamed in Finnish as *Suomenlinna* ("Finnish Fortress") in national fervor, he was shot after he jumped off board. For his White author colleagues, his pre-Civil War change of political allegiance was a shock that added to the anxiety his writings raised in public. This sealed his fate.<sup>73</sup>

Untola's writings in *Työmies* depicted the working classes and the landless peasantry as in a constant want of basic livelihood. In more than one way, he gave his middle-class opponents ample reason to accuse the socialists of materialism: basic needs figured high in his lines, like in many other socialist writings as we already have seen. In Untola's graphic and tantalizing writings, the fat and lazy bourgeoisie, the capitalists, the clergy, and the authorities exploited the people, the true essence of the country, as it pleased them.<sup>74</sup> Untola's rhetoric in the fall of 1917 was more patriotic in its conventional meaning than the writings and lyrics of most other proletarian writers in the press, who grounded their verses in the revolutionary rhetoric and international class struggle that justified the looming fight.<sup>75</sup> Untola, however, grounded his thesis on the notion of the real, ordinary people of Finland and their quest for freedom and welfare. Untola ridiculed the middle-class idealism at the dawn of the declaration of independence and skillfully made the bourgeois patriotism and nationalistic enthusiasm look plainly idiotic at a time when, in line with the subtle art of propaganda, concrete issues of land distribution and the solving of the abasement of the workers should have been important. The middle classes started to look like only selfish and gluttonous materialists at the time of their cherished and elevated independence. Of course, it goes without saying that in the weeks leading to the Civil War, no conventional solution would have pleased the radicalized part of the socialists and the Red Guards. After the Revolution began, Untola shifted towards a more dogmatic revolutionary rhetoric of universal class struggle and found the organic metaphors of blood and

73 Marko A. Hautala, *Omin voimien: Algotn Untolan (1868–1918) poliittis-vakaumuksellinen elämäkerta* (Oulu: Oulun yliopisto, 2010), pp. 533–700.

74 E.g., *Työmies* 24 January 1918.

75 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 93–95. Other notable writers and propagandists in the working-class press during the Civil War included Jussi Raitio and Lauri Letonmäki in the Tampere-based *Kansan Lehti*. The latter held the position of the Commissar of Justice in the People's Delegation.



the avoidable physical and mental disease as useful as his bourgeois counterparts. The socialist battle is justified because:

Cruelty and brutality are only a part of the spiritual syphilis the bourgeoisie is ailing from. We have to be prepared not to get contaminated. The cause of the bourgeoisie is based on injustice and therefore it cannot be sustained unless it is enforced by cruelty, blood and brutality. The workers derive their power from the just cause. This cause will stay like mountains and the foundations of the Earth. As it is, let us not leave any space for slow-moving disease that will eventually demolish even the mountains.<sup>76</sup>

On the White side, the writers' propaganda tried to reach the noble spheres but many times landed in graphic bloodbath fantasies. Many poets of White Finland endorsed the selflessness and honor of individual heroes in the service of the fatherland, differentiating them from the "democratic" and undifferentiated heroism of the people endorsed by the socialists. The romantic characters depicted by the already canonized national poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg (1804–77) were set as an example. The lyrics from his *Tales of Ensign Ståhl* had memorialized the characters of the Finnish War of 1808–09. This war had ended Swedish rule in Finland, and now the War of Liberation reversed the defeat. Especially the Swedish-speaking lyricists endorsed Runeberg's example, but the brave characters resonated in the minds of others as well. Runeberg did not, understandably, harbor any explicit anti-Russian sentiment, as he had written as a subject of the Tsar and, moreover, believed that the concept of ethnic animosity had no place in the repertoire of the romantic and chivalrous genre.

It is striking that the Swedish-speaking poets of White Finland did not harbor any significant Russophobia either. According to Maria-Liisa Kunnas, the main message the Swedish-speaking poets like Bertel Gripenberg or Arvid Mörne wanted to share with their audience dealt with the defense of the traditional Swedish (or "Finland's Swedish" as the term had been introduced a few years earlier) values and social structure. In a nutshell, they portrayed the Civil War as a battle against socialism, which had "Asian" roots<sup>77</sup> but whose protagonists were not Russians, as such, but mainly the Finnish-speaking thrash with

76 *Työmies* 23 February 1918. Quoted in Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 95–96.

77 Bertel Gripenberg, *Under fanan* (Helsinki: Schildt, 1918), pp. 24–25; Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 70.

Bolshevik aid. This view conformed to the worldview of the traditional upper class, whose significance had already begun to cease.

The picture does not look that simple, though. For instance, Gripenberg, an aristocrat, participated in the battles. Generally his views comply with his status, and he invokes heroic metaphors resembling Scandinavian mythology in his verses. The call of the fatherland evokes ancient feelings and values of honor in the “sons of the White Gods.”<sup>78</sup> The battle he cherishes is subsuming, a “grand wave,” which, rather peculiarly, frees the warriors from their individuality as they slash against the enemy, who have armed themselves with weapons of the formerly common enemy of the nation.<sup>79</sup> Despite the celebration of war heroes, the loss of individual boundaries and the sense of oneness was rather common experience among the White enthusiasts, who found an elevated and larger-than-life purpose in the freedom fight. Gripenberg also feels a strong connection with Finnish-speaking co-combatants and defiles the “Red animals” who have proven that they were no longer part of humankind.<sup>80</sup> The fallen brotherly soldiers formed a morally binding force beneath the ground, waiting for recall to life.<sup>81</sup> Yet, only moments before the war, Gripenberg seems to have mourned the tragedy of the fatherland, for it is succumbing to fratricidal violence. He rearranges the lyrics of the *Marsellaise* in a rather pessimistic light: “The future of Finland grows out of the sibling blood / the blood of the murdered sows our fields.”<sup>82</sup> At this point, the framework of brother slaying another was not yet disguised with hate propaganda and psychological tools to ease the killing and –especially in the White case – the guilt that tried to surface after the war.

One can argue that the war between social classes united people in spite of previously important linguistic lines. Many Swedish-speaking workers participated in the Red effort as well, especially in the industrial areas of the southern coast and Helsinki, but the Swedish-speaking Whites failed to recognize this for years to come.<sup>83</sup> Notwithstanding many mutual interests and shared battle

78 Gripenberg, *Under fanan*, pp. 38–39.

79 Gripenberg, *Under fanan*, 47; for a comparison to similar metaphors in the works of other European authors of World War I, see, e.g., Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp. 49–54.

80 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, 117.

81 Gripenberg, *Under fanan*, p. 88.

82 Gripenberg, *Under fanan*, p. 19.

83 Magnus Westerlund, “Harhaanjohdetut torpparit ja isänmaalliset opiskelijat: Ruotsinkieliset suomalaiset ja vuoden 1918 sota,” 2006, trans. by Petri Karonen, in Karonen & Tarjamo, *Kun sota on ohi*, pp. 149–56, 162–65; contrary to the view of Pekka Kalevi Hamalainen, *In Time of Storm: Revolution, Civil War, and the Ethnolinguistic Issue in Finland* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1979), the linguistic issue did not play a decisive role in the Civil War class divisions.

experiences, the linguistic struggle became ingrained in the White Civil War rhetoric, although on the surface the Whites seemed united. The War of Liberation (*frihetskriget* in Swedish) posed for Swedish-speaking upper-class writers the possibility to at least symbolically return to the nostalgic past of Germanistic origin without Eastern influence. At the same time, the Swedish-language authors celebrated their true patriotism. The Finnish-speaking White people and authors saw their fight as a defensive war against the East as well, but it demonstrated the worth of the Finnish national movement and redeemed its place among the nations. The linguistic, and ethnic, attributes of Finnishness were closely linked to the bulk of the members of the Civil Guards, who posed and were seen as the collective backbone of independence. The War of Liberation of the Finns also denoted the Finns as a distinct ethnic group.<sup>84</sup>

Poets and novelists led the War of Liberation in the press and flooded the markets with memoirs, diaries, and fiction after the war, thus helping to establish the myth of the War of Liberation.<sup>85</sup> A crucial difference between White Finnish post-war literature and the contemporaneous pan-European literary experience was the lack of disillusionment about the war itself in Finland. The notion of a “lost generation” was alien to White writers, and this led to the continuation of a rather high-flying vocabulary even among the writers who represented the high culture.

One of the most prominent writers in the White war effort was Kyösti Wilkuna, son of a northern Ostrobothnian farmer. During World War I, he became a recruiter of Jägers and served time in the infamous Shpalernaya Prison in St Petersburg in 1916–17. After his release along with other captured Jäger recruiters, he participated in the organizing of bourgeois Civil Guards. He served as a commander of the guard of his home parish when the war began.

His works, consisting of patriotic, conservative, and historical novels and short stories, had made him an lauded author, although he was not regarded as

84 Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 105–08.

85 A few notable examples include Eino Leino, *Vapauden kirja: Runovalikoima* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918) and his wartime diary *Helsingin valloitus: Muistelmia ja vaikutelmia* (Helsinki: Minerva, 1918); Kyösti Wilkuna, *Kun kansa nousee: Muistelmia ja kokemuksia Suomen vapaussodasta* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918); and perhaps the most revered conservative poet of the interwar period, V.A. Koskenniemi. He portrayed the Whites as defending the European civilization against the East; see V.A. Koskenniemi, *Nuori Anssi: Runoelma Suomen sodasta 1918* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1918). Juhani Aho represented a slightly more liberal-minded view in his *Hajamietteitä kapinaviikoilta*, vols I–III (Porvoo: WSOY, 1918–19); for a short overview, see Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 127. On the Jäger memoirs published immediately after the war, see Anders Ahlbäck’s chapter in this volume.

one of the most revered authors in the Grand Duchy. It was his close ties to the emerging political right wing and his pre-war literary appetite for heroic action and bloodshed in the battlefield that earned him a position as editor of *Valkoisen Suomi* ("White Finland"), the organ of the White Senate. Considering himself more a man of action, however, he soon embarked on a journey to the front, where he served as a sergeant major, feeding his newspaper with clear-cut ethnic hatred of Russians and their domestic servants, the Finnish Reds. During the conflict he acted as a rather merciless military judge and participated in the irredentist wars. This troubled person committed suicide in the early 1920s. However, his wartime diaries were published immediately after the war in 1918 and established him as a key interpreter of the White experience. As it happened, he embarked along with a few other writers on the boat that transported Algot Untola to meet his fate in Sveaborg Fortress.<sup>86</sup>

Wilkuna's texts about the Civil War reveal a writer who had already been committed to the armed fight long before the internal conflict of the War of Liberation began. Freedom gained without a fight was not a fought-for and won liberty. Wilkuna did not hide his eagerness to shed blood and wage war for the freedom of the fatherland. His poem *Tulkohon sota!* ("Let the War Come!"), published in 1913, has become somewhat famous in its "prediction" of a pan-European war and in fact expressed a wish for liberating bloodshed in poetic form: "Let the war come and the blood stained clothing." The generic war he anticipates in the poem is to erase the spoils of the modernity, a familiar theme in European thought around the beginning of World War I.<sup>87</sup> Maria-Liisa Kunnas has pointed out that Wilkuna's hate of modern times included a strong Social Darwinistic ethos, which he aimed against the changing social structure that threatened the romanticized rural hierarchy. Among his targets were also the emerging political parties and parliamentary system, international socialism with "indolent" pacifism, and decadent liberalism. Wilkuna's ideology rested on heroic deeds and authoritarian patriotism. These elements stood against the shallowness of modernity and its weak proponents, whose vascular system, according to the author, circulated milk.<sup>88</sup> In 1918 he found the Reds to be the epitome of the despised ideas brought by modernity.

In addition to Wilkuna and Gripenberg, a handful of other established writers took part in the White war effort, armed with weapons beyond the pen.

86 Eino Railo, *Kyösti Wilkuna: Ihmisenä, kirjailijana, itsenäisyysmiehenä* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1930), pp. 400–18; Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, 52–53.

87 Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp. 58–69.

88 *Tulkohon sota!* Quoted in Railo, *Kyösti Wilkuna*, p. 269; Siltala, *Sodan psykohistoria*, pp. 260–64.

One of them, Juhani Siljo, acknowledged in his wartime writings that the Finns were fighting a civil war, although in the shadow of Eastern disease that threatened Finland. He became a literary war hero when he wounded in Tampere and later died in early May.<sup>89</sup>

Retrospectively, perhaps the most famous White writer, and arguably one of the most visible authors in the eyes of the contemporaries in support of the White war effort, was Ilmari Kianto. He had become well known during the first two decades of the 20th century for his depictions of the northeastern Kainuu region and its impoverished people. His anarchistic lifestyle advocated liberal sexuality, and, in addition to disregarding bourgeois morals, he also criticized the Church and its doctrines as well as the alienated intelligentsia. His lifestyle and books sympathizing with the tribulations of the backwoods poor had gained him a rather misleading reputation of sympathizing the socialist efforts, although his views and habitus pointed towards individual eccentricity rather than explicitly defined political ideology. This son of a clergyman had, however, been an active political journalist in the Young Finns after the revolution of 1905, the year that generally increased political consciousness in Finland. Kianto was also a keen Karelian enthusiast and drew inspiration from the East Karelian Finnic cultures; and he participated in the irredentist expedition to White Karelia after the Civil War. His view on White Karelia facing Kainuu on the Russian side of the border mixed its soil, mythology, and the national spirit into a curious cocktail, which for him revealed the true Finnish spirit and mentality. Already before the events of 1918, he wanted to see White Karelia's unspoiled spirit and virility inject new life into new Greater Finland. He added this pseudo-religious and tribal worldview to the mixture of Nietzschean criticism of middle-class morality and Tolstoyan ideas.<sup>90</sup>

Given his rather anti-bourgeois opinions, the White public responded ambiguously when he, perhaps rather unexpectedly, emerged as one of the fiercest writers in the White press to condemn the Reds and disseminate hateful propaganda. His reputation may have contributed to his early difficulties in finding a publisher for his compilation of war poetry.<sup>91</sup> The press nevertheless

89 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 222.

90 Ilmari Kianto, *Suomi suureksi, Viena vapaaksi: Sotakesän näkemyksiä* (Hämeenlinna: Karisto, 1918); Raija-Liisa Kansi, ed., *Ilmari Kiannon Vienan Karjala: Erään Suur-Suomi unelman vaiheita* (Helsinki: Otava, 1989), 341–57; Eero Marttinen, *Ilmari Kianto: Korpikirjailijan elämä* (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2010), pp. 47–53, 86–87, 101–15, 129–33.

91 Ilmari Kianto, *Hakkaa päälle: Sotarunoja valkoiselle armeijalle* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1918).

published his verses and articles from the beginning of the war, which invoked a bloodthirsty spirit to fight the Red “moth and rust” who “ate and raped the Young Republic.”<sup>92</sup> “Away with the Russkies – down with the Red Guards” read his popular slogan.<sup>93</sup> Kianto established himself along with Wilkuna as the “official” voice of White Finland, although his extreme views went further than what would have been acceptable to the majority of White sympathizers in peacetime. For both writers, the war was an unambiguously just fight, and the Reds were stripped first of their Finnishness and then of their humane attributes. This rhetoric played one role in facilitating the bloody and lawless purges and executions on the White side beyond the battlefield. The enemy was not recognized as a fellow human being. “Are they human beings? Ask from those who have flown through the fires of hell if the red-Russkies are *humans*! Our boys outright deny it!” he roared in May 1918 when the active fighting started to cease.<sup>94</sup>

Kianto’s aggressive war poetry gave the socialist press an easy target during the war. Socialists used his words in their counterpropaganda and did not need to twist his words in order to create a bloodthirsty image of the White “butchers.” Kianto did not participate in the battles himself but stayed in northern Finland during the war until, at the end of the war, he managed to get a position as a war correspondent. He was criticized for avoiding battle, unlike many other men of letters who rushed to the colors. His role in the military expedition to White Karelia in the summer of 1918 was not that of a soldier but of an agitator. He tried to persuade the White Karelians to adjoin Finland. The expeditions to fight the Bolsheviks across the border influenced by Finnish irredentism and national-romanticism are discussed in detail elsewhere in this volume, but suffice it to say that Kianto’s efforts did not succeed. Kianto’s famous rants against the female Red combatants are as well discussed elsewhere in this volume.<sup>95</sup>

Being a radical, or a libertine for many people, Kianto nevertheless departed from the mainstream conservative and Lutheran White ethos. According to Maria-Liisa Kunnas, Kianto saw the battle as a “vulgar-Nietzschean” means to deviate from Christian morality and raise the essence of the nation above outdated moral standards. Without any battle experience of his own – unlike, for instance, Ernst Jünger in German trenches of World War I who preached the

92 *Kaleva* 28 January 1918.

93 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 27.

94 *Keskisuomalainen* 9 May 1918. Quoted in Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 90.

95 See Tiina Lintunen’s chapter in this volume.

elevated gospel of the battle – Kianto praised the war as an elevated experience of a higher consciousness. The White soldier did not enjoy the pusillanimous revenge and torture like the emotionally undeveloped enemy did, but the members of the Civil Guards took enjoyment in the beauty of “pure killing,” the annihilation of the rotten parts of the nation – after all, these rotten people had by themselves deviated from any proper attachment to the national body. The enjoyment of killing, according to Kianto, was the guarantor of victory because it testified to the required callousness the nation needed in its decisive moment.

The enjoyment caused by spilling enemy blood testified also to the shallowness of Christian morality. The Finnish clergy stood as an example in this regard. Their eagerness to arm themselves in spring of 1918, Kianto wrote with only a hint of irony in his thought, had given the Finns permission to free themselves from the Christian ideal of false mercifulness. In reality, as noted above, the clergy did not show any particular eagerness in taking up arms. The un-Christian manifesto of Kianto differs also from the Christian self-sacrificial ethos, which formed one of the major currents in sacrificial thought in 1918, as described above. It was closer to the immanent experience of “tribal” and recreating sacrifice, but it did not fit into this category either. Kianto openly endorsed aggressive and annihilating warrior-ideals, which did not recreate or regenerate the nation but destroyed not only the inhumane enemy but also the old morality altogether.<sup>96</sup> This aspect of Kianto’s thought made the War of Liberation an epic battle that created something entirely new through purifying violence as opposed to recreating the nation through sacrifice. One cannot escape the seeming connection of Kianto’s writing and the European fascist rhetoric of the 1920s and 1930s. It is striking that Kianto never became associated with fascism. One reason might be that Finnish interwar fascism derived its ideology from social conservatism and Lutheranism rather than from social radicalism and paganism.<sup>97</sup>

There is still one other interesting feature of his war rhetoric that deserves an analysis. It also leads us to a wider discussion of the significance of youth in the fantasies and realities of the Civil War.

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96 Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, pp. 90, 165.

97 Andres Kasekamp, “Radical Right-Wing Movements in the North-East Baltic,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34.4 (1999): 587–600; Juha Siltala, *Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930* (Helsinki: Otava, 1985).



### “The Fatherland Needs Young and Fresh Blood”

Kianto's public call<sup>98</sup> to the youth of Finland was only one among many sacrificial fantasies of youthful regeneration during the spring of 1918. The graphic and social-psychologically revealing middle-class rhetoric illustrated in varied ways how the nation drank the regenerative blood of its youth in its quest for freedom.<sup>99</sup> As a matter of fact, the rhetoric on the significance of the youth saving Finland from its ill-chosen path to demise had already begun to circulate in the press in summer of 1917, in line with the dramatic divisions emerging in society. During the Civil War, Kianto appeared frequently as an orator in local meetings north of the front. The bourgeois youth associations had been one of the most important civilian organizations in local country parishes, along with workers' associations. These associations inducted new members based clearly on the inductee's social status in traditional rural hierarchy. The youth associations' role in recruiting young volunteers to the Civil Guards may have been important, and their significance in circulating White war propaganda was clear. The propagandists believed in their message wholeheartedly, and the content of their manifestos sprang up from collectively shared experiences and emotions, but that does not mean that they did not employ classic propagandist means to achieve their goals. Kianto's public, only thinly veiled blame of the adolescent behind the front is revealing: “Beware, the daughters of the country that your duty and honor is to **be ashamed** of those beloved boys who have remembered you **girls more than the Mother Finland.**”<sup>100</sup>

In our example, he targeted the sense of duty of the boys in the audience (and indirectly those at the front) by concentrating first on the proper and patriotic relationship between the young men at the front and the girls on the home front, and second on the relationship between the youth and the parents, the latter being equated with the father and motherland. Kianto's message implied that the youth belonged to the fatherland, the “old men.” The metaphor of a mother replaced the usual Finnish Maiden in wartime rhetoric.<sup>101</sup> This further underlined the “parental” control and duty the White

98 *Savon Sanomat* 18 April 1918.

99 See, e.g., the author Ilmari Kianto in *Savon Sanomat* 18 April 1918; Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 358, 361, 373.

100 *Savon Sanomat* 14 March 1918. Emphasis in original.

101 Tepora, *Sinun puolestas*, p.77–78, 258; see also Juha Siltala, *Valkoisen äidin pojat: Siveellisyys ja sen varjot kansallisessa projektissa* (Helsinki: Otava, 1999), pp. 613, 646; Ala, *Suomineito*, passim; Johanna Valenius, *Undressing the Maid: Gender, Sexuality and the Body in the Construction of the Finnish Nation*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 85 (Helsinki: SKS, 2004), pp. 114–17. The usage of the mother metaphor in this connection is rather exceptional, as

nation bestowed on its youth. Parents dominated their offspring in reality and in collective fantasy.

In addition to a vast amount of research dealing with the destructive elements of crises there has also been some incisive research into the dynamic of collective attachment during crises. The collective layers of people's identities are activated in times of shared distress, and personal grievances make room for collective efforts.<sup>102</sup> Wars and conflicts that people feel are justified are able to elicit collectively shared feelings of meaningfulness, which are usually manifested in the common experience of periodical elevation above the everyday existence.<sup>103</sup> As evidenced above, one recurring and rather universal element in societies at war deals with the proper expression of bonds of attachment between compatriots. It may have been Sigmund Freud who formally articulated for the first time in his treatise on mass psychology that group cohesion excludes intimate relationships between couples, especially when the "group" faces external threat.<sup>104</sup> In practice, however, the experience of strong group cohesion that sanctions individual relationship is presumably as old as human civilization. One example from the history preceding the Finnish Civil War could be the German practices during the Napoleonic Wars, when the German states financed the war effort by collecting married couples' wedding rings for the benefit of the collective.<sup>105</sup>

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Finland is predominantly called a "fatherland" and the female personification, the Finnish Maiden, had already been rather established since the latter half of the 19th century. However, historians cited above have pointed out that during crises such as the Civil War and World War II, these traditional metaphors have been supplemented with a mother image on the one hand and that of a young man on the other. On gendered male discourses of the Civil War, see Anders Ahlbäck's chapter in this volume.

102 Theoretically, see Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), pp. 196–204, 456–64; empirically with critical insights, see Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914–1916* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), pp. 10–13, 104–24.

103 Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York: Viking, 2010) writes on the reciprocal empathy that natural and man-induced disasters elicit in various communities; Kivimäki & Tepora, "War of Hearts," pp. 292–95.

104 Sigmund Freud, *Massenpsychologie un Ich-Analyse* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1921).

105 Veli-Matti Syrjö, "Kultasormuksen tarina," in Jari Leskinen & Antti Juutilainen, eds, *Talvisodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1999), pp. 714–17.

Obviously, the experience of group attachment did not seem to be strong enough naturally, because men and women of letters made explicit efforts to raise it. The youth did not automatically behave according to the demands posed by the society, or the “old men.” Kianto was not the only one who in 1918 felt ambiguously about the youth and lamented on the fantasized threat posed by intimate, sexualized relationships among adolescent. Liberal-minded Eino Leino, a poet laureate in Finland, had stayed in Red Helsinki during the war. A man in his forties, of the same age as Kianto, he felt being old in the youthful atmosphere of the revolution and ensuing Civil War. Moreover, in his published diary from the war months, Leino harbored resentment towards young people – regardless of their allegiance – who publicly showed mutual attraction on the streets of the capital while they, thought the poet, should had been “looking after the future of the fatherland or the development of the world revolution.”<sup>106</sup>

The White rhetoric forcefully connected under-aged boys and sacrifice. But it was far from being only rhetoric. Youngsters sacrificed for the White and the Red effort as much in the battle and the execution grounds as in the graphic rhetoric of the press. Teenage boys, and a small number of teenage girls on the Red side, formed a major portion of the troops on both sides of the conflict and about one-fourth of the casualties. Among the motives for their enlistment was “selfish” desire for adventure and “selfless” patriotic fever as well as strong peer pressure. We should perhaps use the term “revolutionary fervor” when referring to the Red motivation, although “revolution” and the “national cause” were far from being mutually exclusive in the socialist self-understanding. Wages probably seduced many working-class youngsters to the Red side in southern Finland, where the Guards were an important employer during economic hardship. In the later phase of the war, when both sides resorted to drafts, the unwillingness of many of the draftees became visible.

In addition to the romantic, quasi-religious, and tribal expressions of blood sacrifice, the adventurous qualities reminiscent of boys’ adventure literature remained popular. Kyösti Wilkuna wrote in his diary: “It is a pleasure to see and listen to some rosy-cheeked fifteen and sixteen-year-old boys eyes glowingly telling about their participation in the clash.”<sup>107</sup>

The White publicity celebrated self-sacrificial and daring boys. The boy-warrior myths may have been created for propaganda purposes during the Civil War, but as Juha Siltala has demonstrated, the patriotic and self-sacrificial ethos had long been present among Finns. Siltala has further convincingly

<sup>106</sup> Leino, *Helsingin valloitus*, p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> Kunnas, *Kansalaissodan kirjalliset rintamat*, p. 125.

argued that the psychology beneath the discourses of youthful sacrifice pointed towards collectively shared guilt of one's selfish materialism during the era of Russification policies and World War I. Sacrificial fantasies alleviated the social turmoil by adding an elevated and immaterial component to the heated struggles in 1917–18. As described in the beginning of this chapter, selfless idealism and materialism were perpetually set against each other in public discourses when the adversaries fermented the conflict in the fall of 1917, and both sides accused each other of concentrating on the advancement of their personal interests or political group interests. The crumbling of society had damaged the bonds – or belief in the bonds – between fellow citizens, and the uncertainty of the future added to the collectively shared need to rally around the flag and construct clear-cut images of the enemy. According to Siltala's psychoanalytic description, the Whites and the Reds mirrored each other. They controlled and destroyed their own undesirable qualities in the opponent. The quarreling parties tried to substitute the honor of selfless struggle for the shameful attachment to selfish desires, be they "working-class anarchy" or "bourgeois tyranny." The selflessness and the innocence both sides ascribed to the still-uncorrupted youth seemed to offer emotional solace and a way out of the miserable impasse. We, the grown-ups, have failed in resolving the crisis; perhaps the youth will liberate us from this misery, went the rather irrational rationale.<sup>108</sup>

Psychological insights aside, it is a widely documented phenomenon that the significance of the youth in public imagination and propaganda increases in times of crisis and social change. Instances abound in global history, when not only totalitarian movements but also societies of various compositions have looked for encouragement and enforcement from their youth. The Finnish case was not an isolated event in this regard. The early 20th century was a period of youth in European history. The population structures in societies were young, and adolescence as a separate age category between childhood and adulthood had only recently begun to emerge. Child labor had declined and given way to schooling also in lower classes. This added to the expectations that adult society harbored in their youth – adolescence became an aspiring age of the *spes patriae*, the "hopes of the fatherland," which was the phrase popularly associated with students in Finland. Both emerging and established national movements adopted the adolescent as an integral part of their mission. In newly formed national polities such as Finland, the youth paralleled the youngness of the nation itself, and after the declaration of

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108 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 355–429.

independence and the Civil War, they represented the youngness of the sovereign republic.

In early 20th-century Finnish discourse, the youth stood for emancipation and life force, albeit with ambiguities. The youth to whom innocence was ascribed were vulnerable to social vices.<sup>109</sup> The other side of the coin of the energetic young men and women in early 20th-century national pedagogy and emerging youth organizations was the fear that adolescent citizens posed a threat to the social structure if they not been properly socialized and educated. The organic metaphor of a physically viable nation became popular in Europe, and the healthy, able, and selfless youth came to be seen as the best guarantor of the nation's future.<sup>110</sup>

Before closing this chapter, a few concluding remarks on the intricate relationship between notions of sacrifice, the youth, and the national experiences and images should defend their place. The victors' press understood the War of Liberation as a national rite of passage, an epic battle with transformative qualities. Likewise, modern adolescence is a liminal phase between childhood and adulthood. Military historians have pointed out that frontline experiences share some characteristics with coming of age rites, even as modern warfare does not prepare young men and women for full membership or citizenship of the society; quite the contrary. The battle experience and the front as a distinct space are detached from ordinary and everyday life. The secret knowledge akin to the coming-of-age rites forged on the front line remains hidden from members of the home front.<sup>111</sup> Youth around the age of consent form the core of the military, and they volunteer, are drafted or conscripted, and are sent over to the front to fight and sacrifice for the elderly of the community. Thus, theoretically thinking, it is possible to characterize modern warfare as a peculiar kind of generational violence<sup>112</sup> that aims to communicate socially meaningful

<sup>109</sup> Ala, *Suomi-neito*.

<sup>110</sup> Giovanni Levi & Jean-Claude Schmitt, eds, *History of Young People in the West*, vol. II: *Stormy Evolution to Modern Times*, 1994, trans. by Carol Volk (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997); Jukka Relander, "Äidinkullat partiossa: Suomalaisen partiopojan psykohistoria," in Jorma Sipilä & Arto Tiihonen, eds, *Miestä rakennetaan, maskuliinisuuksia puretaan* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 1994); Tuomas Tepora, "Elää ja kuolla lipun puolesta: Suomen lippu uhrisymbolina ensimmäisessä tasavallassa," in Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2006), pp. 102–04; Tepora, "Redirecting Violence," p. 163; see also Anders Ahlbäck's chapter in this volume.

<sup>111</sup> Leed, *No Man's Land*, pp. 72–75.

<sup>112</sup> Sari Näre, "'Päin ryssä!': Lapset ja nuoret sukupolviväkivallan uhreina," in Sari Näre & Jenni Kirves, eds, *Ruma sota: Talvi- ja jatkosodan vaiettu historia* (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga, 2008).

knowledge to the youth by exposing them to the hardships of the front and, thereby, force them to sacrifice for the community. The socially meaningful knowledge in this regard is that sacrifice is a necessary element of group cohesion and that the youth are required to prove their loyalty by submitting to the power of the elderly. Paradoxically, if society fails to ascribe fruitful meaning to the war, the young soldiers may learn that the essence of sacrifice is finally nothing but pure violence and that, moreover, this violence is ultimately exercised by their own community against their own youth. Is this the “secret knowledge” communicated in the trenches? Therefore, we may think that once the youths mature and take their positions in the social hierarchy, they are caught in the cycle of generational violence, this time as perpetrators – although some of them might have rebelled and turned against the prevailing establishment.

During an armed conflict, this ultimately enforced submission has fatal consequences unless, of course, the sacrifice is given voluntarily and the nature of wartime violent sacrifice remains “disguised” as self-sacrifice.<sup>113</sup> The politics of memory utilizes the concept of self-sacrifice in national narratives of war and battle, although the reality of the sacrificial experiences is more complex. There are occasions, however, when willing sacrifice is genuine. In the Finnish Civil War, the actual experience of self-sacrifice and the constructed memory of self-sacrifice more than occasionally coincided after the war. It goes without saying, though, that this does not lead us to the conclusion that all of the sacrifices in 1918 were voluntary. It only means that the myth understood as a condensed, elevating, and transformative experience was often closer to the contemporaneous experience than the myth understood as a constructed and politically instrumental falsification of the reality. Nevertheless, the time and space for the latter began shortly after the war.

The shared mythical characteristics between the coming-of-age rites and the transforming power of warfare did not go unnoticed among contemporaries. We have discussed at length the wartime rhetoric and various Christian and communal notions of sacrifice, but analysis of the significance of the youth points us further in the direction of a rather concrete and corporeal experience of regeneration in connection with the events of 1918. The publicly disseminated fantasies about the regenerating power of the youthful sacrifice may very well transcend their rhetorical or discursive value. Many people, at least when the Whites were concerned, truly identified themselves with the sacrifice of the teenage soldiers and the rebirth of the Finnish nation. So did many of the young soldiers who volunteered – admittedly often under peer

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113 Marvin & Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice*, pp. 73–78.

pressure – to join the Guards. Juha Siltala has written about schoolboys who naively rushed into colors just like many war-elevated young men in August 1914 in Europe – and who subsequently fell in accordance with romantic oneness with the nation.<sup>114</sup> In effect, the fallen boys became revered and idolized heroes after the war and, without a question, precious pieces of propaganda that effectively romanticized the dying and emphasized the brutality of the Reds.<sup>115</sup>

It should be noted, though, that in line with the enthusiasm experienced especially among the educated youth in August 1914 in Europe, the Finnish bourgeois schoolboys and university students ascribed themselves in the beginning of the war the task of liberating the nation from egotism and the spoils of the modern, material world.<sup>116</sup> Their enthusiasm for war may have been prescribed at school and grounded on romantic masculine ideals, influenced by peer-pressure and also a collective counter reaction to fear of the enemy, but in any case it was a psychologically truthful experience of elation – the face of battle probably changed their views, but the glorified narrative did not leave any room for traumatic experiences. As for the Red side, the preserved self-testimonies on the idealism of youths are rare, but it is probable that the workers' cause elated them as well and that somewhat similar incentives existed.

As it is, the pre-war fantasy of innocent, asexual youth who would salvage the nation and the “grown-ups” from their selfish deeds and thoughts became a bloody reality and morbidly made the (White) nation bloom. Namely, the archetypal value of the self-sacrificial ethos of the adolescence became one of the cornerstones of the Finnish interwar nationalism and the cult of the War of Liberation, which aimed to continue the wartime ethos in the wake of the conflict. This war myth mixed quasi-religious propaganda and actual war experiences, and it was far from a uniquely Finnish phenomenon, as European history of the first half of the 20th century professes.<sup>117</sup>

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114 Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria*, pp. 367.

115 Elsa Hästesko, ed., *Sankaripoikia: Vapausodassamme kaatuneiden alaikäisten muistoksi*, vols I–III (Hämeenlinna: Karisto, 1918–19).

116 Verhey, *Spirit of 1914*, pp. 101–02; see also Juha Siltala's chapter in this volume.

117 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).



## Summary

This chapter demonstrated the significance of sacrificial thought and images for both of the adversaries in the Civil War. For the Whites, sacrifice for the nation became such a focal notion that it often neared a means in itself. The Reds celebrated selflessness and sacrifice for the workers' cause, which they in fact equated with "the people" or the real nation without idealist middle-class images. The socialist idea of sacrifice, however, relied more heavily on compensation and vengeance, the victimization of the Whites. Large segments of the middle-class press, in contrast, imagined the socialists as being only puppets of Russian Bolsheviks – or plainly being Russians – and thus helped to justify an "ethnic cleansing" of the socialists in the wake of the war. However, the nature of the conflict as a Civil War rather than a War of Liberation never totally escaped the comprehension of the White population. The writers and poets in the service of the war effort, and on the socialist side the journalists, performed a key role in rallying people around the flag and disseminating propaganda that, a considerable part of which sprang from contemporaneous experiences and fantasies but certainly included elements of deliberate falsification as well.

Christian sacrificial symbolism held an important position in the White rhetoric and in the funerals, and the socialists utilized it as well in a secularized form. Religion formed a traditional script for interpretations, but the collective, national, and psychological aspects are perhaps more important for understanding the sacrificial ethos. Both sides emphasized collectivity, the fatherland, or the revolution. The Reds established a cult of revolutionary heroes who sacrificed for the freedom of the people, whereas the Whites celebrated specifically the young, innocent blood spilled for the sovereignty of the young nation. The celebration of the youth denoted that immaterial idealism had surpassed selfish materialism and that the war would purge the nation of destructive elements. Moreover, the national, or "tribal," notions of sacrifice gave the Whites an important layer of thought that rooted their sacrificial images in national mythology that was not only past but also very present. In fact, contemporaries experienced the War of Liberation as a myth in the making. Finally, and in a reference to the themes in the forthcoming chapters, for all the selflessness and idealism seen in one's own side, it is interesting that the rather benevolent and inclusive ideas of pre-World War I Finnish middle-class nationalism changed, due to the Civil War, into militarism and exclusivity in the interwar period.

## Women at War

*Tiina Lintunen*

The short but raw Civil War in Finland in 1918 engaged women as well as men. Women on both sides worked in maintenance troops. In addition, women on the Red side served as combatants as well. Approximately 2000 armed women operated as guardians and soldiers. Their participation triggered intense emotional reactions in the White *and* Red camps. Especially the right wing found this military activity reprehensible. Women who engaged in the battles acted against the set expectations for their gender and were punished severely after the war. Beyond the sentences given in the court, the women were also confronted with moral condemnation by the surrounding White society. The winners considered that women had acted disgracefully and thus regarded them as ineligible citizens. All the rebels were seen as traitors, but after the war the (White) public opinion judged female soldiers more sternly than male soldiers. Other Red women were despised as well. By “Red women” I refer to those women who actively supported the Red Guards. Their support was shown in several ways, which will be discussed later in this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this chapter is to examine women’s different roles in the Finnish Civil War and explain why some of those roles were seen as so unpalatable. This chapter also seeks to address the following questions: what was the ideal image of woman maintained by the Whites on the eve of the Civil War; and how did the Red women fit into this image? what were the consequences? how did the Reds themselves react to the arming of women? And, finally, women’s military activity will be compared to women’s participation in revolts in other European countries during and after World War I. In the pages that follow, it will be argued that Finnish Red women had very much in common with their sisters in Russia, Germany, Hungary, and Spain.

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1 Equally, the term “White women” will be used to refer to women who supported the Civil Guards.

## Women's Standing and the Expectations of Society

Both Whites and Reds accepted women's participation in the war, provided that they were acting in nursing and maintenance duties. When women exhibited interest in actual fighting, they were rejected, as fighting was regarded definitely as a male occupation. The rejection was a natural consequence of the prevailing conception of the ideal gender roles.<sup>2</sup>

According to the conservative viewpoint, in the beginning of the 20th century, the woman's natural operational environment was the home. Home was considered the basic unit of the society, which had an important role in maintaining the morality of the nation.<sup>3</sup> Given the spirit of the time, women were not supposed to work outside the home.

Nevertheless, the position of Finnish women differed greatly from that of women in traditional patriarchal societies, where women's duty was to be *la perfecta casada*, a perfect housewife, who obeyed the husband and were dominated by their partner. Finnish women did not fit in this picture. This resulted from the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century, Finland was an agricultural country where nearly 90 per cent of the population still lived the rural life, and women participated in the hard work in the farms. Tending cattle was often their job, and especially in the small crofts they also worked in the fields. On a smallholding, the work contribution of the both spouses was vital, and they worked side by side. In addition to the independent and tenant farmers, there was also a large group of landless people, men and women, who were agricultural laborers.<sup>4</sup> Irma Sulkunen writes that the "subjection of women" was not a dominant feature of the old agrarian social order, instead the gender relations were understood as one and indivisible in accordance with the collective concept of man.<sup>5</sup> There was division of work between the sexes in the agrarian culture also, but it did not produce antagonism in the gender

2 Tiina Lintunen, "Punaiset naiset aikansa naiskuvan haastajina," in Erkka Railo & Ville Laamanen, eds, *Suomi muuttuvassa maailmassa: Ulkosuhteiden ja kansallisen itseymmärryksen historiaa* (Helsinki: Edita, 2010), p. 115.

3 Anne Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee ... Marttajärjestö suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa vuoteen 1939*, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia, 173 (Helsinki: SHS, 1993), pp. 30–31.

4 Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee*, p. 62; Ann-Catrin Östman, "Kvinnorna och åkerbruksarbetet: Om det gemensamma arbetets betydelse," in Marjatta Rahikainen & Tarja Räisänen, eds, *Työllä ei oo kukkaan rikastunna": Naisten töitä ja toimeentulokeinoja 1800- ja 1900-luvulla* (Helsinki: SKS, 2001), p. 77.

5 Irma Sulkunen, "The Mobilisation of Women and the Birth of Civil Society," in Merja Manninen & Päivi Setälä, eds, *The Lady with the Bow: The Story of Finnish Women* (Helsinki: Otava, 1990), p. 45.

system. Moreover, the sexes were seen as complementary, and it was held that a partnership existed between the sexes. This was a radical interpretation of equality, rather uncommon even in a European context.<sup>6</sup>

During industrialization, the idea of the family slowly changed. In the countryside, extended families lived under the same roof and worked together. However, as people were forced to migrate to cities in search of work, this arrangement was changing; in towns there were new nuclear families, which consisted only of the father, mother, and children. In this new model, the father worked outside the home and the mother minded the house and home as well as the children. Due to his absence, the father lost the absolute authority he had had over his wife and children. Also, the educational responsibility over the family shifted from father to mother. As a matter of fact, women were now reckoned to be the moral educators of the next generation. Middle-class women's organizations propagated this model of the ideal family and ideal motherhood also to the lower classes. They suggested that women's national duty was to raise the children to become exemplary and patriotic citizens.<sup>7</sup>

The middle classes saw that women could practice this ideal of caring motherhood on two levels. First, the representatives of traditional motherhood were the mothers who gave birth and raised their children at home. This was the woman's most important duty. Second, women could and also should pursue their nurturing and caring traits at the level of the so-called societal motherhood. This could be executed, for example, by acting as a nurse or a teacher or some other similar extension of maternal tasks.<sup>8</sup> However, these professions were thought to be suitable for single women only, and employment was thought to be only a phase between childhood and motherhood. The same division of work was seen in the governance. Education and welfare were the fields in which women were allowed to participate and utilize their "natural

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6 Irma Sulkunen, "Suffrage, Nation and Citizenship – The Finnish Case in an International Context," in Irma Sulkunen et al., eds, *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 100–01.

7 Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee*, pp. 56–61. See also Lintunen, "Punaiset naiset," pp. 116–17.

8 Johanna Annola, *Äiti, emäntä, virkanainen, vartija: Köyhäntalojen johtajattaret ja yhteiskunnallinen äitiys 1880–1918* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, 2011), pp. 15–16; Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee*, pp. 141–43; Kaarina Vattula, "Palvelustyöstä konttoristiin – naisten työhönohallistuminen 1880–1940," in Yrjö Kaukiainen et al., eds, *När samhället förändras – Kun yhteiskunta muuttuu* (Helsinki: SHS, 1981), p. 89.

facilities.” The so-called hard spheres, such as economics, were reserved exclusively for men.<sup>9</sup>

Women had gained new civil rights in Finland, as they also were enfranchised in 1906. Nevertheless, in some questions they were still under the authority of their husbands. For instance, women were not entitled to work without the permission of the husband. Thus, single women were in a special position, as they were justified in earning their living and given autonomy to decide about it. The women’s movement declared that individualization seldom occurred if a woman got married. The small group of early women’s rights activists saw that women were so confined with the family and husband that the only way to be independent was to withdraw totally from domesticity.<sup>10</sup> The majority of women, though, did not prefer independence but shared the conservative values and wanted to start a family.

According to middle-class views, men were supposed to be the sole supporters of the families, but in low-income working families, the women also had to do their bit in order to get food on the table. This responsibility was shared in the working population in the countryside as well as in towns. When the children were small, the mother often worked as a laundress, cleaner, or seamstress, which enabled a combination of work and childcare.<sup>11</sup> In the 1910s, the situation changed in towns: married women increasingly began to work in factories, shops, and bureaus as the social structure was slowly developing.<sup>12</sup>

To summarize, the middle class had certain expectations that were set for women. Motherhood was the most important duty a woman could have and devote herself to. These expectations did not reflect reality in working-class families, but they certainly explain a great deal about White reactions to female combatants during the Civil War.

9 Ollila, *Suomen kotien päivä valkenee*, p. 143.

10 Riitta Jallinoja, *Suomalaisen naisasialiikkeen taistelukaudet: Naisasialiike naisten elämäntilanteen muutoksen ja yhteiskunnallis-aatteellisen murroksen heijastajana* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1983), p.251.

11 Marjatta Rahikainen, “Naiset näkyvät Suomessa tekevän vaikka mitä,” in Marjatta Rahikainen & Tarja Räisänen, eds, *Työllä ei oo kukkaan rikastunna”: Naisten töitä ja toimeentulokeinoja 1800- ja 1900-luvulla* (Helsinki: SKS, 2001), p. 29; Sulkunen, “Suffrage, Nation and Citizenship,” pp. 100–01.

12 Maria Lähteenmäki, *Mahdollisuuksien aika: Työläisnaiset ja yhteiskunnan muutos 1910–30-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: SHS, 1995), p. 29.

## The Roles of Women in the War

Women were not just bystanders during the Civil War. Obviously, women's physical location determined the prospects of their activities. Since the country was divided in two, the crucial factor was on which side one was left. Women supporting the Whites were able to act and travel more freely in White Finland, but in the southern parts of the country, they could assist the White Army only in secret and on a smaller-scale.<sup>13</sup> The same applied to the Red women: on their own side they were openly able to promote the Revolution.

Women's various roles are introduced in the following sections, and it will be demonstrated that White women were more traditional in their actions, whereas Red women broke down gender barriers.

From the very beginning of the war, women were seen as supporters of the Civil Guards and, later, the White Army. They took on the traditional woman's role in maintenance. Some White women had had practice already before the war while maintaining the Jägers, heading to Germany to receive military training. White women's maintaining role widened in fall 1917 when local Civil Guards were gradually constituted and needed provisioning for their military training. Local women's departments were usually established in the Guard as sections of their own.<sup>14</sup>

As a consequence of the spontaneous local activity, women were inadequately organized as the war began. They continued to maintain the troops of their hometowns and villages to the best of their ability, but there was no coordination in their actions. The situation changed for the better when the army maintenance department (*Intendentuurilaitos*) was founded in February 1918.<sup>15</sup> After a period of a few weeks, the department saw the great potential in the existing women's associations, such as the Martta Association.<sup>16</sup> Maintenance

13 Mirva Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä: Valkoiset naiset Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Helsingin yliopisto, 2002), p. 23; Tiina Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), p. 281.

14 Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," p. 280; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 19–20.

15 Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," pp. 280–81; Annika Latva-Äijö, *Lotta Svärdin synty – järjestö, armeija, naiseus 1918–1928* (Helsinki: Otava, 2004), pp. 49–50; Annika Latva-Äijö, *Lotta Svärdin synty: Naisten maanpuolustusliikkeen käynnistyminen ja kehitys valtakunnalliseksi järjestöksi 1918–1924* (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 2001), pp. 26–27; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 24–25.

16 The Martta, or "Martha," Association was founded in 1899 to educate women in home economics. Its specific goal was to promote mental and physical welfare in the homes.

department started to centralize the war efforts of the home front around these non-socialist societies, which already had functional organizations and could assist the maintenance system effectively. These groups also mobilized a great number of new members who wanted to support the Civil Guards.<sup>17</sup> Gradually, women's duties were organized more practically, and five main tasks became recognized. These were medical treatment, provisioning, accommodation, preparing equipment, and education.<sup>18</sup>

One of the most visible groups of the White supporting women was nurses. The nursing staff of the White Army contained two kinds of members. There were experienced, trained nurses as well as people who had had only a short course on basic bandaging and first aid. Most of the professional nurses continued to work at the municipal hospitals where they had been employed before the war, and they treated the wounded there. At the beginning of the war, severely injured soldiers were transported to the hospitals in the rear, but relatively soon this arrangement proved to be unbearable, and field hospitals had to be established. Hence, nurses were needed both in the rear and at the front. The need for medics was so acute that the crash-course trained nursing assistants were much welcomed. There were also nurses who followed the Civil Guard troops of their domicile to the front line. This kind of work at the battlefields was not only dangerous but also physically and mentally draining. The difficulty of the task was increased by shortages of medicine and proper equipment.<sup>19</sup>

The nurses also had other duties beyond medical tasks. For example, they helped transfer patients from field hospitals to war hospitals, wrote letters to the relatives of the wounded, cooked, fed the patients, patched and washed clothes, and assisted in every other necessary task.<sup>20</sup>

Another important and visible section, which also suffered from the shortage of decent equipment and supplies, was the catering. Because there usually was no proper field kitchen apparatus, the canteens had to be set up behind the front line where the troops were centralized. Houses and smaller cottages served as galleys, and when there was no settlement, women prepared the meals outside in large pots. Thus, the cold winter weather severely hindered

17 Jallinoja, *Suomalaisen naisasialiikkeen taistelukaudet*, 115; Latva-Äijö, *Lotta Svärdin syntä -järjestö*, p. 49.

18 Anna Sahlsten, "Keski-Savo," in Hilja Riipinen, Helmi Arneberg-Pentti, & Jenny af Forselles, eds, *Valkoinen kirja* (Helsinki: Lotta Svärd yhdistys, 1928), p. 302.

19 Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," p. 282; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 28–29.

20 Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, p. 29; Signe Strömborg, "Pohjanmaan ruotsalainen alue," in *Valkoinen kirja*, pp. 200–202.



provisioning early in the war. The shortage of food supplies hampered catering even more, and in February, rations had to be precisely regulated. The women at the front felt the war tangibly. They worked amidst firing rifles and machine guns. Even though women's work was dangerous, there were, surprisingly, only around a dozen fatalities. One thing that kept the death toll that low was the shortage of artillery.<sup>21</sup>

Even if women did not die at the front line, they faced death anyhow. One of the hardest auxiliary missions that women performed was the preparation of the fallen soldiers for the last journey back home. Women cleaned the bodies from blood and dirt and bandaged the gaping wounds. The fallen were placed into coffins, and the worst signs of violence were veiled with sheets and flowers. Thus, they tried to ease the pain of the relatives when they saw the deceased.<sup>22</sup> Tending the grotesque bodies was nerve-shattering. One of the women described her experiences:

Only by becoming rational we could contain our feelings. Bloody, soiled heads, half-opened eyes reflecting terror, mouths with horrible twisted smiles [...] – only sleeping medicine could dismiss these memories for the nights that followed.<sup>23</sup>

According to Mirva Ilvonen, women who worked in the front line had motherly feelings towards the soldiers. Women were not allowed to attend the battles, but instead they could do their share by spreading the spirit of home for the soldiers and taking care of them like mothers should do. This attitude was precisely what the middle-class female ideal required from a woman. Thus, the women actualized the societal motherhood while working at the front.<sup>24</sup> Ilvonen's primary sources consist of memoirs of White supporting women collected by the Lotta Svärd Organization<sup>25</sup> in the late 1920s for a publication. This women's voluntary, auxiliary, paramilitary organization was tied to the Civil Guards and strove to cultivate this maternal image of the White women. One

21 During the Civil War, approximately 850 women died, 46 of whom were Whites. Only eight of them were killed for certain while working as nurses and cooks at the front. Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 25–26, 95; Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," p. 282.

22 Jenny af Forselles, "Helsinki," in *Valkoinen kirja*, pp. 519–520; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 83–84.

23 Jenny af Forselles, "Helsinki," p. 520.

24 Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, pp. 27, 85–86.

25 The Lotta Svärd Organization was officially formed in 1921 but started to form effectively already during the Civil War.

could presume that they also chose those memoirs to be published which emphasize this aspect. After the war, the Lotta Svärd leaders did stress that a *lotta's* work is societal maternal love.<sup>26</sup>

Not all the women confined themselves to maintenance work or possessed only maternal, nurturing feelings. Some White women were willing to carry weapons and fight like men. In the provinces of Ostrobothnia and Savonia, women negotiated for military training. They were promised training if they could gather enough eligible women. There were articles in newspapers where women encouraged each other to grab this opportunity, as this one published in Vaasa:<sup>27</sup>

Don't we have the right to sacrifice our own lives, our own strength, how small they ever are, for the nation that we so deeply love. [...] In Haapavesi our sisters already practice, in Oulu they are organizing their platoon, why should Vaasa stay behind?<sup>28</sup>

The leadership of the Whites disapproved this initiative strongly, and General Mannerheim denied women's right to fight, stressing that he expected their help in women's traditional duties:

I expect help from the Finnish women for the various dreadful needs of the army like nursing, making clothes, taking care of the home and comforting those who have lost their loved ones. Whereas armed fighting at the front I regard as an exclusive privilege and duty of a man.<sup>29</sup>

The White newspapers supported Mannerheim's views and strongly disapproved the women's initiatives. The organ of the White Government, *Valkoinen Suomi* ("White Finland"), declared women battalions as repulsive phenomena, which would do more harm than good.<sup>30</sup> Not only men but also women's organizations objected to some of the women's desire to go to war. Many stressed that women should not bother men in their duties "by doing something that *we are not grown into* and where all the circumstances are against us."<sup>31</sup> This

26 Kaarle Sulamaa, *Lotta Svärd – Uskonto ja isänmaa* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1999), p. 80.

27 Latva-Äijö, *Lotta Svärdin synty – järjestö*, p. 54.

28 *Ilkka* 6 March 1918.

29 Hannu Soikkanen, *Kansalaissota dokumentteina*, vol. 2: *Valkoista ja punaista sanankäyttöä v. 1917–1918* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1969), p. 205.

30 *Valkoinen Suomi* 10 March 1918.

31 *Valkoinen Suomi* 16 March 1918.



FIGURE 6.1 *The White Army did not accept armed women in its ranks, although Norwegian doctor and White volunteer Harald Natvig seems to have run into an exception. Anna Myllymäki, a “Finnish Amazon,” read the original caption.*

PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

phrase demonstrates that it was a question of old customs and roles. It was obvious that, according to public opinion, the roles should stay unchanged.

After Mannerheim's manifesto, women's military plans came to a sudden end. All recruitment activities ceased, and women concentrated again on the auxiliary tasks that Mannerheim had set out for them. Only a few exceptional women continued with their intentions to get to the front line to fight. But these were only sporadic cases; the organizing phase was over. Official sentiment strongly forbade women's arming. The White Army adopted the attitudes of the time that it is not appropriate for a woman to wage an armed fight; she should instead send her husband and son to do it for her.<sup>32</sup>

Women were harnessed to the White supporting work also at the home front. Newspapers declared that women's duty was to defend the nation by contributing to the work of the Civil Guards. One of the auxiliary tasks that could be done in both White and Red Finland was making clothes and accoutrements. In White Finland, women's sewing departments typically gathered at schools or other appropriate public places. In some cases, they also worked at factories. For example, in Kuopio, women began to manufacture backpacks and cartridge belts for the army in a shoe factory. Material for the sewing clubs came mostly from the White Army. Apart from that, many women used fabric

32 Lintunen, “Naiset sodassa,” p. 283; Latva-Äijö, *Lotta Svärdin synty – järjestö*, pp. 55–57.

and wool of their own, and there were also fund-raising advertisements in the newspapers asking for money and material donations. Clearly, in Red-occupied Finland, White women could not support the Civil Guards openly. Instead, they had to sew and knit garments secretly at home and hide them in case of a house search.<sup>33</sup> One should bear in mind that the winter of 1918 was very cold; hence, the need for warm garments was substantial, and women's efforts were crucial.

In addition to the clothes and accoutrements, the seamstresses had other important needlework: flags for the Civil Guards. According to Tuomas Tepora, the flag was a symbolic weapon that obliged the young soldiers to honor it with their behavior and defend all the ideals that maintained the social order.<sup>34</sup> The socially powerful flags were important in soldiers' funerals, parades, and functions.<sup>35</sup> If the flags were inspiring for the men, they also inspired their creators. In the spirit of resistance, women sewed flags in the occupied territories. In Pori in Satakunta, for example, it is described how women made the flag "in the days of oppression, while the Red machine guns were firing on the roof and Red riflemen were guarding on each corridor"<sup>36</sup> and handed it ceremoniously over to the White troops after the takeover of the town. The flag-making was considered an honor, which women tried to achieve. Flag-makers were respected like the mythical Betsy Ross, the first American flag-maker who was honored as the mother of the country.<sup>37</sup>

Another mission the White women had in Red Finland was smuggling. Two active groups stood out in these missions: representatives of the Women's Kagal, and secondary-school graduates. The Women's Kagal was founded in the first years of the 20th century to supplement the male Kagal, a secret society that opposed perceived Russification policies. Its field of operation was mainly fund-raising and the distribution of forbidden nationalist political

33 Lintunen, "Naiset sodassa," p. 282; Suoma Kyykoski, "Kuopio ja Pohjois-Savo," in *Valkoinen kirja*, pp. 343–45; Irene Mendelin, "Keski-Suomi," in Hilja Riipinen, Helmi Arneberg-Pentti, and Jenny af Forselles, eds, *Valkoinen kirja* (Helsinki: Lotta Svärd yhdistys, 1928), pp. 360–62; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, p. 33; Tyyne Söderström, "Satakunta," in *Valkoinen kirja*, p. 446.

34 Tuomas Tepora, *Lippu, uhri, kansakunta: Ryhmäkokemukset ja -rajat Suomessa 1917–1945* (Helsinki: Yliopistopaino, 2011), p. 98.

35 Mendelin, "Keski-Suomi," p. 362; see Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War" in this volume.

36 Söderström, "Satakunta," p. 441.

37 Carolyn Marvin & David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation. Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 56–57.

newspapers.<sup>38</sup> During the Civil War, some former members of the Kagal carried on similar tasks, smuggling political leaflets and books, medicine, clothes, and guns. Also, young graduates took daring journeys, and some of them got caught and were imprisoned.<sup>39</sup> The girls that smuggled guns seemed to be luckier:

The crime that most often took young women, mostly young graduates, behind the bars was the distribution of the White educational literature in the working-class quarters. Fortune favored more the ones who smuggled the guns and ammunition, for as far as I know none of those women who carried weapons in order to liberate their country got caught. It was hard to move, for example, when the long barrels of the rifles that were bound together were hanging on the shoulders and they hit your legs with every step you took. But luckily long, straight and very loose coats were á la mode at the time and due to the shortage of food the figures inside the coats had become very slender.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, there were incidents where these young gunrunners were nearly revealed but were saved by a good luck:

Helvi got herself into deep trouble a couple of times. Once she was walking along the Boulevard with another “gun sister,” Miss S., both of them packed rigidly [with rifles], when Miss S. fell on her back on the icy ground. The bayonets, nearly ten of which were tied on her waist, clanged suspiciously and the rifles kept her body in a straight position so that she could hardly move, even less get up. Helvi herself was so stiff that she could not bend her body to help her. What should one do? Then, as if sent from heaven, a Russian marine officer came from the crowd and bent down to help Miss S. like women usually are helped, lightly with one hand. But that did not help in this case. The officer noticed this and grabbed her from the both shoulders with a proper manly grip and lifted her on her feet.<sup>41</sup>

The war also affected the lives of those women who did not leave their homes or have secret missions. Within the home sphere, for those women whose hus-

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38 The Kagal activity ended in 1905.

39 af Forselles, “Helsinki,” pp. 505–18.

40 af Forselles, “Helsinki,” p. 516.

41 Hilja Valtonen, “Raja-ja Keski-Karjala,” in *Valkoinen kirja*, p. 247.

bands were in the Guards, everyday chores became heavier as they had to take full responsibility for the household. In addition to the work at home, many wives and daughters of White soldiers often participated in maintenance work in their home parish. For instance, cooks were required in areas where the units were practicing or just passing by the villages. In Pori, for example, women fed nearly 2000 passing soldiers daily in April, when the White Army had conquered the town and was proceeding southward.<sup>42</sup> Also, when sad news arrived, women usually played the key role in funeral arrangements, together with the older men. The mourning rituals started with informing the local society about the death of the loved one. Then the practicalities needed doing. White soldiers were often buried with festive ceremony, and a substantial number of people engaged in the obsequies: versions of the nonstandardized national flag or Civil Guard flags led the funeral procession while the dead march or hymns were performed.<sup>43</sup> After the burial, when the practicalities were over, other work began. Women comforted the grieving and helped arrange everyday life for the family without the deceased man. Financially, the White widows were secure, though. The state took charge of the matter and arranged for them first financial support and later pensions that compensate for the loss of the breadwinner.

When the Civil War broke out, the Reds needed women in maintenance as badly as the Whites.<sup>44</sup> Women were recruited to the Red Guards to perform tasks similar to those women performed for the Whites. Advertisements in newspapers called women to work. These jobs in the Red Guards were very sought-after because they paid well; a woman could easily earn twice as much as she did in her post in the factory or as a maidservant, for example. Also, increasing unemployment pushed women to join the Guard. The wage was a significant difference between the White and Red women in auxiliary tasks: the Reds were paid, but the Whites were not. Many of the Red women explained after the war that they considered working for the Red Guard only as a job, not as an ideological, rebellious deed. These statements must, of course, be taken

42 Tyyne Söderström, "Satakunta," in Hilja Riipinen, Helmi Arneberg-Pentti, & Jenny af Forselles, eds, *Vita boken* (Helsinki: Lotta Svärd föreningen, 1928), p. 419. I refer to this Swedish edition of the book because it mentions the number of men and the Finnish edition lacks this information; Ilvonen, *Varustajia, lipuntekijöitä, ruumiinpesijöitä*, p. 25.

43 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, "Kuolema sisällissodassa 1918 & muistamisen ja unohtamisen kysymyksiä," *Elore* (2000): 2, e-publication, <[http://www.elore.fi/arkisto/2\\_00/pe1200.html](http://www.elore.fi/arkisto/2_00/pe1200.html)>, accessed 15 March 2013.

44 This chapter draws from Tiina Lintunen, *Punaisen naisen kuvat: Vuonna 1918 tuomitut Porin seudun punaiset naiset* (Turku: University of Turku, 2006), pp. 35–92; and Tiina Lintunen, "Punaiset naiset," pp. 115–34.

with a grain of salt, as they were given during the preliminary investigations when women were trying to avoid a sentence.

The assignments in provisioning, accommodation, preparing equipment, and nursing were so desired that there was a dispute about who should be entitled to such employment. Younger women became involved in altercations with older ones. In many places, the situation turned to the advantage of the older women, as they were rewarded for their long-term party and workers' association memberships with these well-paid jobs. Due to their political past, they were also thought to be more committed and faithful to the cause.

In several cases, as the factories were confiscated by the Guard, many women transferred from the private sector to the payroll of the Red Guard without any effort of their own. The jobs in the clothing and shoe industries were traditionally dominated by women, and they continued in their old jobs manufacturing outfits for the Red soldiers. The same happened in small dressmaker's shops. Even though the head tailors were usually men, the shops provided employment for numerous seamstresses.

Factory workers and craftswomen were the two biggest women's occupational groups that performed auxiliary tasks in the Red Guard. The third biggest occupational group enrolled in the Red Guard was maidservants. It is not a surprise that many of the women who were employed in a bourgeois household wanted to leave their place as the war broke out. Beyond the better salaries that the Guard provided, ideological grounds as well inspired them to quit. Especially if the men of their family were fighting on the Red side, it was understandable that they did not want to serve in a household that supported the Whites. Sometimes the feeling was mutual; employers did not want to keep servants who openly supported the Reds. In job advertisements it can be seen that sympathetic attitudes towards the Reds was an obstacle for getting the post:

From the 1st day of June onwards or earlier a middle-aged, smart, honest and healthy cook [will be hired]. The applicant must know both fancy and simple cooking, baking and preserving. The applications with certificates, wage claims and other references from previous employers must be addressed to the engineer's wife Hellin Horm, in Kajaani. *Nota bene!* Necessarily white.<sup>45</sup>

Interestingly, the number of housewives employed by the Red Guard was remarkable. While husbands were fighting far away from home, these women

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45 *Keskisuomalainen* 30 April 1918.



needed to secure the livelihood of the family. As the older and married women occupied most of the auxiliary tasks, some young Red women saw a new option in front of them: if they could not assist the men, they would join them as equals on the front line, like Russian women who participated in the Russian revolution. These girls wanted to get military training and learn how to shoot. The initial reaction of the Red administration was a strict prohibition; they shared the bourgeois view that women's place was not in combat but in maintenance. Reds considered it humiliating if there were women in their ranks; it would disgrace the whole revolution. Also, the social democratic women's associations came out against arming women. The Red administration, however, reacted slowly and it did not have the same authority as its counterpart seemed to have on the other side. When the Workers' Council that acted as the revolutionary parliament declared on 2 March 1918 that the women should concentrate on nursing, cooking, clothing, and education, it was far too late. Some women's detachments had already been established, and in Helsinki and Vyborg, for example, women had guards of their own. The Red Government, the Delegation of People's Commissars, had to reconsider the situation, and on 13 March they made a compromise: those women's guards already founded would not be disbanded, but forming the new ones was forbidden.

During the war, there were approximately 2000 female soldiers in the ranks of the Red Guard. The urge to form a women battalion came from the women themselves. This was the case in the town of Tampere, for example, where women had ideological motives and shared a collective enthusiasm to join the Guard. In Tampere, women did not settle for only helping with guard duties but also wanted to engage in the battles. One of the first volunteers wrote in a letter:

Today we were told that the second women's company will not be established before this company has been trained and delivered to the front so that it will be seen if it will do. You see, a new company was supposed to be established on next Monday [18 March] but the headquarters gave another command. You cannot believe how excited I am about going to the front. Even now I am going to go on my watch duty again at 8 o'clock though I just came back from there.<sup>46</sup>

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46 Tuomas Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaarti: Myytit ja todellisuus* (Helsinki: Ajatuskirjat, 2008), p. 72.



FIGURE 6.2 *Red guardswoman Martta Pyrhönen from Vyborg, photographed in March 1918.*  
PHOTO: PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.

Most of the female soldiers were young girls, aged 15 to 20, and many of them joined the Guard together with a friend or an acquaintance. They galvanized each other at the workplace or during leisure time. Joining the revolution was an exciting adventure they wanted to experience. Part of the fun was the military clothing. The practice varied throughout the country, but female units were often given proper uniforms. Proper uniforms meant the same thing as men's trousers. In those days, Finnish women wore either skirts or dresses, never pants. If we bear in mind that it was a very cold winter during the Civil War, these outfits were warm and practical compared to skirts. But, however useful they were, they shocked people. Some girl soldiers also cut their hair short in order to look more like men. Girls enjoyed the impact they made on the passers-by as they rode on horses in their soldierly wear. The flip side of the attention was that their striking performance was well remembered after the war during the hearings.

For instance, young Laura Alanen was brought to justice after the war, and several witnesses remembered her behavior and the glaring outfit. They all had seen this 15-year-old “riding a horse dressed in menswear and her hair loose, in front of the cortege.”<sup>47</sup> Apparently, the sight had been unforgettable.

Even though the girls were eager to join the battles, they were at first used in watch duties so that more men could be released to fighting. Nevertheless, when the Reds found themselves losing the war and started to retreat, they needed all the strength there was available. In those circumstances, women soldiers stepped forward. But the great enthusiasm subsided when it actually was time to fight. In Tampere, for example, 166 women had enrolled in the first company, but only approximately 100 of them stuck together when they were sent to their first encounter.<sup>48</sup> The significance of the female battalions was not relevant for the course of war events. Nevertheless, their meaning and actions were emphasized later in literature in consequence of their anomaly. For example, the commander of the German troops, Major General Rüdiger von der Goltz, described in his memoirs the Finnish female soldiers he had encountered as follows: “There were women wearing pants in the first row, lots of Russian uniforms. The situation was of the utmost seriousness. Hardly have the French attacked as fiercely as did these fanatical defenders of the new canon of barbarity.”<sup>49</sup> The female soldiers were breaking the gender boundaries in several ways. First, killing was a masculine deed, whereas women were supposed to preserve life not to destroy it. Second, guns represented power, and in the patriarchal society they belonged in the hand of a man. Third, women were supposed to look feminine. These young girls were challenging the whole prevailing social system and were expressing the revolution even with their clothing.<sup>50</sup>

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47 Provincial Archives of Turku (TMA), Ca1: 204, Court record on 30 June 1921, p. 118, District court of Ulvila jurisdiction.

48 Hoppu, *Tampereen naiskaarti*, pp. 98–99.

49 Rüdiger von der Goltz, *Toimintani Suomessa ja Baltianmaissa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1920), p. 103.

50 Cf. Hungary, where “[r]evolution threatened paternal authority over children as well as the authority of husbands over their wives. These perceived threats were terrifying to conservatives.” See Eliza Ablovatski, “Between Red Army and White Guard: Women in Budapest,” in Nancy W. Wingfield, ed., *Gender and War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), p. 78.

### Female Combatants Elsewhere

The Finnish women had their example in Russia. There had been several “Women’s Battalions of Death” during the October Revolution, which inspired Finns. These women were called to “set an example of self-sacrifice and save Mother Russia,” and the volunteers were actually willing to fight unto death. Their motives to enlist were a combination of reasons, which included patriotism, adventure, desire for glory, and liberation of women’s dreary wartime life. Melissa Stockdale estimates that at least 4000 Russian women enlisted in combat units during the summer of 1917, and an additional 1500–2500 women belonged to smaller local units that did not have formal military approval.<sup>51</sup> These women made a great difference in propaganda. One of the most valuable aspect of women’s armed services was that they could be represented as “even more self-sacrificing and cheerful” than many of the men.<sup>52</sup> The founder of the first women’s battalion, Maria Bochkareva, stated that the number of volunteers was quite irrelevant to her, for “[w]hat was important was to shame the men, and [...] a few women at one place could serve as an example to the entire front.”<sup>53</sup>

In order to bring shame to the men, women had to act irreproachably. They were supposed to be the moral pillars of the whole army, so any kind of sex appeal was seen as a threat to their mission. Therefore, Russian female soldiers were molded to look and act like men. Their hair was cut to stubble, and they were dressed in men’s uniforms. Their leader Bochkareva encouraged them to adopt an abrasive, manly behavior. She told them to smoke and swear and forbade all kinds of flirting with the men. Women were supposed to abandon their womanhood while becoming a soldier. The aim of these extreme regulations was to prevent illicit sexual relationships between male and female soldiers. This target was mostly achieved. Men treated women as comrades and took their military mission more seriously.<sup>54</sup>

The appearance of female soldiers seemed to be an issue elsewhere too. In the early months of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, the republican women soldiers were seen in overalls, carrying rifles. They were highlighted as symbols of

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51 Melissa K. Stockdale “‘My Death for the Motherland Is Happiness’: Women, Patriotism, and Soldiering in Russia’s Great War, 1914–1917,” *The American Historical Review* 109.1 (2004): 78–116, esp. 90–95.

52 Elisabeth A. Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), p. 56.

53 Stockdale, “‘My Death,’” pp. 91–92.

54 Stockdale, “‘My Death,’” pp. 102–03.

the war in order to recruit more people to the battle against fascism. They were valued mostly because of their relevance for the propaganda. Contrary to this aim, the plan backfired against the women and the republicans. The majority despised these women in their prominent outfits, and they were accused of being frivolous coquettes who lacked a true commitment to the antifascist battle.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, also in Germany and Hungary, revolutionary women cut their hair short and created for themselves a new style of clothing after World War I. They did not wear pants but *Reformkleider*, straight-cut dresses that could be worn without a corset. According to Eliza Johnson, conservative observers strongly disapproved of these outfits, which were seen as symbols of a leftist-radical and feminist political worldview. A newspaper reporter described a young girl (accused of aiding and abetting in high treason) as follows:

Despite her youth, Miss Kramer is a fanatical Communist; her behavior during the proceedings made a very poor impression ... In both her appearance and her manner [she is] extremely un-womanly and no political direction is radical enough for this young know-it-all.<sup>56</sup>

She was described unwomanly by her appearance and her behavior. The demonizing of rebellious women as unwomanly, wild, or even bestial was part of the opponents' propaganda.

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55 Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), pp. 52–54. Who was allowed to wear a military uniform was not only a question in revolutionary forces. For example, this issue occurred also in Britain during World War I. Women's voluntary forces, which were organized to serve the nation during the war in Britain, wore khaki uniforms. Their garments caused negative reactions. Scholar Susan R. Grayzel has noted that "those critical of women in khaki regarded the fabric itself as only suitable for those who could have it stained in blood. For women to appropriate it was therefore an insult to the 'real' work of war done by soldiers overseas." Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 193. Hostile attitudes towards women's uniforms softened to a certain extent when the government established the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps to free the men from maintenance to the battlefields. Nevertheless, women in uniforms were labeled as abnormal, and their sexuality and morality were challenged. See Grayzel, *Women's Identities*, pp. 198, 202.

56 Eliza Johnson, "The 'Revolutionary Girl with the Titus-head': Women's Participation in the 1919 Revolutions in Budapest and Munich in the Eyes of their Contemporaries," *Nationalities Papers* 28.3 (2000): 541–50.

### Demons, Heroines, and Saints – Attitudes and Stereotypes

How were the Finnish Red women seen in the eyes of their contemporaries?<sup>57</sup> What picture was drawn of them? The White propaganda effectively molded the image of a Red woman. Four stereotypes of Red women are found in the White propaganda: sisters of free love (nurses), Russian brides (women having affairs with Russian soldiers), tigresses (female soldiers), and sources of evil (Red mothers). With these images they strove to alienate the Red women in the eyes of the Whites. In other words, this sort of war propaganda was used to create an otherness between the adversaries.<sup>58</sup>

In the White newspapers and literature of the time, a clear dichotomy can be seen between the images of the White and Red women. The White women acting in auxiliary tasks were seen as pure and nurturing heroines, whereas the Red women in equivalent tasks were represented as immoral, decadent creatures. This distinction in attitudes can be observed especially with the nurses. The White nurses were described as the embodiments of kindness, who were treated like little sisters. In contrast, Red nurses were defamed as prostitutes. Their reasons for staying at the front were challenged, and it was claimed that nurses on the Red front were there in order to hunt men. The White propaganda made derogatory remarks about them, calling them “sisters of free love.” According to Jaakko Paavolainen, these accusations were strongly exaggerated. And as a matter of fact, there were dances on both sides of the front where alcohol abuse led to riotous behavior and the spread of venereal diseases.<sup>59</sup> The sexual morality of the Red nurses was not the only thing that was questioned; their human dignity was also disputed. It was alleged that Red nurses killed White patients and mutilated their bodies savagely. These allegations have been categorized as a propagandistic myth.

The defaming of women following the military baggage train has a long tradition. Already in the 17th century in Europe, groups of prostitutes used to follow the fighting armies. Their presence shamed all the women who were accompanying the army. Gradually, women following baggage trains were identified as whores. It was implied that their choice to live and travel with

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57 This chapter is mainly based on Tiina Lintunen, “Filthy Whores and Brave Mothers – Women in War Propaganda,” in Marja Vuorinen, ed., *Enemy Images in War Propaganda* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), pp. 15–34.

58 See Juha Siltala’s chapter in this volume.

59 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918*, vol. II: *Valkoinen terrori* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1967), p. 205.

men alone was a sufficient argument for their sexual immorality.<sup>60</sup> The same question of moral reputation came up with the British women in maintenance during World War I. According to Susan Grayzel, the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in Britain seemed to be under intense public scrutiny. She points out that "[t]he viability of the organization was called into question by a series of rumors of rampant sexual immorality, including reports of WAAC pregnancies and of WAAC serving as prostitutes."<sup>61</sup> As a consequence of these rumors, the numbers of new recruits fell remarkably. The WAAC was vindicated by the government,<sup>62</sup> but likely it was hard to stop the malicious rumors that were already circulating.

The second group whose sexual morality and human value was slandered in the White press was women who had affairs with Russian soldiers. Relationships with Russian soldiers, especially Russian officers, had been acceptable during the era of Grand Duchy of Finland. But after the declaration of independence and especially after the outbreak of the Civil War, these women were despised and called "Russian brides." In nationalistic discourse, these relationships were described as a betrayal to the Finnish race, as they would produce half-caste babies. Those with the stiffest judgment wanted to mark these women with a branding iron in order to show their shame to everybody throughout the rest of their lives. Also, exile was demanded for them. Although this never materialized, these women were mentally marked and despised.

The same universal phenomenon has transpired elsewhere in Europe too. Especially after World War II, many women who had had sexual relationships with the German soldiers in the Occupied or Allied countries faced a similar destiny. For instance, French women had their heads shaved and swastikas tattooed on their foreheads.<sup>63</sup> Also, in Finland the newspapers expressed their concern about the purity of Finnish women as soon as the German soldiers landed in Finland in the summer of 1941. Women were held responsible for moral strength on the home front, which correlated with the men's morale on the front lines. Owing to this, sexual encounters with German soldiers were seen as a threat to the whole fatherland. These women were detested and ac-

60 For more information, see Cynthia Enloe, *Does Khaki Become You? The Militarization of Women's Lives* (London: Pandora Press, 1988).

61 Grayzel, *Women's Identities*, 198–99.

62 Grayzel, *Women's Identities*, 199.

63 Joane Nagel, "Ethnicity and Sexuality," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26.1 (2000): 107–33, esp. 107–08; Outi Karemaa, *Vihollisia, vainoojia, syöpäläisiä. Venäläisviha Suomessa 1917–1923* (Helsinki: SHS, 1998), pp. 102–03.



cused of staining not only their own reputation but also the reputation of the whole nation.<sup>64</sup>

The third stereotype involved the soldiers. Like the nurses, women soldiers were similarly accused of loose sexual moral at the front. Analogous defaming occurred during the Spanish Civil War, when the Republican female soldiers were stigmatized as immoral creatures. In addition, they were accused of spreading sexually transmitted diseases and eroding the moral standards on the front.<sup>65</sup> The Finnish female soldiers were accused of having sexual relationships with both the members of the Red Guards and the Russian soldiers. An adulterous affair was already indefensible at the time, but an affair with a Russian was even worse. The extreme right wing labeled these women also as a threat to the purity of the nation and the race.

As was described before, female soldiers in their outfits were more than outstanding. Due to their abnormal clothing, they were ridiculed in the White press:

In their trousers and in other men's wear, wearing, nevertheless, women's shoes and lots of make-up on their faces these guard-members looked very ridiculous while they stood guard with a rifle on their shoulders. Otherwise they were like little devils.<sup>66</sup>

Whites laughed at the Reds and implied that they were hiding behind women's backs while resorting to women's help in combat. In spite of the mockery, female soldiers were taken seriously. They were portrayed as sexually loose barbarians.<sup>67</sup> Their willingness to kill was described as abnormal, unfeminine, and unpalatable. The dominant feeling of the Whites seemed to be shock, as can be perceived in the writing of the educator and former member of Parliament Vilho Reima:

64 Marianne Junila, *Kotirintaman aseveljeyttä: Suomalaisen siviiliväestön ja saksalaisen sotaväen rinnakkainelo Pohjois-Suomessa 1941–1944* (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), pp. 140–50; Anu Heiskanen, “Kansakunnan huonot naiset: Myyttinen kuva ja todellisuus Kolmannen valtakunnan alueelle 1944 lähteneistä suomalaisista naisista,” in Kari Alenius, Olavi K. Fält, & Jouko Vahtola, eds, *Vieraat sotilaat* (Rovaniemi: Pohjois-Suomen historiallinen yhdistys, 2004), pp. 180–81.

65 Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 110–13; Frances Lannon, “Women and Images of Women in the Spanish Civil War,” *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 1 (1991), 6th series, pp. 215–17.

66 *Ilkka* 12 April 1918.

67 Cf. Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, vol. 1: *Women, Floods, Bodies, History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), pp. 70–79.

I heard loud noise of cannon balls. Suddenly I saw a young woman coming towards me with a rifle on her back. First I was shocked, but soon I bounced back, as a familiar oncoming worker woman asked me:

–What would you teacher do to a hero like that?

I answered like an old school master:

–It would be my duty as a teacher to give to someone like that a good spanking.<sup>68</sup>

In the White propagandistic discourse, female soldiers were cast as triple traitors to the nation. First, they had participated in the *coup d'état* against the legitimate government. Second, they were women in arms and thus were renouncing their womanly duties. Third, they were having affairs with Russian soldiers, bringing the purity of the Finnish race into danger. These stereotypic writings had great impact on the impression that White soldiers had of the Red female combatants. After the war, many of the female soldiers were physically abused and shot without proper trials.

The fourth and the last stereotype concerned the Red mothers, who were called sources of evil. Some Whites held the mothers of members of the Red Guards responsible for the whole Civil War. It was stated that with their ill upbringing they had created this generation of beasts that was willing to jeopardize the future of the whole nation. As was mentioned before, women's duty was to raise their children to become decent and law-abiding citizens. According to the White propaganda, Red mothers had failed in this task, as their sons and daughters had started a revolt against the government. Towards the end of the war, the famous author Ilmari Kianto wrote in the newspaper *Keskisuomalainen* an exceptionally harsh article about Red women. He compared them to she-wolves, which should be hunted and killed before they can produce a new litter of wolves. This remark referred not only to the female soldiers but also to all the Red women who could have Red children:

One should ask here why the war saves those women who are seen and known to represent the cruelest element in the Civil War: Should they be saved only because they are women? But is it not a prejudiced or even very shortsighted view not to punish those who with mere reproduction can strengthen the forces of the enemy.<sup>69</sup>

68 Vilho Reima, *Mitä kylvetään, sitä niitetään: Sota-ajan vaikutuksia kotihin, lasten ja nuorten elämään* (Helsinki: Edistysseurojen kustannus Oy, 1919), p. 40.

69 *Keskisuomalainen* 12 April 1918.

The Whites were eager to judge the Red women as unnatural and unwomanly by their behavior and speech. There were lots of women who, although they did not participate in the war, sympathized publicly with the Red Guard. These, usually older, women were often regarded as the biggest agitators. The aforementioned Vilho Reima was appalled by women's talk during the war:

I wanted to listen to the stories on the milk queue. The talk had been quite decent already for a week, but now the praise for barbarism was heard again and the waves of wrath were high. "All the bourgeois people must be killed. And if the men can't do it, we women will go. We will do like they did in Tampere. We will take the guns and swords in our hand and we will clean it up." This is how the conversation went on. After all, the men have been quiet and wordless and in the last few days they have even talked sensibly, but a woman in her degradation is a beast.<sup>70</sup>

There was an immense difference between the attitudes towards the Red and White mothers. Clearly, the dichotomy is once again noticeable. White mothers were praised for their sacrifice as they gave their sons for the fatherland and for the holy cause against the "Red plague." They were also thanked for their work as educators; they had raised model citizens with right values. In the same way, women were held responsible for transferring moral values to the next generation in Central Europe. Therefore, especially teachers were under strict observation, and those educators who supported the revolution in Munich and Budapest were afterwards deplored. They were accused of misleading the children: "A new teacher walks among the children, a devilish red shadow has mounted the teacher's desk. [...] after the robbing of the land the theft of souls has started."<sup>71</sup>

The Reds in Finland did not launch equivalent propaganda against the White women. The Red newspapers usually mentioned the cruelty of the "butchers," which referred to the White soldiers. In general, White women were not mentioned in these writings. How did the Reds then regard their own women? The women in auxiliary tasks were respected. Those who died at the front were described as martyrs to the cause of social justice.<sup>72</sup> In contrast, the woman warriors were mocked and their value contradicted at the beginning of the war. One of the Red leaders, Emil Saarinen wrote about female soldiers: "When yours truly had the presumption that women will fight only with their

70 Reima, *Mitä kylvetään, sitä niitetään*, p. 41.

71 Eliza Johnson, "Revolutionary Girl," p. 546.

72 *Työmies* 7 March 1918.

husbands, I was amused to go to hear what kind of a battle plan they would give for the women.”<sup>73</sup> Saarinen changed his opinion after seeing women in action in the battles of Tampere. The same change in attitudes towards the female soldiers was observable in the socialist newspapers. The newspaper *Työmies* wrote on 14 April about women accordingly:

A perky young woman of the working class with a rifle on her shoulder is the biggest and the most sacred gift that the proletariat has given or ever could give for the cause. This young woman of the working class with a rifle on her shoulder brings tears in the eyes of the onlooker. That rifle-bearing, perky young woman of the working class is the last word of the proletariat, its unrestrained, adamantly strong decision to live, win, achieve freedom, break the shackles. Defeat and death will never have the courage to step in front of the crowd that has made this kind of decision.<sup>74</sup>

Actually, defeat and death were already approaching. The Germans conquered Helsinki the following day. This article from April provides apt evidence of the dramatic shift in attitudes towards female soldiers. More human resources were needed at the front, and all of a sudden the female battalions were not laughing stocks of the Guard anymore. The Reds stressed that finally the whole proletariat was fighting together. Reds realized then the propagandist value that lay behind the women. Red leaders tried to raise the spirits and morale at the front with the entry of women. It was thought that men surely would fight till the end if they saw that female soldiers besides them were fighting without surrender. Women's bravery was praised in the Karelian front, for example: “Today the first female soldiers arrived, amount of 26. Glory to them! Shame on the men who stay behind.”<sup>75</sup> Maria Bochkareva justified her women battalions in Russia with a similar appeal to male honor.<sup>76</sup>

In Finland, the attitudes regarding female soldiers shifted from negative to positive among the Reds. In Spain, the trend was quite reversed in 1936. There the Republicans used female soldiers first in the propaganda posters as brave symbols of the war in order to get more men to join the ranks against fascism.

73 Arvid Luhtakanta, *Suomen punakaarti* (Kulju: E.A. Täckman, 1938), p. 162. Emil Saarinen wrote the book under the pseudonym of Arvid Luhtakanta.

74 *Työmies* 12 April 1918.

75 National Archives (KA), Court for the crimes against the State, Prosecutor Files (VROSYA), Antrea 425.

76 See above in this chapter.

But already in the same year, the women vanished from the propaganda and from the front. The abandonment of the female soldiers was justified by reasoning that women did not have requisite training with guns and would be more useful on the home front. It was also argued that men were more suitable for fighting because of their biological and psychological characteristics. According to Mary Nash, however, the strongest reason for renouncing female soldiers was the fact that their moral reputation was tarnished by rumors and the propaganda of Franco's troops. As a consequence, the leaders of the Republicans discarded the female soldiers, and they were sent home.<sup>77</sup>

After the Civil War, the Finnish nation was polarized. The Whites bore bitter resentment against the Reds and vice versa. The expectations set for the gender and the stereotyped wartime propaganda had certain influence on the lives of the Red women after the war. These consequences presented themselves in several ways.

### The Aftermath of the War

Wartime propaganda had stereotyped Red women as immoral and savage beasts. Due to this active alienation of the Reds, some White soldiers did not regard the Red women as worthy of chivalrous protection. Quite the contrary: many Red women, especially soldiers, were raped and killed shortly after the battles.<sup>78</sup> Civilians were also raped, but most often these wartime atrocities fell upon those women who had actively participated in the war.<sup>79</sup> As a soldier rapes a woman of the opposite side, he humiliates the enemy on several levels: the first target of the shame is the victim herself; the second is the men close to woman who were not able to protect her;<sup>80</sup> and the third target is the whole

77 Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, pp. 53–58, 108–13; Lintunen “Punaiset naiset,” pp. 127–28.

78 Cf. Ablovatski (“Between Red Army and White,” p. 82) for the similar situation in Hungary.

79 In the Finnish case, evidence of the rapes has seldom been documented, but the information has been preserved in oral history instead. The unavailability of the evidence can be understood by the problematic situation of the victim. Rape was a shameful taboo, and often the victims were made to feel guilty about it. A raped Red woman did not trust the White authorities for any help and did not want to make it official. At the same time, it was hardly in the interests of the rapists to document the action.

80 War propaganda often stresses that it is men's duty to join the army and protect the women. For example, the British parliamentary Recruiting Committee tried to persuade new men to volunteer to the forces during World War I, and one of their propaganda posters, aimed at wives and mothers, asked intimidatingly: “You have read what the Germans have done in Belgium. Have you thought what they would do if they invaded this

nation. Namely, in the nationalist discourse, women often symbolize the purity of the nation, and raping women tarnishes this purity.<sup>81</sup>

Due to the lack of evidence, we do not know the exact number of the Finnish Red women who were illegally executed. Estimates vary from 300 to 500. On some occasions, the corpses of female combatants were violated by exposing their breasts and genitals. One of the bloodiest places was the POW camp in Lahti, where more than 100 women were executed. These executions had a remarkable role later in the Red remembrance and folklore. Of those women who were taken to court, only one was sentenced to death, and even she was pardoned before the execution. On the whole 5533 women were brought to court and charged with treason or assisting a treason. Of them, 28 per cent were released of all charges, 58 per cent received a suspended sentence and were released on parole,<sup>82</sup> and only 14 per cent were sentenced to unconditional imprisonment. All who were convicted also forfeited their civil rights for a fixed period.<sup>83</sup> Interestingly, the court records show that the wartime stereotypes did mold, at least to some extent, the impressions the authorities had of the Red women. This can be seen in the judicial statements that local White authorities were asked for on each defendant. Some of these statements are quite revealing, as the two following examples illustrate:

As a mother of a large family she has poisoned the minds of her children and grandchildren and her whole environment as widely as she has been able to travel.<sup>84</sup>

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Country? Do you realize that the safety of your home and children depends on our getting more men *now*?" See Grayzel, *Women's Identities*, p. 63.

- 81 Lintunen "Punaiset naiset," pp. 130; Ville Kivimäki, "Ryvetetty enkeli: Suomalaisotilaiden neuvostoliittolaisiin naissotilaisiin kohdistama seksuaalinen väkivalta ja sodan sukupuolittunut mielenmaisema," *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 20.3 (2007): 26–28; Grayzel, *Women's Identities*, pp. 50–52.
- 82 On 30 October 1918, an amnesty was granted. Those members of the Red Guards who had a maximum four-year sentence were released on parole.
- 83 Lintunen, "Punaisen naisen kuvat," pp. 94ff; Tiina Lintunen, "Effects of the Civil War on Red Women's Civil Rights in Finland in 1918," in Irma Sulkunen, Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, & Pirjo Markkola, eds, *Suffrage, Gender and Citizenship: International Perspectives on Parliamentary Reforms* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), pp. 183–84; Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta* (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), pp. 144–47; Juha Alenius, *Toimeentulon pakosta valtiota vastaan: Naiset sisällissodan jälkiseurauksissa Lahdessa 1918* (Lahti: Lahden kaupunginmuseo, 1997), pp. 26–31. On the punishments, see also Juha Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria* (Helsinki: Otava, 2009), pp. 434–35.
- 84 KA, Supreme Court for the crimes against the State files (VRYO), doc. 20897.

In reference to the earlier statements and to her indecent lifestyle with which she has made herself a disgrace of the whole town we propose the most severe punishment for her.<sup>85</sup>

The mother's responsibility is to be seen in the first example. It portrays perfectly the archetype of "the sources of evil" that spreads socialism to the next generations. In the same way, the second example demonstrates how the sexuality and alleged loose morals of the Red women were included in the statement even though the issue at stake was treason. One should bear in mind that all the statements were not similar; many were neutral or even positive. Nevertheless, there seem to be a certain connection between the discourse used in the propaganda and in the statements. Similar use of rhetorical device can be detected in Hungary during the revolution after World War I. According to Eliza Ablovatski, "the tropes of the pure 'white' women and the dangerous 'red' women helped contemporaries to understand and react to the violent events around them."<sup>86</sup> She continues that these tropes often molded the memories and narratives of the chaotic times.

Apart from the judicial judgments, the Red women also had to face the moral judgments of the White society. The hostility and strained atmosphere presented itself in everyday life, and the feeling was mutual. As follows, it was not easy to enter the labor market looking for work as a former Red convict:

A maidservant or a helper of the lady of the house will be hired on a farm, by a choice one that has studied home economics. (Reds and those with bastards should not bother.) Please, send the answers to the post office of Perniö under a pseudonym "Maid."<sup>87</sup>

This job advertisement clearly states that membership in the Red Guard would be an obstacle for getting the post. In the summer of 1918, these advertisements were quite common, but later, "redness" was mentioned only rarely. Nevertheless, the extract from the population register, which revealed the complicity in rebellion, had to be enclosed to the application. Thus, the employer knew the past of the applicant.

The Red mothers also met difficulties. If they were widowed due to the war, they were not entitled to a pension equal to that of White widows. Instead, they had to resort to poor relief, which was much lower, short-term, and

85 KA, VRYO, doc. 18452.

86 Ablovatski, "Between Red Army and White," p. 74.

87 *Turun Sanomat* 17 July 1918.



brought on the loss of suffrage. In an equally bad position were those women whose husbands were in prison. They had to provide a livelihood for the whole family, and if there were infants and toddlers the mothers were not able to get a job outside the home. In some cases, they had to give their children away. Red women had been labeled as unfit mothers, and the mistrust continued after the war. The Ministry of Social Affairs planned to send Red orphans to White foster homes to get better living conditions. The Ministry had also another motive, namely, to give these children a “decent upbringing” and “weed the bacillus of Red” out of them. Red widows were also offered the chance to send their children to these foster homes, but only very few of them were willing to seize this opportunity.<sup>88</sup>

### Summary

Women participated in the Civil War in several ways. The White women were more true to traditional values and roles, whereas some of the Red women were eager to challenge the patriarchal division of men’s and women’s tasks in the war. The arming of women and women’s complicity in the revolution on the whole was an enormous shock for the Whites, and for them it worked also as an adequate proof of Red women’s moral depravity.

After the conflict, the Whites no longer considered Red women worthy of the nation. In their nationalistic discourse, the Whites stigmatized the Reds as “others” who were not decent Finns and thus should be excluded from the core of the society. The same phenomenon and stereotypes could be observed elsewhere in Europe. In Germany and Hungary, the Whites stressed the dichotomy between the Reds and the Whites and emphasized that only they sought the true benefit of the nation. Furthermore, the gender assumptions and attitudes reveal the similarities of the values of the political Right in Europe during the interwar period.<sup>89</sup>

As has been discussed in this chapter, women’s political action and emancipation were common phenomena during and after World War I. In Finland,

88 Lintunen, “Punaiset naiset,” p. 132; Mervi Kaarninen, *Punaorvot 1918* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2008), pp. 110ff. The authorities’ mistrusting attitudes against Red mothers changed later in the 1920s when they were seen as hard-working women who had done their best for their kids. See Kaarninen, *Punaorvot 1918*, p. 111; Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Punakapinan muistot: Tutkimus työväen muistelukerronnan muotoutumisesta vuoden 1918 jälkeen* (Helsinki: SKS, 1996), pp. 231–34.

89 Lintunen, “Punaiset naiset,” p. 133; Ablovatski, “Between Red Army and White,” p. 75.

women were breaking the gender barriers during the Civil War, but the effects were temporary. After the war, the traditional gender roles were reasserted to the pre-war status quo, and change was yet to come.

## War through the Children's Eyes

*Marianne Junila*

Wars are not fought only on the battlefields, and they are certainly not a concern only of the armies and soldiers. War causes disturbance to the entire society, including those who do not bear arms and do not directly take part in military operations. People on the home front worry about their family members and friends on the front, and at the same time they try to cope with their everyday life, including the shortages and rationing of food and many other essential consumer products.

In a civil war, the home front and the front lines are not separated but, on the contrary, often intertwined. The violence and the fighting break into towns and villages, into houses and homes everywhere. Also, those who do not belong to the fighting forces are sucked into witnessing the gathering of the troops, taking up arms, and starting the hostilities. A civil war often comes near physically when battles are fought near homes and houses, on streets, and in backyards. Mentally, a civil war may be extremely destructive by dividing families, neighbors, and friends. Remaining neutral is very difficult for civilians, who cannot escape the situation but get caught in the middle of the fights. Willingly or unwillingly, people have to choose their sides, and in company with adults also children and adolescents end up becoming supporters of one or the other of the two parties.<sup>1</sup>

One of the main tasks of parents is to provide children with sufficient care: to ensure their well-being or at least their subsistence. But in the circumstances of war, parents may lose their capability to look after and protect their children. From the child's perspective, this is the most terrifying situation. As long as they have one reliable adult person nearby, they may be able to trust that the situation will be handled and can feel safe even in chaotic conditions.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Marianne Junila & Seija Jalagin, "Lapset ja sota," in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), p. 320.

2 Marianne Junila, "Mitä teit keväällä 1918? Tamperelaiset koulutyöt kirjoittavat sisällissodasta," in Ilona Kempainen, Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, & Saara Tuomaala, eds, *Kirjoitettu nuoruus: Aikalaistulkintoja 1900-luvun alkupuolen nuoruudesta* (Helsinki: Nuoristotutkimusverkosto, 2011), pp. 166–68.

In this chapter, the Finnish Civil War is observed from the perspective of the schoolgirls who lived through the siege and battle of the town of Tampere. It was one of the major industrial towns where the Red Guards had taken control in January 1918. In March, the White Army launched its attack and finally conquered the town after heavy combat and shellfire in April. The battle of Tampere was the heaviest battle of the entire war and remains the largest urban battle in the history of the Nordic countries.<sup>3</sup>

The schoolgirls, aged 11 to 20, were pupils of Tampere Lyceum for Girls, which was a secondary school. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Finnish school system consisted of two separate tracks. There was the public track that provided the pupil with lower or primary education required in practical or physical work (called *kansakoulu*, folk school, or people's school in Finnish) and the secondary education track (called *oppikoulu*, grammar school in Finnish), which led to the university. The choice between the tracks – and largely also between one's future position and status in the society – was made between the ages of 10 to 12, when one had to apply to the grammar school. The primary schools were free of charge, but the grammar schools charged pupils school fees, and usually also fees for board and lodging in the school town. The expenses of secondary education were one of the major reasons for parents not to send their children to these schools.<sup>4</sup>

The pupils of the Tampere Lyceum for Girls were aware of the fact that they belonged to a small privileged minority in their age group. As adults they would be members of the middle or upper classes, perhaps married to a man in a leading position, to a prominent state official, or to a teacher, but anyway to a white-collar worker. In their homes they expected to have lower-class serving staff. In spite of ongoing social reforms, Finnish society was organized into different layers with different possibilities and an unequal distribution of power. In the context of the Finnish Civil War, the Whites represented the continuity of this social order, and the girls shared the similar values concerning their own future.

When we study the experiences of children, in the most cases we have access only to stories told years and decades after the events, told by an adult

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3 Tuomas Hoppu, "Tampereen valtausoperaatio," in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), pp. 185–97; see Marko Tikka's chapter in this volume.

4 Marianne Junila, "Finnish Women Entering the Teaching Profession in Secondary Education, 1900–1920," in Mette Buchardt, Pirjo Markkola, & Heli Valtonen eds, *Schooling, Education and Citizenship*, Nordwel Studies in Historical Welfare State Research, 4 (Helsinki: Nordic Centre of Excellence NordWel, 2013), pp. 186–87.

person who tries to remember what it was like when she or he was a child. People tend to interpret, explain, and improve their recollections of the past, reusing not only their personal reminiscences but also pieces of other people's reminiscences, pieces of texts they have read, and stories they have heard. The eagerness to justify one's actions both socially and morally makes one shape the story again and again. People with experiences about times with unintelligible or unfounded violence need to find explanation and justification both for their own and collective actions. Another way to handle the past is to forget. Especially wartime experiences, or at least some of them, are often forgotten collectively.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, thinking back to one's own childhood is always linked to the question of the verity and interpretation.

The source material used here forms a contrast to most cases. It does not consist of reminiscences, reinterpreted and reshaped by information gathered and read during subsequent years. Instead, we use the writings of the schoolgirls themselves, 300 pieces altogether, written in September 1918, five months after the war ended. They offer the exceptional possibility to listen to the children's and the youngsters' authentic voice and to get their first-hand impression of what happened at the time.

This chapter addresses following questions: How did the war affect the everyday life of the citizens? How did the girls describe and explain violence and hostilities they had to witness between their countrymen? What did girls tell about their own actions and experiences?

### The Schoolgirls of the Besieged Town

The schools in Tampere were closed at the beginning of the war in January 1918, and they did not open at all during the spring semester. Pupils, who had a long leave from school and a lot of free time, were now able to follow the maneuvers of the Reds, who occupied the town.

The essays are written in the fall semester 1918, soon after the pupils had reentered the school. Presumably, the dramatic and tragic events of the spring had not yet been forgotten but were still fresh in pupils' minds. The young writers describe events that had taken place in the town of Tampere but also in the surrounding rural areas. Most girls had their homes in Tampere, where they stayed also during the fierce final battles. Those who lived in the surrounding

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5 Pirjo Korhikangas, *Muistoista rakentuva lapsuus: Agraarinen perintö lapsuuden työnteon ja leikkien muistelussa* (Helsinki: Suomen muinaismuistoyhdistys, 1996), pp. 35–41.

villages had to find their way home through the front lines when the White Army besieged the town.

The teacher assigned her pupils to write about "Memories from the Time of Rebellion, 1918." They received a list of questions on matters they were expected to think back and tell about. Questions dealt first with events of war, such as mobilization and operations, battles, and troops, and second with the girls' own activity and contribution to the war effort.

The idea of collecting war memories in schools came from the National Board of Education (NBE), which alongside many other institutions – like the State Archives – stressed the importance of remembering the Civil War. NBE asked all the schools in Finland to collect objects and stories related to the Civil War.<sup>6</sup> Also the journal of the Elementary School Teachers (*Opettajain-lehti*) suggested that all kind of mementos of the war, weapons and pieces of the uniforms of the fallen soldiers, songs and press reviews should be gathered to establish Civil War museums in schools.<sup>7</sup> The commemoration of the Civil War in schools was seen as an important part of the curriculum. The correct interpretation of the events that these school museums would present was obviously that of the victorious Whites.

It is not known how many schools actually started collecting the memorabilia. But the Tampere Lyceum for Girls did. The girls wrote their essays either in school after their teacher's instruction or they wrote it as homework. Probably the papers that were kept –and stored later in the National Archives – were fair copies, because there were no misspellings, other mistakes, or any corrections in the texts.<sup>8</sup> They are also modified not only by spelling but also by content. First, the teacher set the questions, and second, the pupils knew they were writing for the teacher. Surely the pupils wrote their texts at least to some extent with an eye to political correctness: what is the story their teacher, who was known as a keen supporter of the Whites,<sup>9</sup> wanted to hear? There is, however, no reason to suppose a confrontation between the attitudes of teacher and pupils. Basically, they agreed on fundamental questions such as who was to blame for the war and whether the White war effort was justified.

The teachers in secondary schools were almost without exception supporters of the Whites, like most of the pupils' parents. The younger schoolgirls were not old enough to take a stand on political issues but adapted their views to

6 Marianne Junila, "Veljesvihan liekit – koululaiset muistelevat sisällissotaa syksyllä 1918," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 109.3 (2011): 298.

7 *Opettajain-lehti* 29 November 1918.

8 Junila, "Veljesvihan liekit," p. 299.

9 Junila, "Veljesvihan liekit," p. 298.

those of their parents. Hence, the writings are not authentic or private sources similar to diaries or letters. The young writers were aware of the adult readers, the teacher and their parents, which surely must have influenced the texts. Surprisingly, however, the stories are not as uniform one might suppose.

Although the pupils in Finnish secondary schools mainly had a middle-class background, before the Civil War, one out of 20 of the schoolchildren came from crofter or working-class families. In the fall term 1918, however, there were fewer newcomers from working-class families than before the war, but also more of those who had given up their studies. This was due both to political and financial reasons. The father may have been lost in the hostilities or taken captive or lost his job, which of course seriously affected the livelihood of the family, which could no longer afford schooling. But also the division of the society caused by the war raised doubts towards the secondary schools and teachers amongst the working-class families. Logically, after the war, they were less eager to send their children to the secondary schools.<sup>10</sup>

The acceptable and correct, official public narrative of the war was only under construction and had not yet taken final shape in the summer of 1918. Moreover, being on vacation, the schoolgirls had been out of the reach of systematic dissemination of the White propaganda. They might have learned at home who was to blame for starting the war and violence and who was to accuse for betraying their country. Still, their conceptions and interpretations were based, at this point, much on their own experiences and were the reflections of a schoolgirl.

The source material lacks divergent political views for two reasons. First, the parents of the pupils in this particular school were mainly supporters of the Whites. Second, there are no sources, such as memories of the Red families' children, in similar scale which these essays can compared. These are stories that the daughters of White families wrote to their teacher who supported the Whites. At the same time, the joy, angst, fears, or hopes the children felt during the war are rather universal and do not depend on their parents' political opinions. The children were afraid of the strange and dangerous enemy – on the both sides.

### When the Schools Closed

In children's life, school was a central institution representing continuity and stability. It was a place where things run as was planned and expected. Even a

10 K. Kivialho, "Maamme oppikoulujen kehityksestä sota- ja kapinavuosina," *Valvoja* (1921): 172–76; Mervi Kaarninen, *Punaorvot 1918* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2008), pp. 154–56.



minor change during a single school day might have been a major event for children. Accordingly, the way schoolgirls start their essays remembering 30 January 1918, the last day in school before the war, is revealing.

Sylvi, a 15-year-old schoolgirl, described how she waited for the geography teacher with her classmates after a normal forenoon. When the teacher entered the classroom without maps, the girls expected that in place of a normal class something exciting was going to happen. But the teacher looked solemn, and instead of starting a class she led the girls to the school hall, where all the teachers and pupils were gathered. The headmistress announced that the school would be closed for the foreseeable future and the pupils may leave for home.<sup>11</sup>

One would think that an extra vacation from school was good news, but on the contrary, in several essays, the writers referred first to the serious atmosphere of the gathering in the hall, underlined by singing a patriotic hymn together in the end, and second to the sadness caused by the knowledge that they would not be able to go to school anymore.<sup>12</sup> Helvi, aged 14, summed up her feelings: "I walked home with tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat."<sup>13</sup>

Civil unrest had occurred all around Finland during the fall of 1917. Also in Tampere, people had taken part in the general strike in November, and in December the Reds had arrested the members of the town council for a few days. In January, a couple of days before the schoolgirls gathered in the hall to listen to the somber words of their headmistress, the Reds had taken control in the town, and the members of the Civil Guards had started to flee north.<sup>14</sup> These were upsetting events, but being more like adults' business, they did not touch the girls' everyday life to the same extent as did the closing of school. For schoolchildren, it was a sinister sign of the volatile change that life had taken, although – especially when thinking back later – the girls could not conceive what was to come: "I closed the heavy school door, and left all the joys and sorrows of everyday life behind. We schoolgirls could not imagine what the future

11 National Archives (KA), The War of Liberation files (VAPSA), VA: 219 b, file A/58: 15 years. Each essay has been identified with a file number (here: A/58), followed by the age of the writer in September 1918. All the subsequent archival sources refer to VAPSA in the National Archives, hence only file numbers are indicated.

12 Files A/58: 15 years; B/422: 11 years; B/182: 16 years; B/102: 15 years.

13 File C/1666: 14 years.

14 Tuomas Hoppu, "Valtataistelu veljessodan esinäytöksenä," in Tuomas Hoppu et al., eds, *Tampere 1918* (Tampere: Vapriikki, 2008), pp. 38–45; Tuomas Hoppu, "Punaisten asejunnasta rintamataisteluihin," in *Tampere 1918*, pp. 56–57.

would hold when we plodded towards home in the sleety weather.”<sup>15</sup> After the schools closed, girls tried to find something sensible to do to keep their thoughts together and to control the anxiety. One option was to continue the schoolgirl’s life by self-studying at home or taking lessons privately.<sup>16</sup> In most cases, these attempts failed, because “one was too upset,” as the girls explained. They were upset for various reasons – fear, restlessness, suspense, or curiosity – but anyhow, they were unable to settle down and concentrate on something like reading or doing handicrafts.

The girls reported how the familiar and safe world they used to know disappeared, how all the work was stopped and idle men were loitering on the streets. Soon the public space such as major public squares and buildings were occupied by an increasing number of the Red guardsmen, who walked around armed, and the supporters of the Reds rallied on the squares. The unsettled town seemed to expect a war to break out.<sup>17</sup>

### Life in Limbo

The citizens of Tampere were not in immediate danger before the White Army laid siege to the town at the end of March. In fact, life continued at a surprisingly unhurried pace, considering that bloody battles were fought not further than a few dozen kilometers away from the town.

The Reds did not, during their rule of three months, pose a serious threat to the lives of those who sympathized with the Whites. However, for most of the girls and their families, living under the rule of the Reds was distressing because they were under constant threat of violence. The rumors about violent attacks and brutal killings the Reds had committed elsewhere increased the sense of fear. The Reds did shoot men who were caught outside Tampere when they were escaping the town and fleeing north to join the White Army. One of the most well-known incidents of which civilians in Tampere were well aware was the “Suinula Massacre,” which took place on 31 January. In Suinula, after a short firefight, the Reds caught a group of White soldiers, who were forced to surrender. However, despite an agreement between the parties, some Red soldiers started to shoot the prisoners and killed 15 of them. This shooting of unarmed men inflamed especially the White sympathizers and was widely noted

15 File A/1454: 16 years.

16 Files A/16: 19 years; A/20: 16 years; A/73: 16 years; A/109: 16 years; C/1770: 19 years.

17 Files A/70: 18 years; A/58: 15 years; B/46: 14 years; B/91: 16 years.

in the texts: "A group of the best sons of our town became casualties of the blood lust of those bestial Red Russkies."<sup>18</sup>

The incident in Suinula seemed to substantiate the claim of White propaganda that Reds were bloodthirsty enemies with close ties to Russian Bolsheviks and that they did not spare anyone but picked their victims at random. This again compounded fear among the civilians. To verify the accuracy of all horror stories was difficult, because reliable information, from the White's point of view, was not available. All newspapers except those supporting the Reds were banned, and to get news from outside was difficult because leaving or entering the town was strictly restricted.<sup>19</sup> After the war, all the horror stories, true as well as fictitious, ended up in the history books.<sup>20</sup> The fact that the Whites' supporters in Tampere had not experienced severe physical violence did not eliminate the feelings of being threatened. The inhabitants of the town had to resign themselves to living in uncertainty and coping with the restrictions caused by the state of war.

Daily life in town became complicated and boring at the same time. Daily chores and household duties become troublesome due to rationing and curfews as well as breaks in the power supply. Food was rationed, and it was necessary to queue for hours outside grocery stores in order to obtain one's meager, occasional portion. Despite food shortages, the situation never escalated to the point of starvation. One had to be prepared to be stopped by Red guardsmen and show permissions when moving around the town during the daytime, and one had to remember to be at home before the curfew started in the evening. Many offices, shops, factories, and other workplaces were closed at least occasionally, and people had a lot of spare time.

The girls were aware that their parents were not able to act openly against the Reds. Inside their homes, White families could still feel safe and, at the same time, avoid contacts with the Red Guards. It was a shock when house searches proved this to be a wrong assumption. The Red Guards made un-

18 File C/63: 17 years.

19 Tuomas Hoppu, "Tampere – sodan katkerin taistelu," in *Tampere 1918*, pp. 124–25; Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle: Dokumentoitu kuvaus Tampereen antautumiseen johtaneista sotatapahtumista Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1993), p. 32; Tuomas Hoppu, "Taistelevat osapuolet ja johtajat," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, p. 131.

20 Turo Manninen, *Vapaustaistelu, kansalaissota ja kapina: Taistelun luonne valkoisten sotapropagandassa vuonna 1918*, *Studia Historica Jyväskyläläisiä*, 24 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 1982), pp. 166–67. See Oskari Mantere & Gunnar Sarva, *Keskikoulun Suomen historia: Oppi- ja lukukirja keski- ja tyttökouluille sekä seminaareille* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1918); and Mikael Soininen & Alpo Noponen, *Historian oppikirja kansakouluja varten vuorokursseiksi sovittuna*, vol. II: *Suomen historia* (Helsinki: Otava, 1922).

announced and repeated house searches to find hidden men, guns, or groceries. At first, men who were supposed to be members of the (White) Civil Guards were arrested. Usually, they were released almost immediately. Later on, the men were taken and forced to work in the labor squad.<sup>21</sup> Every time the Red guardsmen came, the girls faced one of their worst fears, that of losing a parent,<sup>22</sup> which made the searches extremely traumatic experiences for them: “There is nothing as nerve-racking as these house searches. They drive you mad.”<sup>23</sup>

From the White families’ point of view, to invade homes was the worst kind of oppression and despotism.<sup>24</sup> “These house searches violated the sanctity of our homes!” wrote a 16-year-old schoolgirl.<sup>25</sup> In reality, the harm the Guards caused during these searches was not that severe as the reactions of families suggested. The real harm was not the mess they left behind or even the arrests. The most frustrating thing – beyond the fear of losing a parent – was that the house searches revealed the inability of parents, especially fathers, to protect the home and family from these insults.

The girls described how the loss of daily routines, the increased risk of violence, and the constant insecurity made people stay up the nights: “I heard the sound of a coffee mill. Our neighbors were restless and could not sleep but made coffee in the middle of the night.”<sup>26</sup> Only small children slept at night, because they were too young to understand the gravity of the situation, explained 16-year-old Ester. All the others, including girls’-school pupils like her, stayed awake.<sup>27</sup>

### Strangers and Enemies

Due to the war, the schoolgirls met a lot of new and strange people: folks in transit like refugees and soldiers; people from different regions of Finland and even from abroad; and people from different social classes. Among the White troops advancing towards Tampere there could be found Swedish-speaking

21 Hoppu, “Punaisten asejunasta rintamataisteluihin,” pp. 57, 68, 88; Hoppu, “Tampere – sodan katkerin taistelu,” p. 124.

22 Files B/359: 13 years; A/111: 16 years; A/152: 14 years; A/1674: 14 years.

23 File A/16: 19 years.

24 Files B/91: 16 years; C/1441: 15 years; B/321: 18 years; B/406: 13 years.

25 File A/24: 16 years.

26 File A/20: 16 years.

27 File A/389: 16 years.

Finns from Ostrobothnia, volunteers from Sweden, and even German and Austrian soldiers.<sup>28</sup>

For most of the girls, the Reds – men and women alike – represented something strange, at least on the mental level. Interestingly, though, the girls paid surprisingly little attention to the ordinary supporters of the Reds such as working-class families and other civilians when remembering back to the Civil War. They mentioned having met them occasionally in the same shelters, for instance, when the shellfire started and people had to seek cover quickly. But later on, the girls remembered, the working-class families had preferred, if possible, to seek shelter elsewhere than in the same basements with the White families.

The girls had observed the Red troops in action and used many lines to describe the Red soldiers. They were, according to the girls' observations, not comparable with the soldiers of the White Army but were in many ways inferior in quality and skills. They made a clumsy, noisy, and unpleasant impression, and their off-key singing was awful to hear. They had difficulties in marching in coordinated pace and keeping straight lines, and they were poor in shooting. The 17-year-old Siiri compared Red soldiers to shrieking trolls: "In the nights, these men with bayonets crept around at the old churchyard like trolls." If the Reds had not been armed, they would have been nothing but a laughing stock.<sup>29</sup>

That said, not all Red guardsmen were bad – or at least not totally bad. According to the girls, some of them were just simple men, misguided by their leaders and the Russians. They had been forced to fight, and when possible they tried to escape from the line. The girls' condescending attitude and derisive comments on the Reds were very similar to the way the military capacity of the Reds was presented in White propaganda.

However, whereas the schoolgirls showed some understanding for the Red male soldiers, it was very difficult for them to understand the women who had joined the Red Guards, whether their role was that of a nurse or a soldier.

Two kinds of hospitals were established in Tampere to take care of the casualties of the war: Red hospitals and Red Cross hospitals. They were based in existing hospitals (like Tampere General Hospital) or other large facilities (like school buildings). In addition to four Red Cross hospitals and three Red hospitals there were smaller temporary hospitals and dressing stations.

The Red Cross hospitals were staffed by Finnish physicians and nurses, but the Red hospital the staffs consisted mainly of Russian physicians, feldshers,

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28 See, e.g., files A/53: 16 years; A/91: 13 years; A/93: 12 years; A /158: 20 years; B/98: 15 years.

29 File B/98: 15 years; Junila, "Veljesvihan liekit," pp. 304–05.

and nurses. Both hospitals recruited volunteers like pupils of the Lyceum for Girls or young working class girls. The Red Cross hospitals treated all patients, but the Reds preferred to treat their own soldiers in their own hospitals. However, from the very beginning, surgery patients were sent to the Red Cross hospitals. Until the battle of Tampere started in late March, the patients treated in all hospitals were mostly Reds.<sup>30</sup>

Interestingly, girls who themselves had worked in hospitals and surely knew the difference between a trained nurse and a volunteer did not differentiate the Red staff according to nationality, training, or age. Neither did they comment on the presence of Russians, although it usually was a very delicate issue. It seems that for them, all the female Red nursing staff was the same – or at least the girls wanted to give the impression that none of them was worth a more proper look or any appreciation. The girls were very suspicious of the Red nurses' skills and of their true motives and mentioned as a self-evident fact how Red nurses lacked necessary competence, even though they had not worked in the same hospitals with them. It was not needed, because this conclusion could be drawn from how they behaved in public irresponsibly and unrestrainedly and how they annoyingly presented themselves as nurses, with a white scarf and a red cross. The girls were certain that even the decency of this group who was so careless in appearance was questionable.<sup>31</sup>

However, a woman in a Red soldier's uniform was a far more complicated phenomenon than a woman in a Red nurse's uniform. A Red nurse, although she may have chosen the wrong side of the war, was performing tasks considered suitable for her gender. But a woman in arms stood in glaring contradiction to everything the girls had so far learned about women's position and duties in the society. Gender roles were defined through the man, and the woman was supposed to be different from him. To be brave and ready for fighting were attributed to boys and men, and women and girls were supposed to be the objects of male protection.<sup>32</sup> But the Red guardswomen did not fit into this order, which was both inflaming and exciting.<sup>33</sup>

30 Hoppu, "Punaisten asejunasta rintamataisteluihin," pp. 72–75; Ritva Virtanen, *Sairaanhoidajat Suomen sota-ajan lääkintähuollon tehtävissä 1900-luvulla* (Kuopio: Kuopion yliopisto, 2005), pp. 72–74.

31 Files A/24: 16 years; A/93: 12 years; C/65: 17 years; C/67: 18 years.

32 Katri Komulainen, "Kansallisen ajan esitykset oppikoulun juhliissa," in Tuula Gordon, Katri Komulainen, & Kirsti Lempiäinen, eds, *Suomineitoinen hei! Kansallisuuden suku-puoli* (Helsinki: Vastapaino, 2002), pp. 143, 151; Leena Koski, "Hyvä tyttö ja hyvä poika," in Tarja Tolonen, ed., *Suomalainen koulu ja kulttuuri* (Helsinki: Vastapaino, 1999), pp. 23–25.

33 For an in-depth description of the Red women in the Civil War, see Tiina Lintunen's chapter in this volume.

Generally, the girls in their essays disapproved the women dressing up in men's clothes and carrying a gun. It was improper and indecent behavior for a young woman. The fact that the times were exceptional did not mean that the traditional gender system should be overlooked. "Is this really the way women should seek for equality with men?" one of the girls asked.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, the upper-class students who were of the same age as the young guardswomen did not just condemn these girls. They were too exciting figures. Ainikki, for instance, could not avoid comparing their choices to hers when she watched a young militiawoman guarding on the street.<sup>35</sup> A number of the schoolgirls admitted having reluctantly admired them for their courage, or their admiration is there to be read between the lines: "They had been very brave and had no fear for death. But towards civilians they were rude. They walked along the streets proudly, wearing men's trousers and grey woven wool shirt and red stripes in their caps."<sup>36</sup>

### To Be Useful, Brave, and Clever

As mentioned earlier, people got used to the presence of the Reds bearing arms. Although some people remained frightened and preferred to stay at home, many children and young people moved around, at first for curiosity but later on often for running errands for adults.<sup>37</sup>

Some girls lived in the surrounding countryside, within 20–80 kilometers from the town. If they did not want to stay in Tampere but wanted to travel home after the schools were closed, they faced two problems: how to get permission to leave, and how to get home. Under normal circumstances, someone from home would have picked them up or they would have travelled by train. Due the war, however, train connections were poor, and entry into town was prohibited or tightly controlled, too. Some families managed to send a man and a horse for their children, but in many cases the girls had to find another way home.<sup>38</sup>

Regardless, no one was allowed to leave without permission from the Red staff headquarters. In spite of fear or repugnance, girls had to visit the office

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34 Files A/16: 19 years; A/24: 16 years; A/62: 16 years; A/64: 12 years; A/120: 14 years; B/56: 11 years; B/350: 15 years; B/444: 11 years.

35 File C/54: 19 years.

36 File A/62: 16 years.

37 Junila & Jalagin, "Lapset ja sota," p. 326.

38 Junila & Jalagin, "Lapset ja sota," p. 325.



and convince the staff that they needed to travel. Permission was not given automatically but, on the contrary, the Reds reacted quite reluctantly to applications. Some girls managed to get the permission, some received it after visiting the office twice or thrice. Some did not apply a second time after being refused and decided to travel without the permit. So did Maisi, who, together with her sister and brother, left the town on the very day school ended. "We could not leave by carriage because it would have grabbed the Reds' attention. Therefore, we set off in the evening with a kicksled."<sup>39</sup>

With or without permission, the journey was quite an adventure that the girls proudly remembered afterwards: how they took shortcuts across the woods, coped with the guards at the roadblocks, how they gave smart answers to the questions asked by the guardsmen and bluffed them by talking in Russian. Sometimes the girls had quite a distance to travel. Aili, for instance, walked with her schoolmate from Tampere to her home in Längelmäki, a distance of more than 80 kilometers, in four days. She as well as other girls told of arriving home safely.<sup>40</sup>

In the town, girls took advantage of their sudden extra leave and wandered around to find out what was happening. They watched how troops were gathered, how ammunition trains were unloaded, and how the wounded were carried to hospitals. They followed how the Reds practiced shooting and built barricades on the streets.<sup>41</sup> When the hostilities escalated, moving around in the town became dangerous. Hilda wrote that she was criticized at home for her risky behavior. She answered that one have to die anyway, so it does not matter where and when it happens.<sup>42</sup> They were exciting times, remembered Ester, 15 years old, who regarded herself as lucky when she could stay in the town and witness the events with her own eyes.<sup>43</sup>

For the schoolgirls, it was easier to manage in circumstances that had turned unforeseeable and strange if they found something meaningful to do. Schoolgirls undertook various tasks, from everyday household duties to participating in the White war effort. All tasks outside the home were dangerous after the town had turned into a battlefield, but obviously helping the White Army when living under Red rule was a high-risk activity.

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39 File C/7: 14 years.

40 File A/337: 17 years; Junila, "Mitä teit," p. 150.

41 Files B/327: 14 years; C/1660: 12 years; B/120: 15 years; P/8: 14 years P/9: 14 years A/359: 13 years; B/91: 16 years; P/23: 17 years.

42 File C/1432: 17 years.

43 File B/102: 15 years.

When remembering their wartime activity later, the girls did not much value their efforts at home; shopping for groceries or knitting gloves for the army seemed to be not “doing something important,” even though doing errands, for example, became not just time-consuming but also risky during the course of the war. One of the most common tasks the schoolgirls performed outside home was helping at the war hospitals. Like many school buildings, also Tampere Lyceum for Girls was turned a hospital, and girls were recruited as volunteers. “We ran errands. On our arm we bore a band with the stamp of the Red Cross and the text Messenger and the number.”<sup>44</sup>

In the hospitals, the girls cleaned up, made beds, cut bandages, participated also in nursing, fed patients, and assisted in various procedures. Some girls even assisted in operations. It was something that they could never have experienced under normal circumstances. To work at a hospital was to do something important and was at the same time useful and exciting. Beyond being interesting and valuable, nursing made the time pass quickly. No wonder that far more girls were willing to work at hospitals than could be employed.

However, ranked highest of all tasks that a schoolgirl could perform was working for the White Army. Even though White supporters did not protest against the Reds in public, they were active in gathering intelligence. The schoolgirls performed tasks such as phone-tappers or messengers who carried letters, documents, and reports in their collars, socks, or in a hidden pocket in their coat. There was an anecdote saying that in her outfit a woman could carry the letters of a whole post office. But women did not deliver only messages. They smuggled guns, too. After two nightly house searches to Katri's home, the family decided that the hidden guns had to be moved elsewhere. With another 16-year-old girl, Katri took the weapons in a laundry basket to a new hiding place. In Katri's opinion, it had just been exciting, even though she wondered afterwards in her essay what would have happened if the Reds had checked the basket. She did not reveal whose idea it had been to have the girls undertake the task, but surely her parents had accepted it and probably also spurred her into action. In their stories, the girls themselves were very proud of these kinds of daring contributions, and their teacher had often awarded these efforts by writing a laudatory comment like “interesting,” “good,” or “valuable” on the paper.<sup>45</sup>

After the White Army had taken Tampere, some girls joined the Army's maintenance troops. Terttu was only 13 years old when she started her work in the kitchen of a battalion. After ten days in Tampere, the battalion moved 75

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44 File A/125: 13 years.

45 Junila, “Mitä teit,” pp. 153–55; Files A/33: 17 years; C/5: 14 years; C/11: 18 years,

kilometers southwards to the town of Hämeenlinna. Terttu followed and did not return home before school started in September.<sup>46</sup> Also Elva, as well as her sister and some friends who had all joined the army, worked as kitchen help and followed the unit. In her essay, she wrote wistfully of her service of four months: "I felt sad when I had to leave this fun work I had been able to do with my friends the whole summer."<sup>47</sup>

The girls who had performed tasks for the White Army were afterwards very pleased about the possibilities that had opened up for them during wartime. They were aware that in peacetime they hardly could have received similar opportunities to show courage and fearlessness. Where did this courageousness arise? The girls themselves understandably offered reasons such as patriotism and loyalty, but they also mentioned female gender and age. Here, bravery and confidence rose from the conviction that their gender, together with their young age, protected them in potential risky situations. No adult – not even an enemy – would harm seriously children. Several girls mentioned this either as something they had experienced themselves or as a commonly known fact; it was far easier for girls and women to move around in the besieged town than it was for men or boys. The former were not suspected by the Reds as potential collaborators, or at least they were seldom stopped and searched on these grounds. The cover the female gender provided was used even to protect boys. When a brother had to get out of the town, he was dressed in his sister's clothes, and accompanied by her he managed to get through the lines to the White side.

Similarly, the children of the Red families believed that their young age would protect them. In her edited memoirs, Helmi Haapanen, daughter of a Red family, remembered how she in secret delivered food to her imprisoned family members after the Whites had conquered the town. But she was certain that the guards would not shoot children. When there had eventually been some shooting that forced her to flee when visiting her father, she remained convinced that the aim had not been to hit her but only to frighten her away.<sup>48</sup>

Interestingly, traditional social status was an element the girls of the White families obviously found encouraging, although they do not mention it explicitly. They were members of a higher social class than the Reds and their supporters, and that fact seemed to have given them a feeling of superiority even during the Red rule. The middle-class Whites were simply better people, and in their stories the girls adopted condescending attitudes towards the Reds.

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46 File A/121: 14 years.

47 File B/123: 16 years.

48 Pertti Rajala, *Helmi Haapasen sisällissota* (Helsinki: TSL, 2012).

### Witnessing the Violence

The Whites launched a massive offensive against Tampere at the end of March. The battle lasted for nine days, during which all the citizens were endangered due to heavy shellfire and fighting. The more the siege tightened, the less space there was left for people. To leave town became impossible, and people from the outskirts fled into the town center. Churches and other public buildings were overcrowded with refugees. In the end, the people living in the nucleus of the town had to leave their homes too and search for cover. Usually the nearest safe place was the basement or the laundry compartment within the apartment building, where people might spend several days.

The rising number of refugees and approaching gunshots were signs that the battles were drawing closer to the town. The blackout of the town and the curfew increased the uncertainty and foreboding, but at the same time the spirits – especially among supporters of the Whites – rose. However, before the Whites took over the town, all the people who had crowded into the urban area had time to fear for the worst during the shellfire and blazes that raged.<sup>49</sup> Anna remembered the moment when she started to feel frightened: “The distant sounds of artillery and warfare did not worry me but when the first grenades fell on the town, I got afraid.”<sup>50</sup> The civilians were literally in the firing line between the artillery fire of the Reds and Whites. Depending on which part of the town they lived, the girls remembered sitting in the shelters for five or six days, listening to the Reds’ machine guns next door firing at the Whites, who answered with return fire. Explosions rocked the buildings, and incessant gunfire kept people awake at nights. From their hiding places, people watched with growing restlessness the blazes caused by the bombing. If the house should go up in flames, people were forced to escape from the shelter out into the middle of the firefight.<sup>51</sup>

However, it was not possible just to sit waiting in the improvised bomb shelters. Household duties like shopping have to be done despite the shooting. Thus, the schoolgirls were running errands for their family, queuing for milk, bread, and flour. On these trips, they encountered for the first time serious violence and killings. Anna, for instance, was queuing outside the grocery store when shrapnel hit three people who were standing in the same queue. “They were injured badly,” she bluntly wrote in her essay.<sup>52</sup>

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49 Junila, “Mitä teit,” pp. 155–56; Hoppu, “Tampere – sodan katkerin taistelu,” pp. 140–42.

50 File C/1441: 15 years.

51 Junila, “Mitä teit,” pp. 155–57.

52 File C/1441: 15 years.



FIGURE 7.1 *Tampere after the battle, April 1918.* PHOTO: MUSEUM CENTER VAPRIIKKI.

Finally, the battles were fought on the streets, in the houses, on the staircases, and in backyards around the town. People could hardly avoid becoming a target themselves, and it was impossible to protect children from encountering violence. The schoolgirls learned that in war, people are not only shot and executed but also may get killed in countless different ways. “Our yard was crowded with bodies. Two had died when jumping from the upstairs window and one when he had cut his throat with a razor blade.”<sup>53</sup>

After the Whites had won the battle, the purging of the town continued several days. Although 11,000 Red soldiers were arrested, many were shot as soon as they were caught. Even people who were neither involved in the battles nor members of the Red Guard were imprisoned or killed.<sup>54</sup>

From a distance, the Whites shouted if there were any Reds there [in the house], and they searched the pockets of all of them and took them to the washing house, and after a while they were taken away from there and shot.<sup>55</sup>

Or actually they were three Russians [the men the Whites had arrested]. They were shot in the yard. I saw it myself from the kitchen window and

53 File C/1752: 15 years.

54 Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle*, pp. 472–74.

55 File A/12: 13 years.

when they were shot in the head a mound of pink brains spread on the ground from everyone.<sup>56</sup>

During the fights, civilians faced death as well. They might be killed by accident or because they did not obey the orders. Again, those who were killed were mostly supporters or sympathizers of the Reds. "The Whites shouted to a man who was crossing the street that he should stop or otherwise he would be shot. He did not stop so he was killed but he was a Red [civilian] so I did not feel much sorry for him."<sup>57</sup>

As soon as the firing ceased, the people left their dark and cramped shelters to see the traces of the battle. The streets bustled with people, with handsome White officers and townspeople, both adults and children. The devastation was incredible.<sup>58</sup> The damage was hard to believe; it seemed like whole areas with houses had disappeared and just the chimneys were standing in the ruins "like burial crosses."<sup>59</sup> The girls described in detail the death and destruction they had witnessed. It seemed like not only soldiers, civilians, and animals had been victims of the war; the entire town, the desolate, dirty, dismal, and destroyed town had become a victim itself. Siiri observed the damage:

I faced a horrible scene. Blocks of houses were burned to the ashes leaving only black ruins standing. There were bodies of Red soldiers, horses and cows along the streets. The bodies of the White soldiers had been collected and moved away. The windows were broken and the streets were dirty and bloody. Charred bodies and burned items were lying in the ruins.<sup>60</sup>

The extent of the material losses was massive, and it partially explains why the girls paid almost greater attention to the damages and lost property than to the human losses. However, it may have been easier to think back and remember the ruins than the human bodies.<sup>61</sup> The violence the girls were unexpectedly forced to witness was more difficult to understand.

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56 File C/1464: 15 years.

57 File C/1464: 15 years.

58 Sami Suodenjoki, "Valtauksen jäljet kaupungissa," in *Tampere 1918*, pp. 214–15.

59 File A/46: 16 years.

60 File C/1796: 17 years.

61 Junila, "Mitä teit," pp. 162–63.

### Living through the War

When the Civil War was discussed afterwards in the school, the focus was on facts and events. The girls were asked about their activity and observations: what did you do? what did you see? What was not initially addressed was how they felt, but many girls nevertheless wrote about how it was to live through the war. On the one hand, the war, and especially the last days of it, had been a time of fear and anxiety. On the other hand, the war had offered exceptional opportunities for participation and contribution. It had been an once-in-a-lifetime occasion for some girls to step out of the conventional position of the young female subject and to take on a new, atypical or more active role.

Under gunfire, everyone had experienced fear, and from time to time it had manifested in real physical symptoms. Fifteen-year-old Sylvi remembered having been scared to death. For her it meant that she was unable to move, her legs no longer supported her, and she even got stomach pain: "I and my sister went almost insane from fear!"<sup>62</sup> Lempi also had felt the fear in her body: "I myself was repeatedly ill during the war, mostly from fear."<sup>63</sup> Kyllikki and Tuulikki were sisters who had become lost from their parents when seeking shelter and were alone amid the shocking nightly fires and bombing. They wrote that they had felt totally paralyzed from fear.<sup>64</sup>

The presence of adults helped in coping with the feelings of fear: "Evenings, when the uncle told bedtime stories, the fear disappeared and I fell asleep serenely."<sup>65</sup> However, if the adults did not keep their calm but lost their self-control, the situation got even worse. Aini's mother had awakened her children in the middle of the night because she thought that the house might catch fire. "She was so afraid and she cried," wrote Aini. Therefore, Aini herself got so frightened that she could not manage to tie her shoelaces because her hands shook so much.<sup>66</sup>

However, it happened also that people became insensitive under the continuous bombardment. A number of girls explained how they got used to shooting, to the sounds of artillery fire, and to exploding shells.<sup>67</sup> They grew tired of sitting in the basement and left their shelter unconcerned about dangers. In spite of the risks, Hilda, for instance, wanted to return home where she

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62 File A/58: 15 years.

63 File A/124: 13 years.

64 Files B/149: 17 years; C/1501: 13 years.

65 File B/440: 12 years.

66 File A/146: 13 years.

67 File A/20: 16 years.



could find more to do than sit in the basement. When her parents warned her not to leave, she remembered answering that she preferred to die at home rather than in some unfamiliar place.<sup>68</sup>

The way people tried to continue their lives amid a full-scale urban war bordered on the absurd, and in some cases they even laughed at this absurdity. Aune remembered standing in line for bread for a very long time during the shelling.

We were queuing for bread when the grenades were falling down. At the end, we did not care much. When we heard the whistling sound of a falling grenade we just bent down a bit, then straightened up again and laughed.<sup>69</sup>

Another reason for leaving the hiding places was the desire to find out with one's own eyes what was going on.<sup>70</sup> Girls who had been able to observe the shellfire from a safe vantage point described the spectacular panorama of the war, the dazzling fireballs and fires in the darkness. Laine, 20 years old, wrote: "The mill caught fire in the night. It was a grand sight. We were like in a sea of fire without getting burnt."<sup>71</sup> The fires and explosions that illuminated the night sky presented a fascinating scene. To witness the war was not just a terrifying experience but also a memorable and exciting one.

One might think that the summary executions of the members or suspected members of the Red Guards would have terrified eyewitnesses. Some girls admitted that they were completely shaken up after such a violent incident. However, there were girls who – at least later in their essays – said that they realized that shooting even an unarmed civilian was a military necessity.

In their essays, the girls often wrote in detail about the killings – how it was organized and how people looked after being shot – but most of the girls remained silent about how they had felt witnessing the killings. In fact, what they related more often was a lack of emotions or adverse effects produced by encountering violence. Thirteen-year-old Impi had expected that the experiences would have been manifested in dreams: "I imagined that I would have bad dreams about those loads of corpses but I did not."<sup>72</sup> "In the beginning it

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68 File C/1432: 17 years.

69 File C/64: 14 years.

70 Junila, "Mitä teit," pp. 155–57.

71 File C/1706: 20 years.

72 File A/359: 13 years.

was awful but you got used to it,” noted 16-year-old Alli about the bodies lying everywhere.<sup>73</sup>

The lack of feelings was to some extent understandable and even explicable. When girls referred to the callousness, they stated how the encountering too much violence had made them numb, unable to feel any emotions.<sup>74</sup> “During the World War I heard how people were talking about the horrors of war [...] but not until now had I learned to know the downsides of the war; how it makes you desensitized to the death’s presence.”<sup>75</sup> However, unlike the lack of feelings, the lack of sympathy and pity was more difficult to explain by dullness. Some essays apologized for this: “I am sorry to say but seeing dead Reds did not make me feel bad.”

Although the killing itself, as well as the bodies on the street, might have been a detestable sight, the act of killing was a natural deed of the war. There was no need to explain the violence. However, afterwards, in a peacetime society, this acceptance of violence without questioning caused obviously some feelings of guilt. Although the texts do not explicitly state about how the girls really had felt, they prove how they thought they were expected to write about the violence of the Civil War in a school essay.<sup>76</sup>

In many cases, the inability to feel emotions proved to be selective, occasional, and influenced by political sympathies. The White sympathies of the girls and their families were one of the major explanations for the absence of emotions. For most of the girls, a Red soldier represented an enemy – or at least a stranger whose death did not resonate strongly with them. It is likely also that political correctness and the wish to please their teacher directed the way the girls wrote about these issues. The essays were written four months after the war had ended. At that point, the girls already knew that the White victors did not show mercy to the Reds; on the contrary. The schoolgirls may have adopted a similar attitude and tried to avoid expressing too mild-mannered sentiments.

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73 File A/62: 16 years.

74 File C/1660: 14 years.

75 File A/6: 18 years.

76 Junila, “Veljesvihan liekit,” pp. 306–07; Tuomas Tepora, “Neurotieteiden haaste tunteiden historialle,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 111.3 (2013): 322–40.

### Reminiscing about the War

The school plays a central role in building collective memories and a national and historical identity.<sup>77</sup> Like many other grammar schools in Finland, Tampere Lyceum for Girls accepted only the White interpretation of the Civil War, and there was no space for open discussion. The school teaching and the history books repeated the White thesis of the cruel and dangerous Reds who had terrorized the peaceful civilians and killed them brutally for no reason. However, those who had been eyewitnesses of the war in Tampere could not share this narrative of the common past without rejecting some of their own experiences.

The discussion on who was to blame for the war had started already in the spring of 1918. The topic became even more relevant after the battle was over in Tampere and it became necessary to explain all the violence and devastation. The defeated Red rebels were to blame for all the bloodshed. At this point, the Reds, men and women alike, represented "the other," and regardless of whether alive, dead, or captive they lacked individual characteristics and were treated as nameless and faceless mass. The empathy was shown entirely towards people who shared same values and ideology.

Horror stories about the crimes and violent acts the Reds had committed circulated, and the schoolgirls also knew and wrote about how the Reds were guilty of murders and brutal violence, terrorism and oppression in places other than in Tampere. This was not only evidence of the prevalent hate rhetoric common on the both sides of the war<sup>78</sup> but also an attempt to solve the problem that arose from the contradiction between one's own experiences and the White interpretation.

The most violent period of the war in Tampere was not the time of Red rule. The violence and the danger to life did not become day-to-day experiences until the Whites started to shell the town, the people were forced stay and hide in the buildings, and the people in the end could not avoid witnessing the cleansing of the town. This was a problematic question to solve and make fit into the White narrative. Elsewhere in Finland, tales about the atrocities of the Reds did not have a rival narrative, but in Tampere it was impossible to dismiss

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77 Junila, "Veljesvihan liekit," pp. 296–309. See also Sirkka Ahonen, *Historiaton sukupolvi? Historian vastaanotto ja historiallisen identiteetin rakentuminen 1990-luvun nuorison keskuudessa* (Helsinki: SHS, 1998); Sirkka Ahonen, "Historiallinen identiteetti tutkimuskohdeena," *Tieteessä tapahtuu* 17.2 (1999): 33–35; James V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

78 See Juha Siltala's chapter and Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War" in this volume.

the violence of the White Army. Both parties were involved in the battles, but the girls had witnessed only the executions carried out by the Whites.

Similarly, the schoolgirls preferred to use the passive voice when talking about the shelling of the town that had turned the war into a terrifying personal experience. No one shelled Tampere; instead the grenades just fell on the town. The reason for this is obvious. The Whites shelled the town, but it was impossible to claim that the Whites, for whom many had so eagerly awaited for, were responsible for this terrible ordeal, from which civilians also suffered.

For girls who were keen supporters of the Whites and shared the political enthusiasm of their non-socialist parents (and teachers), solving these contradictions was not insuperable. Yet, members of families who were not politically active were more confused over the violent events. Their worldview might have prevented them from justifying the illegal executions.

Tampere was one of the most crucial scenes of the Finnish Civil War, where the front line between the parties was drawn through neighborhoods, where backyards turned to battlefields. It was impossible not to hear and see the war; all members of the community, adults as well as children, were forced to witness the cruelty with their own eyes.

To encounter ultimate violence was undoubtedly a traumatic experience for the schoolgirls. However, the harsh, even vengeful, social climate after the war did not give opportunity to discuss the experiences.<sup>79</sup> In Finland, the violence of the Civil War remained undiscussed for decades.

### Summary

In this chapter, the Civil War is observed from the perspective of schoolgirls who lived in the town of Tampere, where one of the heaviest battles of the war was fought in spring 1918. Five months after the war, the girls wrote a school essay about their experiences.

Civil unrest had occurred all around Finland and also in Tampere during the fall of 1917. In January 1918, the schools were closed when the Reds took over. In children's lives, closing the school became a sinister sign of the volatile change that life had taken. Daily life in town became complicated and boring at the same time.

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79 See Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Punakapinan muistot: Tutkimus työväen muistelukerronnan muutoutumisesta vuoden 1918 jälkeen*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 657 (Helsinki: SKS, 1996).

However, the citizens of Tampere were not in any immediate danger before the White Army laid siege to the town at the end of March. In fact, life continued at a surprisingly unhurried pace, considering that bloody battles were fought not further than a few dozen kilometers away from the town. Being mostly sympathizers of the Whites, living under the rule of the Reds was distressing for most of the girls and their families.

Neither the girls themselves nor their families became direct targets of violent attacks. But the White Army's continuous shelling of the town threatened the life of everyone there. In their essays, the schoolgirls describe their fear of death and of losing their loved ones. The girls were also forced to witness fierce battles and severe violence, killings, and executions conducted mainly by the Whites. However, the war opened also new possibilities to act and contribute in a very exceptional way for their gender.

After the war, the Whites wrote the national narrative of the Finnish Civil War. The interpretation this narrative presented was not entirely consistent with the experiences of the girls during the war. In the harsh post-war social climate, however, there was no space for discussions or reflecting of children's feelings.

## Masculinities and the Ideal Warrior: Images of the Jäger Movement

*Anders Ahlbäck*

The Civil War of 1918 was in many ways a turning point in the history of male citizenship in Finland. The century preceding World War I had been a peaceful period, when most Finnish men had little or nothing to do with military matters. With Finland's independence, the Civil War, and the subsequent build-up of national conscription-based armed forces, soldiering suddenly rushed into the lives of Finnish men and their families. For some, this meant participation in military action in 1917–18; for others it meant compulsory military service in the regular peacetime army after the war or voluntary membership in the Civil Guards. During and after the Civil War, new militarized images of Finnish masculinities and ideal manliness emerged. This militarization of manhood was heavily propagated by pro-defense nationalists but also met with widespread reluctance and skepticism in Finnish society.

A group that was central to this transformation process was the so-called *Jägers*. They were a group of about 1900 young men who clandestinely left Finland during World War I to get military training in the German Army. Their aim was to soon return to Finland and lead a national uprising to detach Finland from the Russian Empire. Instead, they were deployed on the German East Front and eventually returned to Finland only after the declaration of independence and outbreak of a civil war. They trained and led the White Government's new conscripted troops into battle, mainly against their own countrymen. Since Finland had no domestic armed forces and there was an acute shortage of professional officers and men with military training, the Jägers' proficiency and leadership were regarded as a decisive reinforcement of the striking power of the White Army. For the same reason, many Jägers rose rapidly in the ranks during and soon after the war. By the late 1920s, Jäger officers had essentially taken over command of the new national armed forces from the older generation of professional Finnish officers who had served in the Russian imperial army before the revolution.

In the conservative and nationalist commemoration of the War of Liberation, the Jägers were presented as war heroes and symbols of the young Finnish nation's ability to take action. They came to serve as models of a new form of

Finnish military manliness that gained a strong foothold in Finland as a consequence of the events in 1918. A great number of historical and fictional works, articles and short stories in magazines and periodicals, memoirs, stage plays, and motion pictures were produced in the interwar era to commemorate the Jäger movement and the vicissitudes of the Jägers' journeys, military training, and war experiences.<sup>1</sup> The story about the young men who risked everything to save their country was actively told and retold, not least by their supporters and the Jägers themselves. It became part of the victors' dominant interpretation of the Civil War.<sup>2</sup>

The Jäger story fit well with the classic pattern of hero myths, where the hero's quest takes him away from home into the dangers of foreign lands, a perilous journey culminating in a crucial struggle before he can return triumphant, bringing home some life-transmuting trophy to renew the community or the nation.<sup>3</sup> The basic function of heroes, however, is to serve as objects of identification and tell a story of struggle and growth that the collective can recognize as its own.<sup>4</sup> The concepts "heroic narrative" and "hero myth" are used here to apply an analytical perspective highlighting how the Jäger commemoration attempted to convey moral messages and offer objects of identification to its audiences. It was used to legitimize the Jäger movement and the White war effort, infuse the nation with pride of its past and faith in its future, and set a new standard of manliness in order to mobilize the nation for future wars. It was a history directed as much towards how to remember the past as towards prescribing for its audiences how to understand the present and anticipate the national future.

This highly political commemoration was naturally far removed from the private war memories of many people, especially those on the Red side. Forming part of the public and official memory of the war, the Jäger story obscured many other stories about the Finnish war experience. It muted not only the voices of socialists and proletarians who lost the Civil War but also those of the professional officers who had served the Russian tsar, the Jägers who for one reason or another did not return to Finland to fight in the Civil War, as well as the Jägers physically or mentally disabled in the war. Nevertheless, the Jäger

1 See Matti Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin Jääkäripataljoona 27: Vaiheet ja vaikutus* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1966), p. 1001.

2 See, e.g., "Jääkärit tulevat," in Erkki Kivijärvi, ed., *Suomen Vapaussota 1918: Kuvauksia taistelurintamilta*, vol. 2 (Helsinki: Ahjo, 1919), pp. 35–47.

3 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* [1949] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

4 Ilona Kemppainen & Ulla-Maija Peltonen, "Muuttuva sankaruus," in Kemppainen & Peltonen, eds., *Kirjoituksia sankaruudesta* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2010), pp. 9–43.



story obviously offered a perception of history that both served the state's purposes and genuinely appealed to many Finns. As Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, and Michael Roper have pointed out in an essay on war commemoration, “[T]he power of dominant memories depends not simply on their public visibility, but also on their capacity to connect with and articulate particular popular conceptions, whilst actively silencing or marginalizing others.”<sup>5</sup> To the extent that the Jäger stories as the “winners’ history” became publicly dominant, the stories evidently supplied particular terms through which both those who had experienced the war and younger generations wanted to think of the past and their national identity.

This chapter examines the heroic narratives that evolved around the Jägers in post-war society. It outlines the main developments of the Jäger movement, yet its focus is not on the historical events but on how they were remembered and represented after the war, in historical and fictional works written by or with the assistance of members of the Jäger movement. The analysis is based on different types of texts: from to the 1200-page anthology *Suomen Jääkärit* (“Finland’s Jägers”), published in 1918–1920, over dramatic fiction and political pamphlets, to articles about the Jäger heritage published in the Finnish Army’s magazine for soldiers throughout the interwar period. The chapter aims to describe and analyze how the specific young manliness and war heroism of the Jägers was constructed as part of war commemoration, what societal and ideological purposes this construction served, and how its images of masculinity can be understood within the context of the history of war heroism, nationalism, and male citizenship.

### European War Heroism and Finland Before the Storm

The myth-making surrounding the Jäger movement and the new forms of militarized manliness that emerged in the wake of Finland’s Civil War need to be studied as a part of wider European developments. During the “long 19th century” up until World War I, a fundamental change in the relationship between male citizenship, manliness, and soldiering had taken place throughout the continent. Soldiering in preceding centuries had mainly been a specialized profession for enlisted troops, recruited from the bottom layers of society. With the spread of universal male conscription – essentially an invention of the

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5 Timothy G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, & Michael Roper, “The Politics of War Memory: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics,” in Ashplant, Dawson, & Roper, eds, *Commemorating War: The Politics of Memory* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 3–85, at pp. 13–14.

French revolutionary republic – men from all layers of society came to fill the ranks. Every village and every family now had their own sons fighting in the army, which led to a sharp rise in the appreciation of soldiering and a new level of national mobilization and patriotic engagement in war efforts. As *every* fit man was in principle liable for the draft, manliness and male civic virtue became increasingly associated with soldiering and military prowess.<sup>6</sup>

This also had striking effects on cultural understandings of war heroism. The fallen soldiers – volunteers or conscripted soldiers – were now respectable citizens of their local communities. Their dying in war mattered to society in quite another manner and thus had to be given a higher meaning as a sacrifice for “the nation.”<sup>7</sup> The status of war hero that previously had been reserved for princes and aristocratic officers was made attainable for any man, of the humblest origin, who showed extraordinary courage and made the greatest sacrifice on the battlefield. As pointed out by historian Karen Hagemann, these “warrior heroes” were constantly being reconstructed in the national memory and presented as models of manliness and patriotism to other men. The myth of “death for the fatherland” became the heart of collective commemoration. The “fallen” were always supposed to have given their lives voluntarily and only for the loftiest objectives: the “honor” and “liberty” of “home and fatherland.” Especially in Prussia and later the German Empire, a veritable cult of fallen heroes ensued. Hagemann points to three societal functions fulfilled by this cult: 1) mobilizing the patriotic and national readiness to fight and sacrifice; 2) helping society deal with the grief of the dead soldiers’ families by bestowing “immortality” on the dead heroes; and 3) constructing a national self-image of Prussia as a “manly nation” that legitimized its military efforts and motivated men for military service.<sup>8</sup>

The iconic fallen heroes of the mid-19th century embodied a rather civilian image of the virtuous citizen who takes up arms when the fatherland is threatened. According to historian René Schilling, the cult emphasized the hero’s

6 See, e.g., Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, & John Tosh, eds, *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 2004); Ute Frevert, *A Nation in Barracks. Modern Germany, Military Conscription and Civil Society* (Oxford & New York: Berg, 2004)

7 George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 15–19.

8 Karen Hagemann, “German Heroes: The Cult of the Death for the Fatherland in Nineteenth-Century Germany,” in Dudink, Hagemann, & Tosh, eds, *Masculinities in Politics and War*, pp. 116–34; Ute Frevert, “Herren und Helden: Vom Aufstieg und Niedergang des Heroismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert,” in R. van Dülmen, ed., *Erfindung des Menschen: Schöpfungsträume und Körperbilder 1500–2000* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1998), pp. 323–44, at pp. 337–40.

individuality and intellectual capacities and expressed enlightenment ideals such as liberty, equality, rationality, and universal moral values. From the 1890s onward, however, a “militarized” cult of fallen heroes developed, idealizing military life and manly self-fulfillment in the all-male military collective. The focus was more exclusively on the hero’s military prowess and his submission to the collective, to military discipline, and to the authoritarian national state.<sup>9</sup>

Finland, however, was on the margin of these European developments up until 1918. The level of militarization within Finnish society was at a historic low while Finland was an autonomous part of the Russian Empire. Its defense was mainly handled by Russian troops stationed in Finland. Nineteenth-century Finnish and Swedish language-nationalisms primarily celebrated language and culture and emphasized the peaceful advancement of national prosperity through popular enlightenment, legal rule, and domestic autonomy. National independence from the mighty Russian Empire was not even considered an option. The heroes of the national pantheon were mainly poets, philologists, composers, and political philosophers. The most important military heroes of the period were the Finnish officers and soldiers depicted in Johan Ludvig Runeberg’s patriotic poems about the Finnish War of 1808–09 and Zachris Topelius’s historical novels about the Thirty Years’ War. However, these immensely popular works of historical fiction certainly provided materials for a cult of military manliness. Especially Runeberg glossed over the sufferings of war and exaggerated the glory and significance of the battles themselves, depicting violence in war as men’s way of displaying their patriotism and citizenship. Topelius also taught the Finnish people to distinguish themselves as bearers of the same virtues as Finnish military heroes of past centuries, yet emphasized more unambiguously than Runeberg that this kind of Finnish identity was perfectly compatible with being a loyal subject of the lawful ruler, the Russian tsar.<sup>10</sup>

A new nationalist militancy came into existence around 1900, for the first time suggesting that military violence could be a purposeful way of promoting Finland’s national interest in relation to Russia. Under the influence of Russian opposition groups, nationalist activists and socialists in Finland incorporated

9 René Schilling, *“Kriegshelden”: Deutungsmuster heroischer Männlichkeit in Deutschland, 1813–1945* (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna & Zürich: Schöningh, 2002).

10 Arto Jokinen, “Myytti sodan palveluksessa: Suomalainen mies, soturius ja talvisota,” in Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta* (Helsinki & Jyväskylä: Minerva, 2006), pp. 141–58, at pp. 141–43; Teuvo Laitila, *The Finnish Guard in the Balkans: Heroism, imperial loyalty and Finnishness in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–1878 as recollected in the memoirs of Finnish guardsmen* (Helsinki: Suomalainen tiedeakatemia, 2003), pp. 74–76.

political violence into their political arsenal. However, this early activism was soon dissolved as a consequence of the Russian government's political concessions in the wake of the Russian Revolution in 1905. In the same context, even the very limited military conscription for Finnish male citizens that had been introduced in 1881 was abolished. As war with Germany broke out in 1914, the Russian government did not find it worthwhile to call up their unruly Finnish subjects, and so the Finns were spared from the mass slaughter on the Eastern Front.

As long as the Russian monarchy was in place, opinions in Finland remained deeply divided over whether resistance should be active or passive and whether the Finns should seek confrontation or reconciliation with the Russian government.<sup>11</sup> A majority of Finns remained loyal to Russia at the outbreak of World War I, and more than 1000 young men actually volunteered to fight in the Russian army.<sup>12</sup> Yet, according to historian Tuomas Hoppu, their motivation ranged from a poor social position and a desire to secure their own and their families' livelihood, to love of adventure and a wish to see the world and gain career opportunities.<sup>13</sup> Among the educated classes in Finland, however, the general attitude towards war and military solutions was largely negative. Historian Vesa Vares has even characterized the *Zeitgeist* among the elites as "very pacifist" up until 1917.<sup>14</sup>

As Finland declared its independence in December 1917, the issue of establishing national military forces became yet another bone of contention between the socialists and non-socialists. Basically, the non-socialists wanted to quickly create an army controlled by the government in order to prevent a revolution, whereas the socialists tried to prevent the required legislation from passing in Parliament. The debate in those last feverish weeks of political argu-

11 Antti Kujala, "Venäjän sosialistivallankumouksellinen puolue ja Suomen aktivismin synty," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 85.2 (1987): 83–95; Matti Klinge, *Finlands historia: Kejsartiden* (Helsinki: Schildts, 1996), pp. 353–58, 380–89, 395–98, 428–29; Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkäri liikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluja ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000), pp. 20–45, 66–67; Osmo Jussila, *Suomen historian suuret myytit* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2007), p. 182.

12 See also Pertti Haapala's chapter in this volume.

13 Tuomas Hoppu, *Historian unohtamat: Suomalaiset vapaaehtoiset Venäjän armeijassa 1. maailmansodassa 1914–1918* (Helsinki: Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, 2005), pp. 61–136.

14 Vesa Vares, "Kulttuurin vai sotilaan aseinen? Porvarillisen pasifismin tausta ja sisältö vuosisadan vaihteessa sekä murtuminen vuoden 1918 sisällissotaan," in Jari Niemelä, ed., *Niin tuli sota maahan! Sotien ja sotalaitoksen vaikutus suomalaiseen yhteiskuntaan* (Turku: Turun Historiallinen Yhdistys, 1995), pp. 279–304.

ment before the outbreak of Civil War demonstrated that anti-militarist sentiment was still strong in Finnish society at this point. There was widespread skepticism, across the divide between the socialists and other parties, towards authoritarian military systems of the Prussian and Russian kind.<sup>15</sup>

The Civil War, however, became a sudden turning point in attitudes towards military matters in Finland. It was the starting shot for a rapid “modernization” of cultural notions of war heroism and the relationship between male citizenship and military service. The Jäger movement heralded this clear break with domestic political tradition and the subsequent introduction of continental, not least Prussian, militarized notions of patriotism, heroism, and manliness. Initially embraced only by a small group of activists, the Jägers’ militancy might have become a mere footnote in history, just like that of the Finnish extremist nationalists around the turn of the century. However, their status as victorious heroes and rapidly advancing career officers in post-war society, filling ever higher positions in the new Finnish Army from 1918 onwards, as well as their prominent role in the writing of Finland’s contemporary history, meant that the new militarized type of male citizenship that they brought forward gained immense cultural and political significance.

### Youthful Passions and Generational Conflicts

The writing of the history of the Finnish Civil War started long before the weapons had fallen silent, as its participants not only wrote letters and diaries documenting their experiences but also already started drafting manuscripts intended for publication. In the latter part of 1918, the stream of accounts of the war events grew into a torrent. Not least the activists of the Jäger movement proved to have a great itch to write about their experiences. Prominent Jäger officers such as Aarne Sihvo, Erik Heinrichs, Heikki Nurmio and Viljo Tuompo promptly published memoirs.<sup>16</sup> In December 1918, the first installment of a major history of the Jäger movement started appearing, written mainly by its own participants. By 1920, this work under the title (in translation) *Finland’s Jägers: Lives and Activities with Text and Illustrations* encompassed 18 volumes

15 Anders Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military: Conscript and Masculinity in Finland, 1917–1939* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

16 Aarne Sihvo, *Kolmasti komennettuna: Muistelmia Saksan-matkoiltaani* (Jyväskylä: K.J. Gummerus, 1918); Erik Heinrichs, *Kring Östersjön: bilder och betraktelser från jägarnas färder* (Helsinki: Schildt, 1918); Heikki Nurmio, *Jääkärien päiväkirja* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918); V.E. Tuompo, *Suomen Jääkärit*, 2 vols (Jyväskylä: K.J. Gummerus, 1918).

and 1168 pages by almost 80 different authors. It was swiftly translated and published in Swedish as well.<sup>17</sup>

An interesting feature in these early commemorative texts was their almost exclusive focus on the origins of the Jäger movement, the Jägers' military training in Germany in 1915–1916, and the time they spent in the trenches on the German Eastern Front in 1916–18. Their activities in the Finnish Civil War, however, were largely absent. For example, the 1200-page *Finland's Jägers* ended with a depiction of the Jägers' sea voyage back to Finland in February 1918. This pattern continued in histories and reminiscences of the Jäger movement in the years to come. It lies near at hand to understand this as an attempt to direct attention away from the bloody internal conflict that tore Finnish society asunder in 1918. The narrative focus on the Jägers' adventures in foreign lands and the movement's original motives – to initiate and assist a foreign invasion or a popular uprising in order to detach Finland from Russia – told another more edifying story about a group of young heroes setting out on a quest for freedom for their people and preparing a “war of liberation” against an external enemy, namely, Russia. Whatever happened in 1918, these narratives signaled, the intentions of the Jäger movement had never been directed against any group within its own people.<sup>18</sup>

The Jäger story, as it was usually told, begun with the outbreak of the World War. The setting was a country depicted as sunken into a state of despair and degradation. The defense of Finland's autonomy had slowly been ground down and broken by the renewed attempts of Russian authorities to integrate the country more tightly into the empire. As commemorated by the participants in the Jäger movement, Finland was weighed down by an atmosphere of heavy pessimism and feelings of defeat in the years preceding the Great War. Among nationalist students at the Imperial Alexander University of Finland in Helsinki, there was an increasing frustration with the older politicians' apparently inefficient policies of passive protest, based on legal arguments and defense of the Grand Duchy's old Swedish constitution. To these young men, Germany's declaration of war on Russia in August 1914 was “like a thunderbolt lightening up a black horizon” – finally an opportunity to take action.<sup>19</sup>

17 Jaakko Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen jääkärit: Elämä ja toiminta sanoin ja kuvin*, 20 vols (Kuopio: Sotakuvia, 1918–20); Swedish edition: Jaakko Suomalainen et al., eds, *Jägarbataljonen 27: En historik i ord och bild*, 19 vols (Helsinki: Söderströms, 1919–20).

18 See also Aapo Roselius's chapter “The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards, and the Veterans' Union” in this volume.

19 See, e.g., Kai Donner, “Jägarrörelsens uppkomst och utveckling intill den ryska revolutionen 1917,” in Kai Donner, Th. Svedlin, & Heikki Nurmio, eds, *Finlands frihetskrig skildrat av deltagare*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Schildts, 1921), pp. 72–73; P[ehr] H[ermann] Norrmén,

During the fall of 1914, small cliques of university students and young graduates discussed different courses of action among themselves, from inciting and aiding a Swedish invasion of Finland to simply stirring up a rebellion against the Russian rule in Finland. Emissaries were sent to Stockholm but could extract nothing but sympathy from their Swedish contacts. When a government program for the further dismantling of Finland's autonomy was revealed in November 1914, another idea gained support among the students. This amounted to sending a small group of Finnish volunteers to Germany for military training. They would then assist a Swedish or German landing in Finland, which the students at that point expected would take place within a few months.<sup>20</sup>

Contacts with the Germans were soon established, with the help of exiled Finnish activists in Stockholm and Berlin. At the end of January 1915, the German Ministry of War agreed to give military training to a group of 200 Finnish students. Within one month of the German decision, the first group of 55 students left Finland, travelling to neutral Sweden under various false pretexts and then secretly continuing to an army training camp outside Hamburg. At the end of March 1915, their number had risen to 180. These first volunteers only planned to participate in a four-week crash course, disguised as a boy-scouting course, and were unaware that they would not return to Finland until three years later. Their training was gradually extended, however, as the German military authorities postponed a decision on their future. In August 1915, the Germans agreed to the entreaties of Finnish activists lobbying in Berlin and decided to enlarge the training group to a battalion of the German Army comprising circa 2000 men. A secret recruitment campaign was started in Finland, this time aimed not only at students but also at young men from all layers of society. A handful of Jägers returned to Finland from the Lockstedt camp to assist in the recruitment and carry on espionage for the Germans. The bulk of the recruitment organization, however, was formed by networks of independence activists in Finland. Playing hide-and-seek with the Russian gendarmerie and Finnish snoopers, the activists managed to recruit hundreds of young men and smuggle them out of the country both by sea and land to Sweden.<sup>21</sup>

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“Itsenäisyysaatteen herääminen Suomen ylioppilasnuorison keskuudessa,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 28–51, at pp. 28, 43; quote: Emerik Olsoni, “Suomen seitsensataisivuotinen sivistystaistelu: Johdannoksi Suomen jääkärien historiaan,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 9–25, at pp. 22–23.

20 Hannes Ignatius et al., eds, *Suomen Vapaussota vuonna 1918*, vol. 1 (Helsinki: Otava, 1920–25), pp. 141–60; Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 44–60.

21 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 92–249; see also Kai Donner, “Yleiskatsaus värväystoimintaan Suomessa v. 1915–16,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen*



Initially, however, the activists had great problems gaining support and funding for their venture among the older generation of nationalist leaders and politicians in Helsinki. These thought that the Jäger movement's foolhardy plans could only worsen Finland's situation. Moreover, after the German atrocities during the invasion of Belgium in August–September 1914, public opinion in Finland was largely sympathetic to the Entente and strongly negative toward Germany.<sup>22</sup> Neither were the young activists' parents and relatives usually very understanding. As Jäger activist Bertel Appelgren later recollected, the greatest difficulty for the 200 young men who secretly prepared to travel to Germany in the winter of 1915 was getting their family's permission. "Often, they had to negotiate with some older politician in order to calm their closest ones. Then we usually knew there would be no journey for that young man, unless he had enough strength of will not to give in."<sup>23</sup>

The repeated theme of generational conflict in histories of the Jäger movement points to the fact that it represented a significant shift within Finnish nationalism, both in terms of its objectives – full national independence – and its readiness to use military violence as a means in the national struggle. The Jäger stories often depicted this shift in terms of the youth and youthful passion of the Jäger activists. According to an account by Pehr Norrmén, one of the instigators and earliest participants in the Jäger movement, published in 1918, the young men who started the movement had grown up in the "agitated patriotic atmosphere" caused by the struggle over Finland's autonomy since the turn of the century. They had experienced this period with an emotional intensity that Norrmén claimed was peculiar to young people. The Russian policies had ignited "a burning national hatred" of all things Russian in this younger generation, he claimed, and the young men were "trembling with a desire for some form of action that would satisfy this hatred."<sup>24</sup>

In his documentary book *Diary of a Jäger* (1918), published soon after the Civil War, Heikki Nurmio described how three adolescent boys came to see him in 1915. They were eager to leave for Germany, but as their high school teacher at the time, Nurmio felt it was his duty to talk them out of it. In hindsight, he commented on his failure: "Who can still a storm with rebukes. The storms of spring take their own course; they crush the chains of nature, as if for

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*Jääkärit*, pp. 321–34; Sulo V. Pekkola, "Värväämässä," in *ibid.*, pp. 348–62.

22 Klinge, *Finlands historia*, pp. 487, 494.

23 Bertel Appelberg, "Värväys pfafinderkursille," in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 132–36, at p. 133. Cf. E[rich] H[einrichs], "Miten minusta tuli jääkäri," *Suomen Sotilas* no. 5, 1935, pp. 132–35.

24 Norrmén, "Itsenäisyysaatteen herääminen," p. 38.

fun, with their irresistible force. In those youths, under their seemingly tranquil surface, the storms of spring were raging and already doing their irresistible work.”<sup>25</sup>

In 19th-century middle-class notions of masculinity, adolescence and youth constituted a period in a man’s life associated with strong passions and desires. In most contexts, however, these passions of youth were viewed in a negative light, as moral perils for the immature young man. Educators impressed upon young men the importance of manly self-restraint and building a “strong character” in order to resist being misled onto the road to perdition by one’s passions and desires.<sup>26</sup> In the Jäger narrative, in contrast, the passions of youth came to represent a positive life force that propelled patriotic young men to action and heroic deeds, overcoming the straitjacket of rational deliberation and the paralyzing prudence of their parents’ generation.

Jäger colonel Aarne Sihvo recollected how his “heart blazed up in a fierce fire” when he first heard of the Jäger movement’s plans, aiming for national liberation and independence: “I was unable to reason coldly about it, unable to weigh the overwhelming difficulties of the venture. I was seized by the all-defying recklessness among my friends, the hopeful dedication and heartfelt faith that justice would prevail.”<sup>27</sup> It is significant that in the fall of 1918, when these recollections were published, Sihvo was not just any young hotheaded adventurer but was one of the most prominent and celebrated heroes of the “War of Liberation.”<sup>28</sup> He had been among the first volunteers to travel to Germany and made several dangerous trips back to Finland to recruit new Jägers and carry out espionage. He served successfully as commander of the White forces in the Karelian sector during the Civil War and was the only Jäger to be promoted colonel already during the war. Being young, handsome, Finnish-speaking, and a Jäger, Sihvo stood out as a national hero even more attractive to the most ardent Fennoman nationalists than the commander-in-chief of the White Army, General Mannerheim.<sup>29</sup>

The passionate desire for action and deeds among the young generation was thus idealized and juxtaposed with the caution and passivity of the older generation. Perhaps the most explicit articulation of this narrative is to be found

25 Heikki Nurmio, *Jääkärien päiväkirja* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918), p. 22. Cf. Aarne Sihvo, “Miten minusta tuli jääkäri,” in Suomalainen et. al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 73–75.

26 David Tjeder, *The Power of Character: Middle-class Masculinities, 1800–1900* (Stockholm: Stockholm University, 2003).

27 Sihvo, “Miten minusta tuli jääkäri.”

28 “Aarne Sihvo ja hänen esikuntansa,” in Kivijärvi, ed., *Suomen vapaussota 1918*, pp. 120–21.

29 Vesa Saarikoski, “Aarne Sihvo,” *The National Biography of Finland on-line*, <<http://www.kansallisbiografia.fi/kb/artikkeli/1759/>>, published 2006, accessed 22 May 2013.

in the stage play *The Jägers*, written by Jäger major Leonard Grandell and best-selling author Kersti Bergroth, which premiered at the National Theater in Helsinki in 1933. In the play, young Arvo is secretly preparing to travel to the Jäger training camp in Germany. He angrily bursts out at his father, who adamantly abides by legality in the face of Russian oppression: “A young person will do foolish things if he is not allowed to fight. (...) A young person cannot control himself – but maybe he can control the world. Let us fight outwards, that suits us. And let us fight in our way.” At the end of the play, as Arvo returns as a Jäger officer and the liberator of his own village from the socialist revolutionaries, his father admits: “I say, it was a great idea, this strange deed of the boys. Where did they get it, immature children? It took us old people years to even *understand* it. To them it just came ready-made – out of somewhere!”<sup>30</sup>

### Germanism, Class, and Language

The idealization of youth, emotion, and action in Jäger memoirs indicates how contemporary cultural currents, such as the rising appreciation of youth and youthful life force, had an effect on participants in the Jäger movement – both as motivational forces for some of the early Jäger activist and as an available discourse to glorify their actions in the aftermath. Many of these currents reached Finland from Germany, which was the main source of ideological influences on Finnish elites in the period. According to historian Matti Klinge, a current of “Germanism” in the decade before World War I, especially among Swedish-speaking young men of the educated classes in Finland, celebrated manliness, activism, sports, and racialist notions of “Germanic energy.” Together with an increasing admiration of the German *Kaiserreich* and its science, economy, and military strength went a celebration of emotionality, will power, and instinct. Force, action, and intuition were seen as superior to dry rationalism.<sup>31</sup>

In the decades leading up to World War I, the ideal stereotype of masculinity had hardened throughout Western Europe. Especially in Germany, there was a cultural obsession with male willpower and resolve. According to historian George L. Mosse, the reality of 19th-century European war experiences had been transformed into a myth, which looked back upon war as a meaning-

30 Kersti Bergroth & L[eonard] Grandell, *Jääkärit: Kolme kuvaelmaa jääkäriликkeestä* (Helsinki: Otava, 1933), pp. 25–26, 126. Cf. Heikki Nurmio, *Jääkärien päiväkirja*, p. 22.

31 Matti Klinge, “Ruotsinkielisten 1910-lukua: germanismia ja konservatiivisuutta,” in idem, *Vihan veljistä valtiososialismiin* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1972), pp. 45–56.

ful and even sacred event that made life worthwhile for young men and liberated them from the boredom and routine of bourgeois life. Mosse sees this mythical notion of war as a key factor behind the war enthusiasm that swept over Europe in August 1914. Young men were seduced by its image of war as providing an escape from loneliness into a feeling of national unity and a communal experience with other men. They were fascinated with the manliness, energy, and unsophisticated strength that the myth associated with war.<sup>32</sup>

For young men attracted by this cult of feeling and manly action, the option of sitting out a world war in peaceful Finland, while other nations seemingly fought over the future of Western civilization, must have seemed unmanly and shameful.<sup>33</sup> Filled with a youthful urge for action, the Finnish nationalist students found the caution and passivity of the older generations suffocating and emasculating. By contrast, the alternative of joining forces with the admired Germans naturally had an allure of manly adventure. Jäger activist Pehr Norrmén's recollection of a night in October 1914 illustrates aptly this pent-up fervor: students at a nightly gathering in Helsinki burst out singing *Die Wacht am Rhein*, "seized with a crazy enthusiasm [...] without damping and without precaution, just for the joy of defying the prevailing sentiment of old men's wariness."<sup>34</sup>

At the brink of World War I, these Finnish students' German counterparts, i.e., German men of the educated classes, had developed a gender identity that combined emotionality, analytical intellect, and artistic creativity with military prowess. According to historian Jens Ljunggren, this particular notion of manliness served the needs of men of the educated elite – scholars, scientists, writers, and artists – to assert their own social status in relation to the social advances of other groups, such as the influential and admired German military elite or the increasingly wealthy economic elite of industrialists and businessmen. Men of the educated elites tried to demonstrate their superiority through a cult of genius and the war heroism of the educated, feeling individual who left aside his intellectual pursuits and took up arms to defend the fatherland in peril. They wanted to think of themselves as superior warriors by virtue of their superior spirituality and more "comprehensive" manliness.<sup>35</sup>

32 George L. Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 100–02; idem, *Fallen Soldiers*, pp. 6–7, 22, 53–69.

33 See also Juha Siltala's chapter and Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War" in this volume.

34 Norrmén, "Itsenäisyysaatteen herääminen," pp. 46–47.

35 Jens Ljunggren, *Känslornas krig: Första världskriget och den tyska bildningselitens androgyna manlighet* (Symposion: Stockholm & Stehag, 2004).

Especially the Swedish-speaking young men of Finland's educated elites were apt to easily identify with similar class-based gender ideologies in the early 20th century. To these young men, the democratization of Finnish society and the advances of Finnish-speakers within education, administration, and commerce, as well as the increasing political strength of the workers' movement, represented a threatening loss of power, prestige, and social position. In order to legitimize their status as a separate ethnic group and justify the high proportion of Swedish-speakers in the top layers of society, Swedish-language nationalists developed notions about a distinctive "Finland-Swedish" national character. Swedish had traditionally been the language of the educated classes in Finland but was also spoken by peasants and fishermen in the coastal regions. As a reaction to the Fennoman nationalist movement in the late 19th century, the Swedish-speaking educated classes had started to construct a Swedish nationality in Finland among these disparate social groups. Around the time of World War I, this nationalist rhetoric depicted Swedish men as superior to the Finns in their civic and manly virtues; as more rational, freedom-loving, energetic, and warlike.<sup>36</sup>

If these constructions were to be taken seriously, they more or less demanded that Swedish-speaking university students take on the role of a patriotic avant-garde and military leaders of the nation. The intertwined issues of language, class, and masculinity might help explain why 64 per cent of the first 150 Finnish students arriving for military training in Germany in 1915 were Swedish speakers, at a time when they only comprised 25 per cent of the students at the Imperial Alexander University. However, these issues are insufficient to explain the Jäger movement as a whole. After the large recruitment campaign in the movement's second stage, three-quarters of the battalion was eventually made up of Finnish-speakers. Neither was the Jäger movement in its later stages an exclusive project of the educated elites; university students were certainly over-represented, but almost one-third of the Jägers were workingmen and one-sixth were farmers. Office clerks, shop assistants, and seamen were well represented as well. This could be taken to demonstrate widespread support for the idea of independence by military means. However, as will be discussed below, other motives for enrollment have to be taken into account as well.<sup>37</sup>

36 Sigríður Mathiasdóttir & Ann-Catrin Östman, "Möte mellan manligheter: Nationalism, bondeideal och (åter)skapandet av de övre skiktens manlighetsideal?," in Göran Fredriksson et al., eds, *Könsmaktens förvandlingar* (Göteborg: Göteborgs universitet, 2003), pp. 91–108; Anders Ahlbäck, "Årans och hjältarnas anspråk: Militär manlighet och de svenskspråkiga männens medborgarskap i det nya Finland, 1918–1925," *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 97:1 (2012): 42–74, at pp. 51–54.

37 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 254–65.

The Jäger activists nonetheless had great difficulties recruiting the whole amount of volunteers that the Germans were willing to train. Historians such as Matti Klinge and Matti Lackman have questioned the nationalist bias of much history-writing about the Jäger movement, underlining that there was no broad support for the plans for an armed rebellion in Finnish society before the convulsions in Russia in 1917. Lackman has also pointed out that the Jäger histories always highlighted the activities of the young and zealous student activists, although most of the initiatives and decisions were actually taken by an older generation of Finnish nationalist activists and politicians or by the German military authorities. Many bourgeois “old activists” saw Germany as a natural ally not only against the Russians but also against the ever-strengthening socialist movement and the growing threat of social revolution in Finland. The German military command, for its part, naturally had a strategic interest in inciting a rebellion against Russian rule in Finland.<sup>38</sup> The idealistic young students were used according to German strategic interests and might not always have realized – or later wanted to admit – to what extent they were being manipulated from the onset. After the “War of Liberation” and Germany’s defeat in World War I, there was naturally more patriotic splendor in ascribing the idea and driving force behind the movement completely to the ardent young patriots. In commemoration, youthful passion, zealous nationalism, longing for deeds, willpower, and willingness to take action came to dominate the image of the Jäger heroes – and thereby the model for patriotic military manliness conveyed through these narratives.

### The Transformative Power of Military Service

After the Jäger activists’ adventurous departure from Finland, the next stages in the Jäger stories depicted their military training at Lockstedter Lager in 1915–16 and the period the Jäger battalion spent in front-line duty, in several locations around Riga from June 1916 until February 1918. Although their time in the German Army was usually recounted in the peculiarly humorous tone often used in men’s reminiscences of military service, it was nonetheless made clear in commemoration that these were “the years of ordeal”<sup>39</sup> for the Finnish Jägers; a time of physical hardships and nerve-racking uncertainty about the future.

38 Klinge, *Finlands historia*, pp. 494–98.

39 Sam[uli] Sihvo, *Jääkäriin morsian: Kolminäytöksinen sotilasnäytelmä Libausta lauluineen ja tansseineen* (Helsinki: Otava, 1921), p. 150.

Writing about their memories of the time at training camp, the Jägers emphasized the extremely harsh conditions, the severity of Prussian discipline, endless closed-order exercises and draconian drill officers, the lack of food due to war-time rationing, and the oftentimes depressed and sometimes despairing mood among the Finnish volunteers<sup>40</sup> – but also how these experiences transformed them. Writing about their time in Lockstedt more than 15 years later, the Jägers G.F. Helsingius and Ture Eriksson remembered the arrival at the training camp as a “moment of creation.” They were “met with a blast from a new world, stronger and more austere.” Eriksson depicted the recruit training in Lockstedt as absolutely hellish, as “pure white death”:

Yet not we but our souls died. Our old souls that we had dragged along all the way from home, inherited, foisted upon us, struggled for, respected and cherished. Needless ballast! Enough to have a rifle, a belt, a bayonet, a food bag, water bottle, iron-shod boots. – And around this denuded, skinned, naked self something new, sprouting, vigorous and hard started forming, layer by layer: a new soul. (...) I think it was largely the simple grip of life, which we learnt [in the Lockstedt training camp] that gave this new soul its vital force.<sup>41</sup>

Naturally, not only the time the Jägers spent in military training but also their “baptism of fire” at the German Eastern Front was essential to the transformation process in the heroic narrative. The Jägers recollected that the whole battalion was frustrated with the deadly monotony of life in the training camp and therefore immensely “happy” and unanimously “excited” to finally get to fight against the Russians in open combat.<sup>42</sup> Any worries about the Germans’ intentions with the troop and the risk that the battalion could be seriously decimated by Russian shelling was in public commemoration ascribed only to the movement’s older generation of politicians and activists.<sup>43</sup> In reality, however, not all Jägers were willing to risk their lives in the ranks of the German Army. Some wanted to fight only on Finnish soil, others had joined the

40 See, e.g., W.E. Tuompo, “Jääkäriajan muistoja,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* 1929 [not paginated].

41 Ture Erikson, “Den nya själen,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* 1933, pp. 101–04; G.F. Helsingius, “När soldatbaracken tog emot oss,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* 1933, pp. 46–47; Tuompo, “Jääkäriajan muistoja”; J.K., “Kalle Kopfhoch,” *Suomen Sotilas* no. 17 (1924): 913–15.

42 Toivo A. Heimonen, “Jääkäriin päiväkirjasta rekryyttiajalta L. L:ssä,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 487–505, p. 505; Aarne Sihvo, “Pataljoonan asettaminen liikekannalle ja lähtö rintamalle,” in *ibid.*, pp. 561–64.

43 J. Sundwall, “Pataljoonan rintamallehdön diplomaattiset valmistelut,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 557–60.





FIGURE 8.1 *Jägers of the special training unit Sprengkommando Polangen in the summer of 1917. PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.*

battalion for other than patriotic reasons, in the belief that they would never have to see combat. The image of 2000 young men united in spirit by a common patriotic conviction and endeavor, later constructed by the members of the movement's ideological core, was largely fictitious.<sup>44</sup>

Memories of the Jägers' first front-line duty centered on the lack of action, austere discipline, miserable weather conditions, and soaking wet lodgings during ten weeks in the marshlands outside Riga. They spent most of the time toiling at the fortifications. In their reminiscences, Jäger penmen nonetheless ascribed great significance to their first experiences of shelling, perilous reconnaissance patrolling in the no-man's-land, and repelling Russian sallies. W.E. Tuompo wrote about the "strange festive spirit" he experienced approaching the fire zone for the first time and how the blood of the first fallen Jäger, hit by shrapnel on 13 June 1916, "consecrated" the Finnish troop to the fight for its fatherland.<sup>45</sup> The first drumfire affected the Jägers deeply but was also an experience that "made soldiers of the men," claimed Heikki Nurmio.<sup>46</sup>

44 Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta*, pp. 288–301; Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin Jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 328–43.

45 W.E. Tuompo, "Tulo etulinjaan: Ensimmäinen veri vuotaa," in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 648–50.

46 "Juhannusaatto: 'Yliloikkarit' ja ensimmäinen rumputuli," in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 651–56.

The Finnish Jägers were relocated a few times in the Riga region and witnessed some skirmishes but no major battles. The Germans had declared that the Finnish battalion would be used with great care in order to avoid casualties. The German military command actually spared the battalion, which only lost 13 men in combat, with 49 wounded.<sup>47</sup> In connection with the revolution in Russia in March 1917, it was completely withdrawn from the front line. An extended and nerve-wracking ten-month period of continued military education, uncertainty, and repeated disappointments followed, as the main part of the Jägers anxiously waited for orders in the Latvian city of Libau (Liepāja). Around 20 Jägers were in Finland on special assignments, and only three small additional groups were secretly sent home in the fall of 1917 to serve as instructors for the recently formed Civil Guards.<sup>48</sup>

For a while it seemed likely that Finland would remain part of a democratized Russia. In that case, the Jägers would possibly have had to spend the rest of their lives in exile as terrorists and traitors to the state. Even after Finland's declaration of independence in December 1917, the Finnish government worried that calling home the Jägers might irritate the Entente powers or push the country over the brink into civil war. Only the rising fear of the Red Guards and the Russian troops in Finland moved the government to send a request to Germany in mid-January 1918, calling for the Jägers' repatriation. Because the Germans were careful not to disturb the delicate peace negotiations with Russia in Brest-Litovsk, a departure was further delayed. Only on 25 February, four weeks after the outbreak of open war in Finland, did the main part of the Jägers disembark from three merchant vessels outside the town of Vaasa on the western coast of Finland. The day of their return later became a key event in the commemoration of the War of Liberation and the cause for yearly celebrations in the interwar period.<sup>49</sup>

In the heroic narratives, the transformation process had been completed by the time the Jägers returned to Finland. Landing in Vaasa, they were already seasoned warriors who had looked death in the eye and were ready to fearlessly lead their troops into battle. In White Finland, great expectations were set on the Jägers in this respect. In the situation that had arisen, there was a great lack of trained military personnel and especially an acute shortage of competent training and troop officers. Depictions of the Jägers' homecoming

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47 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, p. 537.

48 E.E. Kaila, "Frihetskrigets förberedelser i hemlandet," in Kai Donner, Thure Svedlin, & Heikki Nurmio, *Suomen vapaussota*, vol. 1 (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1921), pp. 325–34.

49 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 668–73; Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta*, pp. 531–36.

parades convey the emotions that were set in motion merely by the sight of apparently well-trained Finnish troops in smart uniforms. For example, the arrival of some 100 Jägers in the town of Jyväskylä on 4 March was celebrated with an impressive ceremony in the main square. An orchestra, a choir, and Civil Guards in formation lined the square that was decorated with Finland's coat of arms and blue and white flags and surrounded by thousands of people.

A few minutes to 3 o'clock the Jägers marched onto the square while the orchestra played [...] and the audience cheered to greet them. The sight was wonderful: the springy, measured march of our young, passionate Jägers, the sharp and powerful commands, everything had an arousing and uplifting effect. [...] [The parade] filled every heart with joy and pride and a firm trust in Finland's great future.<sup>50</sup>

In fictional Jäger stories, the protagonists were sometimes portrayed as reckless adolescents upon leaving home for the great adventure. Yet, when they returned, they had invariably grown into real men. Without military discipline and a war to fight, it was implied, some of these young men's restlessness and longing for action might have led them into conflict with the ordered society. However, when the nation was in danger and deeds were needed, the passionate nature of young masculinity was transformed from a problem in normal peacetime society into a rescuing resource in times of crises. War and noble action gave the passions of youth the possibility of being discharged in a way that was of benefit to society.

The journalist and former student of theology Eino Salmelainen depicted the main character of his 1922 short story "How Rudolf Borg became a Jäger" as an unusual and precocious adolescent who was ill-adjusted to his school environment, did not care for schoolwork, and caused his parents great worry. Rudolf Borg leaves for Jäger training in Germany and returns transformed. The narrator declares that Borg "fought like a man" in the War of 1918 yet wonders aloud whatever would have become of the boy if he had not found his calling in soldiering. "The manly and gallant officer's dress still hid within it more of a daredevil boy than a manly man. After the war, life here once more began to feel too plain and ordinary. Then the battlefields of Estonia and East Karelia could for their part bring his restless mind gratification." The story ends with a depiction of how Rudolf Borg visits his hometown as a stately officer. His old schoolmates who had used to make fun of him now shy away in awe and do

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50 "Jääkärit tulevat," pp. 46–47.

not know what to say. His father, however, is proud to walk around town with him: “He felt that his boy had now become a man.”<sup>51</sup>

In narratives such as the stage play *Jääkärit* or the short story about Rudolf Borg, military training, war experience, and the duties of an officer thus channeled the foolhardiness and passion of youth and gave them forms respected and appreciated by society. In the post-war context in which these stories were published, the depictions of the ordeals and transformative power of austere Prussian military training not only formed a central element in the narrative logic of the hero myth. Implicitly, they also served to legitimize any excessive harshness or toughness in Finnish military training in the 1920s and 1930s – largely led by Jäger training officers. If the Jägers’ experiences had eventually produced the hardened military manliness of exemplary military heroes, a bit of rough play certainly would not hurt the present conscripts either – on the contrary, it would toughen them and make them warriors, capable of serving their nation like real men.

### New Men and New Officers

The Jägers’ activities during the actual “War of Liberation” do not come out as strongly or in such detail in the heroic narratives as their previous adventures during the Great War. The history of the Civil War was usually treated as a separate topic or a kind of an epilogue to the Jäger story as such. In the three different multivolume histories of the war that were published in 1918–1925, edited by prominent officers and activists on the white side, the Jäger movement was mainly described in the background chapters about the war preparations. The particular texts about the Jägers ended with accounts of their repatriation to Finland. The bulk of these monumental works focused on detailed yet surprisingly detached expositions of the army organization and military operations on the White side during the months of war, paying no special attention to individual “heroic” front commanders or the Jägers as a group.<sup>52</sup>

After their return to Finland, the Jägers were primarily assigned the task of training the government’s new conscripted troops. These soldiers had been drafted after the old conscription law of 1878 was reintroduced on 18 February

51 Eino Salmelainen, “Kuinka Rudolf Borgista tuli jääkäri,” *Suomen Sotilas* nos 13 (1922): 207–08 & 15 (1922): 242.

52 Kai Donner, Thure Svedlin, & Heikki Nurmio, *Suomen vapaussota*, 8 vols (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1921–27); Hannes Ignatius et al., eds, *Suomen Vapaussota vuonna 1918*, 6 vols (Helsinki: Otava, 1920–25).

1918. They were a mixed crowd in comparison to the voluntary Civil Guards, but the Jägers swiftly managed to train efficient conscript regiments that participated in heavy fighting already in the battles of Tampere and Rautu at the end of March and beginning of April 1918. The Jägers used the austere “Prussian” methods they had learned in Germany to train and discipline these troops. According to the reminiscences of Jäger officer Jalmari Kara, the Jägers were well aware that the Finnish recruits hated this “Prussian discipline.” Kara claimed that they nonetheless knew from their own experience in Germany that these methods actually worked and produced a closely knit troop fit for combat.<sup>53</sup>

In the war commemoration, the military expertise and leadership of the Jägers was often identified as a decisive advantage of the White forces over the well-equipped but poorly trained Red troops. The Swedish colonel W.A. Douglas, who participated in the Finnish Civil War as a staff officer, later recalled that the Jägers “enjoyed an almost supernatural trust among the nationally minded public in Finland.” According to the historian and politician Eirik Hornborg – himself a Jäger – the Jägers’ greatest contribution to the White Army was not in their numbers, roughly 400 officers and 700 non-commissioned officers, but in their heroic standing as seasoned warriors in a country hitherto untouched by the Great War. “[A] Jäger was a legendary figure who enjoyed the blind confidence of his men, whether he actually deserved it or not.” Sievi Holmberg, who worked as a nurse for the Whites, described Jäger officer Veikko Läheniemi, commanding the White forces in her sector, as a man who “despite his modest appearance arouses horror in the enemy, unlimited admiration and respect in his own boys, and with his personal courage shows his boys that ‘a real man can only fall, not yield to danger.’”<sup>54</sup>

Jäger stories that explicitly continued the heroic epos of the Jägers into the tumultuous months of the Civil War were often tributes to the exceptional heroic qualities of individual Jägers – especially Jäger officers who were killed in the war. Characteristic of such texts was that the Jägers were depicted as charismatic officers who could encourage and inspire their men through their patriotic zeal and fearlessness in battle. In a memorial publication to “the Vaasa region’s people’s hero,” Jäger lieutenant Oskar Peltokangas was described as a man whose comportment was “stirring and uplifting” because of the “sympathetic effect” of his patriotic fervor. Peltokangas was remembered as intrepid,

53 Jalmari Kara, *Jääkärien muistelmia* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918), pp. 337–42.

54 Eirik Hornborg, *Finlands hävder*, vol. 4 (Helsinki: Schildts, 1933), p. 415; W.A. Douglas, “Mitt möte med de finska jägarna 1918,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1938): 32–36; Sievi Holmberg, “Rajaseudun taistelussa 1918,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1934): 81–84. Cf. Jalmari Kara, *Jääkärien muistelmia* (Helsinki: Kirja, 1918), pp. 340–41.

cold-blooded, and daring in battle but, above all, admired and popular among the civil guardsmen he commanded. This was attributed to his “appealing simplicity” and general friendliness. When some of his men once hesitated to advance under heavy fire, he kindly encouraged them not to be afraid but move forward, since there was “nothing better and sweeter than giving one’s life for Finland.” Peltokangas, who was killed in battle on 26 March 1918, was described by one of his subalterns as “a real man through and through.” He was modest, right-minded, warm-hearted, and friendly, yet with a “pleasant and manly” taciturnity, reserve, and artlessness. His personality was explicitly celebrated in the publication as an ideal and inspirational expression of the provincial ethnic character in his Swedish-speaking home district.<sup>55</sup>

The heroic narratives repeatedly stressed how the Jägers had emerged from the masses of the Finnish people and therefore had a “deep bond” with the people. In other words, they understood and took care of the lumberjacks and farmhands they commanded. Jäger officers were described as strict and demanding leaders, yet with a close and trustful relationship to their “boys.” An obituary for the fallen Jäger lieutenant Yrjö Koivisto in the army magazine *Suomen Sotilas* (“Finland’s Soldier”), published in 1920, recounted how Koivisto sang with his men, refused to ride on his horse when his men had to march along muddy roads, ate the food they ate, slept where they slept, and stood at their side in the heat of battle, “always calm and encouraging where needed.” He was respected “to an unusual degree” by his comrades and his men, and they followed him with pride. Under the “boyishly nonchalant surface was the mind of a real man, apt, glowing and deep, who did not shun even great sacrifices if the cause was just and noble.”<sup>56</sup>

The young men who returned to Finland were not described as blue-eyed Boy Scouts in these texts but as hardened warriors who had experienced horrors and hardships. They embodied a military masculinity hitherto unknown in Finland. It combined traditional notions of patriotic and valorous Finnish men defending their fatherland with new, “democratized” notions of charismatic and zealous officers with a close, understanding, and inspirational relationship to their men. Certain danger and a potential for violence were often included in images of the Jägers. Their narrative heroic manliness contained something hard, ruthless, and sometimes even merciless. The Jägers’ marching

55 Edvin Sundqvist, *Vasabygdens Folkhjärte: Jägarlöjtnant Oskar Peltokangas in memoriam* (Vasa: F.W. Unggrens boktryckeri, 1918), pp. 60–62, 70, 73–74.

56 I[Imari] H[eikinheimo], “Eräs vapausotamme raskaimpia tappioita,” *Suomen Sotilas* no. 8–9 (1919). Cf. “Tampereen valloitus,” in *Suomen Vapauskota*, vol. 2, pp. 87–99; Sam. Sihvo, “Sankarin muisto,” *Suomen Sotilas* nos 20–21 (1926), pp. 339–39.



song, to a text written by Heikki Nurmio in Libau in October 1917, boasted that the Jägers' wrath or hatred (the same word in Finnish) was "as strong as our blow is deep." There was "no mercy and no homeland" for them unless their swords liberated the fatherland, and until then, "our hearts may not soften."<sup>57</sup> This song was promptly set to music by the celebrated composer Jean Sibelius and gained a wide popularity in White Finland after the war.<sup>58</sup>

The conscripted soldiers and civil guardsmen sometimes experienced the Jägers as harbingers of not only new draconian forms of "Prussian discipline" but also new forms of military masculinity that were unfamiliar and partly alarming to domestic cultural sensibilities in Finland. In a causerie published in the Finnish Army magazine in 1924, a fictive rank-and-file-soldier in the Civil War commented, "Us, we were just ordinary fat-faced country bumpkins and them Jägers, they were such skinny and angry-looking boys, like pitch oil merchants, cursin' and makin' such a racket that blue smoke was puffin' from their nostrils."<sup>59</sup> Here, as often happens in men's narratives about military life, humor was probably used to gloss over memories of awkwardness and intimidation.

There are apparent parallels between the military imagery associated with the Jägers and the general feeling that prevailed across Europe that a new type of man had emerged from the trenches of the Great War. In the German version of this notion, iconically depicted by authors such as Ernst Jünger, the war had produced a new race of men of steel, loaded with energy, with supple, lean, muscular bodies, striking faces, and "eyes that had seen a thousand deaths."<sup>60</sup> The Finnish version was less focused on such super-masculine aesthetics and more on pitiless military efficiency. Jäger captain Jalmari Kara wrote in his memoir of the war years (1918) about the "ruthless Jäger spirit" and "eternal hate towards the East" that he claimed would make the young Finnish Army invincible when combined with "iron military discipline."<sup>61</sup> In the popular stage play the *Jäger's Bride*, which premiered at the National Theater in Helsinki in 1921, a Jäger corporal talks merrily of how Russian soldiers are being sent to slaughter by the thousands by their own generals. He is quite unapologetic of bringing this up in the presence of the wife of a Russian soldier – just as he is unapologetic about being unfaithful to his own fiancée with girls in

57 Heikki Nurmio, "Jääkärimarssi," in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, p. 581.

58 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen Preussin jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 640–47.

59 Vaasan Jaakkoo, "Kun m'olin kans jääkäri" *Suomen Sotilas* nos 48–52 (1924): 904–05, reprinted in nos 9–11 (1937), pp. 239–40; cf. Kara, *Jääkärien muistelmia*, pp. 337–42; Urho Kekkonen, "Kun jääkäri karkasi," *Suomen Sotilas*, no. 52 (1921): 806–07.

60 Mosse, *Image of Man*, pp. 115–19.

61 Kara, *Jääkärien muistelmia*, p. 344.



Libau. He bluntly declares, “War brutalizes men in every respect.” The play was written by Jäger second lieutenant Samuli Sihvo, who drew on his experiences of the time the Jägers spent fighting in the German Army in Latvia.<sup>62</sup>

### The Jägers as Military Educators and Reformists

Out of nearly 1300 Jägers who fought in the Finnish Civil War, 121 were killed. Although these deaths were certainly important in commemoration, the emphasis of the Jäger heroic narratives was not on fallen heroes but rather on the heroes who survived and went on to build the new independent nation and its armed forces, making brilliant military careers in peacetime society. There was a decidedly triumphalist undertone in the Jäger stories – especially when compared to the post-war gloom in the “old” European powers that had fought the Great War on the continent. In spite of the Jägers’ hardships, sufferings, and deaths, their epic narrative ended in complete victory and Finland’s emergence from the “War of Liberation” as a vigorous, independent, new nation. The sacrifices, its audiences were told, had been worthwhile.

Close to 170 Jägers went on fighting in the irredentist wars in areas beyond the eastern border that were partially populated by Finnish- and Baltic Finnish-speakers, as well as in the Estonian War of Liberation 1918–19. As peace returned after the Civil War, roughly half of the Jägers left the army and went on to continue their interrupted civilian lives. However, 700 still remained in service in 1921, ranging in rank from sergeants to colonels.<sup>63</sup> Some stayed because of promising career opportunities, some because they did not know what else to do. For many, organizing and training strong Finnish armed forces against what they perceived as a constant threat from Russia was also the logical continuation of their mission as freedom fighters. Jäger sergeant majors, lieutenants, and captains manned a large part of the training officer positions when the White Army was reorganized into a peacetime, conscription-based regular army according to German models and initially under the supervision of German military advisors. Ambitious Jäger officers immediately started their climb towards leading positions at the highest level.

Finnish post-war society was, however, conflict-torn and deeply divided. Accordingly, there were two dominant public images of the Jägers as military educators, in part contradicting each other: on the one hand, the harsh and merciless practitioners of “Prussian discipline”; and on the other hand, the

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62 Sihvo, *Jääkäarin morsian*, pp. 94–98.

63 Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen preussilainen jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 871, 938.

trailblazers of a new, national, and “modern” military education. Most of the Jägers had only received a hurried NCO training in the German Army, others an incomplete officer training, when they were put in charge of conscripted troops and required to rapidly prepare them for combat in the midst of the Civil War. Without any further education, they continued to train conscripts in the undeveloped army organization of the post-war years, which were marked by a lack of officers and material scarcity.

A great many of the conscripts who arrived to do their military service in the years immediately after the Civil War sympathized with the socialists and resented the regular White Army and the Jäger “butchers.” Even among young men from non-socialist layers of society, there was much reluctance and aversion against the 12–18 months of compulsory military training in peacetime. In the face of such recalcitrant conscripts, many Jäger officers took recourse to the only form of military training they had personally experienced. The “Prussian discipline” soon became a swearword in the Finnish military vernacular and commonly associated with the Jägers. In memories of interwar military training, it usually denoted a stereotyped image of a ridiculous over-emphasis on saluting superiors, on close-order drill and indoor duty, stiffness and pompousness in staging the military hierarchy, and extremely formal and distanced relationships between officers and the rank-and-file.<sup>64</sup>

One influential cultural image of the Jägers from without the heroic commemoration is worth attention in this connection. In his highly controversial but widely read anti-militarist collection of short stories *Fields and Barracks* (1928) (“Kenttä ja kasarmi”), the author Pentti Haanpää presented a caustic psychological portrayal of a fictional Jäger officer. The protagonist is born a tenant farmer’s son and reads “more books than is healthy for somebody bound to become a workman.” He meditates upon Runeberg’s and Topelius’s images of the Finnish people, “beautified by the sheen of poetry,” and is infatuated with ideas about “manly fitness, justice, valor, fatherland.” However, arriving at the training camp in Prussia in 1915, Haanpää’s Jäger character feels “betrayed” and “depressed.” The barracks and training fields are grey and dull, and there is no sign of the military grandness he had expected. “He felt that here one should rather take on the humility of a whipped dog.” The Jäger’s naivety is gradually eroded by his war experiences. Ending up as a training officer in the peacetime Finnish conscript army, his idealism receives a final blow from the reluctance and unyieldingness of the conscripts in military service. The Jäger, now a sergeant-major, becomes increasingly depressed by seeing that the only thing the conscripts are enthusiastic about is inventing schemes to avoid and escape

64 Ahlbäck, *Manhood and the Making of the Military*, pp. 157, 174, 186.

their military duties and exercises. They despise their officers, thinking that someone who serves for money in the armed forces is either too lazy or otherwise unskilled to find any other employment. The task given to the officers, to inculcate patriotism in the soldiers and make them trust and love their officers, proves utterly impossible in the face of the conscripts' averseness. "Swearing and roaring at them was what you had to do, otherwise they would not move an inch." Their obstinacy and scornfulness make the sergeant-major, a thoughtful and idealistic patriot, enraged.

He felt a desire to make these men run until they dropped dead, order them up a tree and down headlong into a snowdrift, to do something really evil, to really humiliate them, to make them understand how great power a man of one golden ribbon had in this Republic.<sup>65</sup>

Haanpää's critical images of the Jäger-led conscript army illustrate the prolonged skepticism and reluctance within Finnish civilian society towards the army system and military culture created by professional officers – both Jägers and former officers of the Imperial Russian Army – during and after the Civil War. Some prominent Jägers, however, actually took the lead in trying to reform the conflict-ridden military culture that, according to its critics, had permeated the new Finnish armed forces as a consequence of "Prussian" training methods. Notable figures in this connection were Heikki Nurmio, Director of the Cadet School 1925–27; Aarne Sihvo, Director of the Military Academy 1924–26 and Commander of the Armed Forces 1926–33; Regiment and Division Commander Hugo Österman, Sihvo's successor as Commander of the Armed Forces 1933–39, and Hannes Anttila, who instigated the formal teaching of military pedagogy in the Finnish armed forces. In writings in the military press as well as in the new army regulations of the mid-1920s and onwards, they pushed for a reform of military training. These self-designated reformists claimed that traditional methods of scaring or drilling the conscripts into mechanical obedience were insufficient to produce the patriotism, willpower, sense of duty, self-discipline, spirit of sacrifice, and individual initiative needed in modern warfare.<sup>66</sup>

Today's armies are different from those in the past, wrote Heikki Nurmio in 1922, in that the men must feel they are fighting for the survival of their people, for freedom and independence. They must believe they are fighting for a just cause and must be ready to sacrifice themselves for this idea. Otherwise, they

65 Pentti Haanpää, *Kenttä ja kasarmi: Kertomuksia tasavallan armeijasta* (Helsinki: Kansanvalta, 1928), pp. 7–28.

66 Ibid.

yield when they look death in the eye. “We must not chain up men’s freedom with slavish demands for submission, because then they will be afraid to fight,” wrote Nurmio. In the past, he claimed, there had only been discipline achieved through drill and harsh punishments. Now, the demands were much greater. “The recruit must be educated into a new human being.” The officers, claimed Nurmio in 1924, must not only be teachers but must also know and understand their soldiers and their background, in order to be able to rouse the dormant forces of patriotism within them. Military training must not inflict insults upon the soldiers but must encourage them. A precondition for true military discipline, he stated, is that the officers have such authority, maturity, and knowledge of human nature that the soldiers feel absolute trust in them.<sup>67</sup>

Nurmio, Sihvo, and Anttila were among the most active Jäger collaborators of the Finnish Army’s magazine for conscripted soldiers, *Finland’s Soldier*, which was started in 1919. Aiming to educate young men in the ranks into “good human beings, good citizens and good soldiers,” this magazine actively participated in the maintenance of the Jäger hero narrative through the constant retelling of the Jägers’ adventures, hardships, virtues, and ultimate triumphs. However, it was only one of the channels through which the Jägers’ ideas and ideals were disseminated throughout the interwar armed forces. Jäger lieutenants and captains led much of the practical military education of Finnish conscripts at a company and regiment level, serving as real-life heroes and models for young men. Jäger officers led the institutions for officer training, from the Reserve Officer School to the Cadet School and the National War College. Towards the end of the 1920s and especially in the 1930s, they increasingly dominated the leading positions in the armed forces and, thus, were the authorities responsible for centrally planning and organizing the military training of young males.

There was actually nothing very new or original about the Jägers’ ideas about a “new” kind of citizen-soldier. The emphasis on the increasing importance of the individual soldier’s morale was a consequence of the rapid development of firearms in the last quarter of the 19th century and had been a staple of Russian and German military pedagogical theorizing ever since.<sup>68</sup> Certainly,

67 *Suunta* 6 December 1922; Heikki Nurmio, “Sananen sotilaspedagogiikka,” *Suomen Sotilas* nos 35–36 (1924): 656–57 & 38 (1924): 708–09.

68 Hew Strachan, “Training, Morale and Modern War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 41.2 (2006): 211–27, at pp. 217–18; Ute Frevert, “Das Militär als Schule der Männlichkeit: Erwartungen, Angebote, Erfahrungen im 19. Jahrhundert,” in Ute Frevert, ed., *Militär und Gesellschaft im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), pp. 145–73, at pp. 159–60; Joshua A. Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation, Military Conscription, Total War, and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), p. 10.

these ideas had not yet permeated thinking and attitudes among the Finnish officer corps enough to eradicate the military culture that remained partly based on what Nurmio discarded as “slavish submission.” However, criticizing “outdated” forms of Finnish military education fit very well into the Jäger mindset of seeing themselves as modernizers and a new generation of men, soldiers, and officers combining idealism and action – although the methods they criticized were largely practiced in the regiments by no one else other than their old Jäger comrades.

It was obviously no coincidence that the new ideal soldier outlined by the Jäger reformists in the 1920s bore a striking resemblance to the Jägers’ own heroic military manliness. In effect, the Jägers called for a reshaped military training that would produce soldiers with the same kind of mindset with which they themselves had fought the “War of Liberation” – at least according to their own heroic self-image. The “new” Finnish soldier defending the liberated nation state should be driven by the same passionate, zealous patriotism and spirit of sacrifice that the hero myth ascribed to the Jägers. Moreover, the officers who were training and leading them should be the “new” kind of officers represented by the Jägers, “close to the people” and motivated by nationalistic sentiment.

### War Heroism, Career-Building, and Military Power Struggles

The notion that the heroic Jäger officers differed from earlier generations of professional officers was not only used in war commemoration or to promote military reform agendas in the post-war period. It was also used, often quite ruthlessly, in the power struggles that ensued within the Finnish officer corps soon after the Civil War. In 1918, the highest command in the White Army had been given to professional middle-aged officers of Finnish origin who had made careers in the Russian Imperial Army before and during World War I. Several of them had reached high positions in the Russian army. Unlike the young Jägers, they had received higher military education and gained thorough experience of planning large military campaigns and leading whole divisions and army corps. As a matter of course, the top positions in the new national armed forces after the Civil War were given to these senior officers, among others Karl Fredrik Wilkama, who was made Commander of the Armed Forces and Oscar Enckell who became Chief of the General Staff in 1919. Although some Jägers were also appointed to high offices, such as division com-

manders, the former imperial officers formed a powerful group within the new military sector.<sup>69</sup>

This left many Jäger officers and activists of the Jäger movement dissatisfied. As they saw it, many of the senior Finnish officers – whom they called the “Tsar’s officers” or “the Russian officers” – had unscrupulously served their people’s oppressors for the sake of their own careers, whereas the Jägers had selflessly put their own future at risk and suffered hardships in the German trenches only for the sake of the fatherland. Together with experienced propagandists and old activists such as Kai Donner and Elmo Kaila, a group of high-ranking Jägers started a campaign in sympathetic newspapers and periodicals in 1920 to oust all “Russianness” from the army. They accused the “Russian officers” of general incompetence, corruption, and mismanagement. Moreover, they claimed that the top brass prevented the Jägers from obtaining continued military education and favored other officers who had served in Russia.<sup>70</sup>

Central to the rancorously nationalistic rhetoric of this campaign was the accusation that, having served for so long in Russia, the “Tsar’s officers” lacked “national spirit” and had become “Russian in mindset.” These officers allegedly did not cherish Finnish independence and derided Finnish nationalism. Elmo Kaila, probably the most active and venomous writer of the campaign, claimed that the “Russian” officers had no contact with their soldiers and left their training completely to the non-commissioned officers. To Kaila, they represented an old oppressive military culture, alien to an army of free citizens: “A soldier in the Russian view is a brutish machine, only good enough for taking orders and being cannon-food.” The soldier, Kaila wrote, will start to hate the army where he is not treated like a human being, and the people will be alienated from national defense.<sup>71</sup> In another article in the *Suunta* (“Direction”) political weekly, the pseudonym “Defender of the Country” claimed that officers who “did not share the soldier’s nationality” (i.e., Finnish officers from an aristocratic-cosmopolitan background) simply could not be good military leaders, since they lacked all prerequisites for “understanding the spiritual life and basic nature of the men”; neither had they the will to closer contact with the

69 Jarl Kronlund et al., *Suomen puolustuslaitos 1918–1939: Puolustusvoimien rauhan ajan historia* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1988), pp. 137–60, 268–74.

70 In Parliament, Agrarian MP Juho Niukkanen already in the summer of 1918 complained about the fact that the Jägers were being sidelined and discriminated against; Parliamentary protocols II 1917, p. 1775; *Suunta* 6 December 1922; Martti Ahti, *Ryssänvihassa: Elmo Kaila 1888–1935* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1999), pp. 259–352; Vesa Saarikoski, *Keskustajääkäri Aarne Sihvo: Näkökulma aseellisen voiman ja yhteiskunnan vuorovaikutukseen itsenäistymisen murroksesta paasikiviläiseen toiseen tasavaltaan* (Helsinki: SKS, 1997), pp. 141–52.

71 *Ilkka* 23, 24, 26, & 29 July 1920. Cf. *Suunta* 21, 28 October & 11 November 1922.

men that would produce the necessary feelings of sympathy and trust within the troops.<sup>72</sup>

By pointing out all the deficiencies of the “Russian” officers, such descriptions directly and indirectly painted an image of another species of officers who *would* meet these requirements. In the words of “Defender of the Country” the officers presently needed were “accomplished, far-sighted men who have the courage to face all the demands of the future and endure the worst ordeals head up high, trusting in victory.” Who would fit this description better than the Jägers? In *Ilkka*, a newspaper sympathizing with the Agrarian League, Elmo Kaila explicitly brought up the Jägers as a positive contrast to the “Russian” officers:

Everybody knows what kind of men the Jägers are: to a large extent their origin is among the ordinary people, they are close to the people, they have dedicated themselves to the military profession enlivened by patriotic ideals and thus they understand the needs of the rank-and-file; they are of young age, but they have gathered life-experience in a hard school.<sup>73</sup>

In the campaign against the “Russian officers,” an opposition was thus constructed between old-school officers, depicted as high-level mercenaries and military professionals with allegiance only to their own self-interest, and the “new” kind of nationalist officers who supposedly had chosen the military profession for purely patriotic and idealistic reasons. The former were portrayed as alienated from the people and steeped in foreign aristocratic traditions, whereas the latter had the required qualifications to induce patriotism and spirit of sacrifice in the soldiers. They would lead by the power of their own heroic example and a deep understanding of the national character of their men.

The campaign culminated in 1924, as the Jäger officers in effect blackmailed the Finnish government into dismissing eight of the country’s highest-ranking officers, including the commander-in-chief, by threatening their own mass resignations.<sup>74</sup> The politicians resisted at first, but the Jägers eventually triumphed. Whether this should be understood as a case of the military overruling parliamentary democracy or as a skillful move on part of the politicians to

<sup>72</sup> *Suunta* 6 December 1922.

<sup>73</sup> *Ilkka* 23 July 1920.

<sup>74</sup> National Archives (KA), K.J. Ståhlberg’s collection, fol. 83, Woldemar Hägglund: “P.M. puolustuslaitoksessamme nykyään vallitsevasta tilanteesta.”



purchase the Jägers' loyalty to the centrist republic – i.e., a kind of “appeasement” policy to prevent the Jägers from allying themselves with authoritarian radical movements – is a matter of perspective.<sup>75</sup> The “purge” of the army command was stretched out over a two-year period and was carried out under various false pretexts. The Jägers involved repeatedly denied that the “officers’ strike” would have been aimed at making their own advancement possible, but the end result was that by 1926 most of the top positions in the army – chief of the general staff, commander-in-chief, two out of three division commanders, and so forth – were filled by Jäger officers.

Historian Max Engman has compared the Jäger officers to similar voluntary nationalist warriors of the same period in Poland and Czechoslovakia. Because they were driven by idealism and high expectations, the Jägers and the Polish and Czechoslovak legionnaires were likely to be disappointed with developments in post-war society – especially with regard to their own career prospects. In all three cases, Engman notes, these men who once had taken up arms against the legal authorities had a low threshold for political intrigue to reach their other objectives.<sup>76</sup> Matti Klinge, in turn, has noted how the Jägers' ascendancy colored the notions of contemporary history in interwar Finland. After the Civil War, Klinge writes, there had been two competing conceptions of the war victory in White Finland: one emphasizing the importance of Germany and the Jägers; the other emphasizing the decisive role played by Mannerheim, the other former Russian staff officers, the voluntary officers from Sweden, and the Civil Guards. After the Jägers assumed control of the armed forces in the late 1920s, Klinge points out, the Jäger interpretation was consolidated and became increasingly dominant up until World War II.<sup>77</sup>

### Blanks and Cracks in the Heroic Image

Essential to the commemoration and construction of Jäger war heroes was not only what was told but also what was left out of the story. Although this chapter focuses on the idealized commemoration of the heroic, it is necessary to

75 See Vesa Saarikoski, “Yhteiskunnan modernisoituminen,” in Ville Perna & Mari K. Niemi, eds, *Suomalaisen yhteiskunnan poliittinen historia* (Helsinki: Edita, 2005), pp. 115–31 at pp. 124–26.

76 Max Engman, “Legionärer och jägare: Skapandet av en nationell officerskår i mellankrigstidens nya stater,” in J. Kuusanmäki & K. Rumpunen, eds, *Snellmanin ja Mannerheimin välissä: Kirjoituksia sodasta, rauhasta ja isänmaan historiasta* (Helsinki: SHS, 2000), pp. 29–55.

77 Klinge, *Finlands historia*, pp. 498–99.

briefly point to just some of the many complexities in the Jäger movement's history that were played down, ignored, or denied in public war commemoration. For one thing, the Jäger commemoration never dwelled on what it was like to leave one's loved ones behind and be separated from them during three long years, nor did it describe the Jägers' homecoming in terms of family reunion or trying to re-establish strained relationships. This, however, is only to be expected. In leaving out any references to the Jägers' private lives and the emotional significance of family ties and romantic attachments, the Jäger stories merely followed the contemporary European genre conventions of both military adventure stories and political history writing.<sup>78</sup> The heroic deeds of men in the public sphere of politics and war were, as a matter of course, separated from the sphere of domesticity, intimacy, and men's emotional dependencies on women. Women only occurred in Jäger narratives as men's assistants in the military effort: as nurses or organizers of lodging, food, and clothing. Their work for the common cause could sometimes be described as adventurous as well, yet women always appeared more as the heroes' courageous helpers than as heroines in their own right.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps the most conspicuous blank in the heroic image that the Jägers and their supporters wanted to convey to posterity lies elsewhere, namely in the compact silence on the wanton executions of war prisoners and acts of vengeance against the Reds in "liberated" areas. There is no detailed information available on the Jägers' complicity in the "White Terror." Since they filled leading positions in the army that carried out the atrocities, especially on the company level and thus in immediate contact with the action on the ground, many of them must have been deeply involved in the Terror. However, the memory of the White Terror was naturally deeply disturbing to the attempts to construct the war not as a traumatic and shameful war of brethren but as a glorious War of Liberation against the Russians and their henchmen. There was obviously a limit to how much rancor and vindictiveness could be fit within the heroic image of the passionate and youthful national warrior.

According to Jäger captain Arno Jaatinen's depiction, the Jägers in Libau were "staggered" when they got the news about the Red rebellion in Finland. This "thunderbolt from a clear blue sky" was a "hard blow" to the Jägers who had firmly believed in the working movement's support for Finland's independence, Jaatinen claimed. They "flatly and unanimously condemned" the

78 See Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 58, 63–64.

79 See, e.g., E. I., "Naiset ja jääkäriilike," *Suomen Sotilas* nos 8–9 (1919): 104–07. Cf. Frevert, "Herren und Helden."

rebellion.<sup>80</sup> However, such descriptions of the Jägers as a close-knit body of patriots united by a common ideology and common purpose point to another significant blank in the story. The social and ideological heterogeneity, strong class hierarchies, and bitter internal conflicts within the Jäger battalion were mostly ignored in the triumphalist post-war rhetoric. Since the educated elites that formed the original core of the Jäger movement also came to dominate the commemorative writing, their own motives, experiences, and understandings tended to be presented as common to all the Jägers.

The main historians of the Jäger movement, Matti Lauerma (1966) and Matti Lackman (2000), have both estimated that roughly one-third of the total 1895 members of the Finnish Jäger battalion joined for reasons other than nationalist idealism. In their ranks were workers who had evidently been misled by recruiters' vague promises of well-paid employment in Germany after a short military training. Others were sailors on Finnish ships that happened to be in German ports when war was declared with Russia. Recruitment to the Jäger battalion could be merely a way of escaping the internment camps for enemy aliens. Many Jägers also were or became unwilling to risk their lives in the German Army's Baltic campaign. This resulted in mutinous sentiments among parts of the battalion during much of 1916 and 1917. Around 200 Jägers, mainly men with little education and from a lower-class background, were sent to a military labor camp and never returned to the battalion.<sup>81</sup>

The *éminence grise* of the Jäger movement, Herman Gummerus, in a memorial sketch published in 1929 explicitly denied the existence of any language conflicts or class hierarchies within the Jäger battalion.<sup>82</sup> This, however, was simply untrue. As studied in detail by Matti Lackman, there was a relatively large number of Jägers who subscribed to the nationalist project of liberating Finland from Russian rule, yet sympathized with the working-class movement and the social democratic ideology. After the revolution in Russia, tensions within the battalion increased, both between socialists and non-socialists and between the mainly Finnish-speaking rank-and-file on the one hand and the largely upper class, Swedish-speaking, higher ranking Jäger NCOs on the other hand. According to Lackman, there are strong indications that the battalion

80 Arno Jaatinen, "Jääkäripataljoona Libaussa," in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 133–34.

81 Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta*, pp. 184–92, 206, 414–22; Lauerma, *Kuninkaallinen preussilainen jääkäripataljoona*, pp. 269–73, 683–99.

82 Herman Gummerus, "Den stora tidens minnen förplikta," *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1929) [not paginated].

was purged of “unfit” and politically “untrustworthy” elements before it was allowed to sail for Finland.<sup>83</sup>

Only two-thirds (c. 1300) of all men recruited to the Jäger battalion returned to Finland to fight in the Civil War. In other words, roughly one Jäger out of three was left behind, either because he was not fit for military service, did not want to fight against the Finnish socialists, or was not allowed to join the White Army. This was not much talked about in the Jäger histories. The “lost” Jägers were naturally difficult to fit into the story of the Civil War as a war of national liberation. Since they had fought alongside their comrades against Russia on the German Eastern Front, it was difficult to question their valor or their patriotism. Brief mentions can be found of how the “weakest” and “most injudicious” elements in the battalion were apt to be influenced by a small number of “malicious agitators” whose innermost motivation was fear of battle. However, the unrest and discontent within the battalion was usually ascribed only to impatience and frustration with the uncertainty and uneventful waiting for repatriation – never to ideological differences among the Jägers.<sup>84</sup>

Another relatively large group of Jägers not much mentioned in commemoration was those who were mentally or physically disabled by their war experiences. In the public commemoration of the Jägers, there was a tendency to pay more attention to heroes who lived or died than to those mutilated and crippled. The attitude taken by the heroic narration to these unfortunate Jägers was complex. On the one hand, they were mostly not mentioned when the feats of the Jägers were celebrated. On the other hand, they were the most forceful living evidence of the Jägers’ heroic spirit of self-sacrifice. Yet, they were strange heroes, since they had lost their heroic strength and manly autonomy and were now in need of society to return the favor. A Jäger pension committee in 1935 reported that at least one-fourth of the surviving Jägers were in need of economic assistance. At least 68 Jägers had died from tuberculosis since the war, 11 had committed suicide, and four “died of mental disturbance.” In addition, 15 were “permanently insane.”<sup>85</sup>

83 Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta*, pp. 464–505; a number of these so-called Red Jägers emigrated to Soviet Russia, see Tauno Saarela’s chapter in this volume.

84 See, e.g., A.E. Martola, “Muistelmia elämästä jääkäripataljoonassa syksyllä 1917 ja pataljoonan tulosta Suomeen helmikuussa 1918,” in Hannes Ignatius, Heikki Nurmio, & Kaarle Soikkeli, eds, *Suomen kohtaloa ratkaistaessa: Kokoelma muistelmia vapaussodasta* (Helsinki: Otava, 1927), pp. 90–95; Ignatius et al., eds, *Suomen Vapaussota 1918*, pp. 209, 212; and Arno Jaatinen, “Jääkäripataljoona Libaussa,” in Suomalainen et al., eds, *Suomen Jääkärit*, pp. 1035–47, 1127–114; quote Arno Jaatinen, “Jääkäripataljoona Riianlahdella,” in *ibid.*, p. 735.

85 Veli-Matti Syrjö, “Jääkärikohtaloitten kirjoja,” *Sotahistoriallinen Aikakauskirja* 7 (1988): 85–108, at pp. 97–100. Cf. Reino E. Rimala, “Jääkärien eläkekysymys: Selostusta n.s.

Historian Sabine Kienitz has suggested that the “reconstruction of aggressive masculinity” among the far right in Germany in the 1920s and 1930s was a way to conceal men’s lack of orientation and loss of meaning after the cultural experiences of psychic and physical destruction of the male body in the Great War. The war dead could be forgotten or made mythical as fallen heroes, but the war cripples could not; their materiality was difficult to explain away and punctuated the myth of war as somehow edifying for masculinity. The invalid’s dismembered male body was a “site of the collective memory of destructive military power.” The cripples were encouraged to make the destruction invisible and overcome their physical damage through willpower and prostheses.<sup>86</sup>

This cultural discomfort with the invalids’ mutilated masculinity is evident in the Finnish Jäger commemoration as well. The invalids were the subjects of relatively few articles, even in the yearly magazine sold around Christmas time to collect monies for charity among disabled and impoverished Jägers. This magazine, *The Jäger Invalid*, was mostly filled with the ubiquitous adventure stories about the Jägers’ undertakings during the war. However, there were one or two texts in every issue in which officials of the Jäger association depicted the heart-rending destinies of many Jägers who wrote letters to the association begging for financial support. These texts added interesting nuances and cracks to the public image of the Jägers. Unemployment and problems earning a living among the Jägers were depicted as results of war experiences, but also as indications of the lack of gratitude in society. Toiling as training officers in the understaffed armed forces after the war was presented as another cause of mental burnout.<sup>87</sup> The association’s secretary, Jäger colonel Paavo Talvela, candidly noted in 1933 that “returning home from a war can be harder than winning the war.”<sup>88</sup>

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jääkärieläkekomitean mietinnöstä ja tekemistä ehdotuksista,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1936): 105–12. On suicidal tendencies among Jäger veterans, see Jussi Jalonen, “War Neuroses and Politics of Trauma among the Finnish Jägers, 1915–1939,” *Lähde* (2009): 75–91.

86 Sabine Kienitz, “Body Damage: War Disability and Constructions of Masculinity in Weimar Germany,” in Karen Hagemann & Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds, *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 181–204.

87 See, e.g., A.F. Leppänen, “Sihteerin salkusta,” *Jääkäri-Invaliidi* (1930) [unpaginated]; Hannes Anttila, “Sihteerin silmään sattunutta,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1932): 50–51; Hannes Anttila, “Jääkäriliiton avustustoiminnasta vuonna 1933,” *Jääkäri-Invaliidi* (1934): 23–24; V[äinö] Valve, “Jääkäri-invaliidit,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1935): 20; and E. Mäkinen, “Mitalin toinen puoli,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1939): 16–18.

88 Paavo Talvela, “Jääkäriliiton toiminnasta,” *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1933): 7–8.

### Re-masculinizing the Finnish Nation

The Jäger mythology claimed that Finland's independence had been achieved by means of manly action, armed struggle, and military might. This conception of history conveyed a significant message as it effectively claimed that the armed forces were the foundation and guarantor of national freedom. This put military service at the heart of male citizenship. Yrjö Ruutu, who had a standing as a kind of theorist and ideologue of the Jäger movement,<sup>89</sup> in 1919 told readers of the army magazine *Suomen Sotilas* that the Jägers had been the first to realize that the only efficient way to achieve independence was the creation of a Finnish Army.

The creation of a Finnish armed force marked the birth of Finland's independence. And still today we must build our country's future on the same solid foundation. Finland's future rests on the strong arms of Finnish soldiers. And just as helpless as a man without arms is a people without an army.<sup>90</sup>

Ruutu returned to the topic in an article commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of the War of Liberation in 1933. The Finns' own influence on their country's future, he claimed, hung on the success of the Jäger movement more than on anything else. "Its existence was proof that the will for independence of the Finnish people had gone from words and wishes to actions." The Jägers, he wrote, had demonstrated that the Finnish people did not want to "sit around arms crossed" in the middle of a World War, waiting for others to act and to help, but that the people of this nation wanted to take responsibility for its own destiny. In Ruutu's mind, the Jäger movement was proof of Finland's "coming of age" as a state.<sup>91</sup>

The passion and valor of a small group of young idealistic men was thus produced as evidence of how the "Finnish people" had developed patriotism strong enough to sustain an independent state. The Jägers springing into action, doing something manly, daring, and magnificent, made it possible for Ruutu and other nationalist writers to gloss over the threateningly emasculated image of a nation passively awaiting its destiny at the hands of foreign armies with the much preferable image of the Finnish nation as strong, ener-

89 Timo Soikkanen, *Yrjö Ruutu: Näkijä ja tekijä* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1991), pp. 40, 42.

90 Yrjö Ruutu, "Suomen Armeijan syntysanat," *Suomen Sotilas* no. 8–9 (1919): 91.

91 Yrjö Ruutu, "Jääkäriliikkeen valtiollinen merkitys," *Jääkäri-invaliidi* (1933): 10; see also Yrjö Ruutu, *Itsenäisyyspolitiikan edellytykset ja alkuvaiheet* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1918).

getic, and masculine. Similar to how they had appeared on the battlefields as armed and trained soldiers, Finland had now emerged on the world stage as a sovereign state: armed, ready, and able to defend itself. Another frequent variation on this theme was that the Jägers had rekindled “the spirit of the forefathers” and thus renewed a centuries-old alleged tradition in which “the Finnish man has fought for his country or valiantly marched for faith, freedom and fatherland,” especially against “the evil East.” In this version, the strong, bold, and manly Jägers evoked the memories of the Finnish forefathers, linking the modern nation to a mythical past. The Jägers’ role in this particular heroic narrative had been to *re-masculinize* a nation that had lost its manly vigor and valor through Russian oppression, the lack of national armed forces, and the anxiousness of old men clutching on to law books instead of taking up the sword.<sup>92</sup>

The Jägers’ military manliness was offered as a model for the young male defenders of the new nation in the post-war era. The hero myth carried the promise that if the new citizen-soldier embraced the ideal embodied by the Jägers – marked by passionate patriotism, manly energy, willingness to fight, endurance, a spirit of sacrifice, and an unflinching faith in victory, heedless of rational considerations – they too would be victorious against the same old enemy: the Russians. Moreover, this model of manliness was not only a distant and lofty ideal but also a living reality in the form of flesh-and-blood training officers and successful army commanders educating the Finnish conscript and leading him into battle. Although many dead heroes were commemorated and honored, the focus on living heroes making splendid military careers in the brand-new national armed forces catered better to the need perceived by many nationalists to optimistically look forward, towards a rosy national future, rather than back at the painful and confusing war between brothers. The Jägers’ particular brand of war heroism was about the spirit of self-sacrifice, a journey to the unknown, hardships and ordeals, but also about homecoming, victory, and success and prestige in post-war society. For young men who were to be educated into citizen-soldiers in interwar Finland, this probably made the Jägers more attractive models of military masculinity than the fallen heroes of the war, no matter how gloriously they had died.

Jäger stories can largely be read as a local Finnish variation of what George L. Mosse has called the “myth of the war experience”; as an attempt to construct a purposeful story about manliness and youth, national warriors, and ultimate victory out of the potentially traumatizing and shameful events of the Civil War, masking the horrors of war and assigning a positive meaning to the sacrifices and losses. In Jäger mythology, the Jägers’ youth and manly valor

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92 Jääkäri [pseudonym], “Viel’ elää isäin henki,” *Suomen Sotilas* no. 15–16 (1935): 347–48.



were used as symbols to convey an optimistic sense of the Finnish nation's youthful vigor and ability to defend and maintain its independence. Their heroic narrative constituted an attempt to direct the commemoration of war towards heroes who survived and invest the war with meanings such as rebirth and liberation. In other parts of the White war commemoration, death and sacrifice certainly played a significant role, as pointed out by Aapo Roselius further on in this volume. Through the Jägers, however, White Finland could construct a victorious, even triumphant, self-image after the war: the country had been "liberated" and achieved independence and was now confidently heading for a prosperous future of national self-fulfillment.

In this respect, the Jäger mythology, as one element in the complex commemoration of the Finnish War of Liberation, differed from how war commemoration developed in western European countries.<sup>93</sup> In Great Britain, for example, the war victory in itself justified the sacrifices that had been made, which allowed for a wide range of public interpretations of the war experience, including strong pacifist sentiments. In Germany, it was much more difficult to call into question the established heroic-romantic glorification of war. Discrediting the values for which the war had been fought would have meant rendering the deaths of millions of German young men utterly meaningless. In Sweden, the war eventually strengthened anti-militarism and political support for military disarmament, as Swedish national identity was constructed around the idea of Sweden as a neutral, progressive, modernist society that had passed beyond the primitive and brutal developmental stage marked by military alliances and conflict-solving by warfare.<sup>94</sup>

In Finland, however, like in many of the other newly independent nations throughout Central and Eastern Europe in the wake of World War I, there was little space in official arenas for negative reinterpretations of national defense or recent "patriotic" war efforts. Independence and the new national borders were still insecure. Many feared an immediate attack from Bolshevik Russia,

93 For the general description of the commemoration of the War of Liberation in the inter-war period, see Aapo Roselius's chapter "The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards, and the Veterans' Union"; for the significance of sacrifice in the rhetoric and imagery in 1918, see Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Mystified War," both in this volume.

94 Sonja Levsen, *Elite, Männlichkeit und Krieg: Tübinger und Cambridger Studenten 1900–1929* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006); Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2005); Lina Sturfelt, "Utanför krigskartan: Första världskrigets svenska berättelser om neutralitet och modernitet," in Magnus Jerneck, ed., *Fred i realpolitikens skugga* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2009), pp. 143–67, at pp. 161–64.

and society was still torn asunder by internal conflicts.<sup>95</sup> In this situation, the Jäger story was used to give Finnish war commemoration a triumphalist keynote intended to infuse the nation with a belief in its own military strength and support the emergence of a new gender order where soldiering and military virtues were central to manliness and male citizenship. The great need to repeatedly assert and insist on these claims should, however, also be seen as a consequence of the political and social disintegration in post-war society, where the memory of the war in 1918 was highly controversial and military service enjoyed little popularity among large segments of the population.

### Conclusion

How to construct a heroic self-image of the independent Finnish nation in the wake of 1918 was not unproblematic. Finland never really participated in World War I but could not identify with the self-image of a peace-loving neutral nation either, since it had the memories of its own short but cruel Civil War to deal with. The Jägers, however, provided ample material for anybody who wanted to tell a heroic and edifying story about how Finland gained its independence. Their story had all the elements of a good adventure tale about soldier heroes: Finland's desperate situation at the hands of the Russian oppressors; the passivity and resignation of the older generations; the insuppressible longing for deeds and action among a young male elite; a dangerous journey into the unknown; the hardships and privations of draconian military training abroad; a baptism of fire at the Eastern Front; the nerve-racking wait for a decisive turn; and eventually the triumphant return to the fatherland and the final victorious battle against its enemies.

The Jäger mythology and the massive commemoration surrounding the Jäger movement largely served the same purposes as the 19th-century European cult of fallen heroes: helping post-war society deal with the shocking destruction, suffering, and bereavement left behind by the war; legitimizing the war cause; and mobilizing the patriotic national readiness to fight and sacrifice anew. Its most obvious purpose, however, was to vindicate those who had plotted and agitated for armed resistance against Russian rule and embarked upon the road of treason and military violence during the World War. The Jäger narrative and the construction of the conflict in 1918 as a glorious War of

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95 See Aapo Roselius, *Kiista, eheys, unohdus: Vapaussodan muistaminen suojeleuskuntien ja veteraaniliikkeen toiminnassa 1918–1944*, Bidrag till kännedom av Finlands natur och folk, 186 (Helsinki: Suomen Tiedeseura, 2010), pp. 170–72.

Liberation was used to prove the activists and Jägers right and to wrong all those who had doubted or objected to the new militarized forms of both masculinity and nationalism that they represented.



**PART 3**

*Interpretations and Remembrance*





## The War of Liberation, the Civil Guards and the Veterans' Union: Public Memory in the Interwar Period

*Aapo Roselius*

During the interwar period, the commemoration of the Great War focusing on remembering the fallen became a strong ingredient in European cultures. The commemoration was embodied not only as a stately orchestrated manifestation but also as a vernacular mass movement, deeply connected to the emergence of post-war modern civil society. The fallen were linked strongly to the home parish with local memorials and Remembrance Day parades. Gatherings of war veterans, war monuments, and military graveyards became part of the European landscape. The popularity of the commemorative movement was based not so much on an ideological or political conformity but, rather, on the possibility to act collectively without being excluded on political or social grounds. Especially in France and Great Britain, the public memory of the war stood firm against attempts at ideological monopolization and included expressions that varied from pacifism to conservative patriotism. In defeated Germany, however, the memory concentrated more on the heroic, masculine, and even revanchist aspects accompanied with an enforced consensus. The commemorative movement emerged strongly also in Finland, with similar cultural expressions and symbols. In Finland, however, the overwhelming aspect concerning the public memory of the war was the character of the Civil War conflict.<sup>1</sup>

The problems of remembering a civil war derives not only from the fact that the adversaries continue to share the same public space after the conflict but also from the ideological concept of a nation-state. How to honor a war that in its structure is an anomaly of nationalism and shakes the very foundations of the nation state, the collective experience of the unity of the people?

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1 Stefan Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory: War, Remembrance and Medievalism in Britain and Germany, 1914–1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 3–7; Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919–1946* (Oxford & Providence: Berg, 1994), pp. 225–27; Stéphane Audoin-Rozeau & Annette Becker, *14–18: Understanding the Great War* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2003), pp. 169–70.





FIGURE 9.1 *The victorious White Army in Helsinki on 16 May 1918.* PHOTO: MILITARY MUSEUM OF FINLAND.

Concerning the public memory of a civil war, there is usually no room for a display of a wide range of experiences. Tensions in a post-war climate, when the enemy continues to live among us after the killing has ended, promotes simplified narratives even to a degree of denial regarding the characteristics of the domestic conflict. This is commonly done by positioning the enemy outside the national-ethnic sphere and placing the disturbing elements of national unity outside the definition of the nation. When shared remembrance becomes impossible and when glorifying and honoring the victory is problematic, a collective oblivion and demand for silence becomes an alternative.<sup>2</sup>

It is pretty much a rule that there will be difficulties overcoming the crisis of a domestic war that includes a traumatized memory, but there may be inherent in the very idea of a nation-state certain factors that support re-establish-

2 On the Spanish Civil War, see Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 2–10; on the public memory of the Irish Civil War, see Anne Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: History and Memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); and on the Finnish case, see Matti Virtanen, *Fennomanian perilliset: Poliittiset traditiot ja sukupolvien dynamiikka* (Helsinki: SKS, 2001), p. 113.

ing an imagined national harmony. The return to the normality after a period of social upheaval and war at least partially restores the plurality of a society with complicated social networks and interdependence across and within regional and social groups. After a civil war there is usually a tendency towards reconciliation and national healing, resulting in a public remembrance where the pompous celebrations of the victors are paralleled by the narrative of a national tragedy.<sup>3</sup> Also, the experience of the conflict in Finland in 1918 includes the narrative of national reconciliation, a theme that dominated much of the political rhetoric in the interwar period. From the verge of national annihilation the reconciliation was the only possible and acceptable goal for the newly independent nation, a mantra on the lips of every self-confident politician, from the radicals to the conservatives, filled with whatsoever ideological and political premises. However, the possibility to confront the inflamed and traumatic domestic conflict with silence and oblivion or, for instance, common memorial days and memorials for all the war dead, both Red and White, was never introduced during the interwar period. Instead, the remembrance culture became just one stage in the continuation of the split between the victors and the defeated, with the White narrative totally dominating the public memory.

The White interpretation of the conflict as a war of national liberation, pivotal for reaching independence, gave no room for the experiences of the Reds in the "official" history and effectively institutionalized the divergences of the crisis of 1918. The Red collective memories and interpretations were forced behind the closed doors of Workers' Halls, the labor unions, and the private homes of families of the former Red Guards. Most attempts to introduce the Red narrative in the field of public memory were oppressed by both the authorities and the bourgeois community as attempts to incite subversion.<sup>4</sup> The politicized and polarized culture of remembrance, opposing in its own existence the process of reconciliation and only slowly giving room for an ideological demobilization, strengthened the traumatic aspect of the war. It would take a new generation and a profound, almost existential national crisis experienced in the wars against the Soviet Union during World War II, before the Red and White narratives of 1918 could be fitted somehow into the same national history.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, there were from the outset of the spring of 1918

3 Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War*, p. 5.

4 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Punakapinan muistot: Tutkimus työväen muistelukerronnan muotoutumisesta vuoden 1918 jälkeen* (Helsinki: SKS, 1996), pp. 20–21; Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta* (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), pp. 238–39.

5 More about World War II and the memory of the Finnish Civil War in Tuomas Tepora's chapter "The Changing Perceptions of 1918" in this volume.

common and widespread public outbursts of the need to reconcile and create a united nation, themes that were an integral part of every respectable national narrative of the time. But what really became characteristic of the interwar period, at least until the last years of the 1930s, were the intensive public expressions of an utterly one-sided interpretation of the victors of the Civil War, a public memory that continued rather than reconciled the crisis.

The White narrative described the conflict of 1918 both as a War of Liberation and the suppression of a socialist rebellion. These two approaches to the crisis and two narratives were successfully mixed together and endlessly referred to in commemorative speeches and writings. These concepts offered channels for different experiences within White Finland, different explanations for problematic issues, and different remedies for the uncertainty both on the individual level and in public.<sup>6</sup> The concept of the War of Liberation had deep roots in the process of nation-building, a narrative incorporated in most of the new national states of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Born from the ruins of the empires and the world war, the new nation-states of Eastern Europe emphasized the heroic and romanticized narratives of the freedom fight. Obtaining independence should be a matter of national struggle, not merely a gift or the result of the policy of foreign powers.<sup>7</sup> Opposed to the War of Liberation narrative, usually described in euphoric words that totally ignored the Civil War experience, was the rebellion narrative. The war as the suppression of a rebellion offered legitimacy to the war effort of the White Army and leaned strongly on a pre-war popular image, where the focus of the national movement laid on a political struggle over the juridical status of Finland. Russification policy in the early 20th century had been met mainly by passive resistance based on juridical propaganda. Images of a righteous struggle for justice against a law-breaking Russia were mixed with a more violent approach by the resistance movement during World War I. So, when the Civil War broke out, the Whites quite successfully imaged it as a continuation of the resistance movement both in its violent and in its juridical form and a freedom

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6 Partly, as pointed out by Miika Siironen, the difficulties of developing a more heterogeneous public memory within bourgeois Finland before the mid-1930s was due to the lack of clear-cut distinctions between conservative and agrarian traditions. See Miika Siironen, *Vapaussodan perintö* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2012).

7 For instance, in the Baltic countries, the upheavals linked to the independence struggle were highlighted and given the status of national wars of liberation, literally named in Lithuania as "The Freedom Struggles," in Latvia as "Struggles for Latvia's freedom," and in Estonia as the "Freedom War" or "War of Independence."

fight in which the people finally broke their chains after centuries of foreign rule.<sup>8</sup>

According to the victors, the conflict of 1918 had been an uprising by the socialists against law and order, but the socialists had also opposed the historical struggle for national freedom. This made the Reds guilty of a double crime, a juridical crime and a national one. The victors saw the almost desired Freedom Struggle turned into a civil war by the socialists, who had turned their backs on the national question and played instead into the hands of the enemy.

The intensive commemoration of the victors of the war during the 1920s and 1930s was strongly connected to the establishment of a popular paramilitary movement – the Civil Guards – who managed not only to establish an impressive remembrance culture and achieve hegemony in public memory on the local and regional level but also, in the end, to isolate the cemented White narrative from the constantly changing surrounding society. When the new war between Finland and Soviet Union in 1939–40 (the “Winter War”) made it possible to create a new national narrative, the one-sided public memory of the victors of the Civil War immediately lost its dominance. The popularity and status that the Civil Guards achieved after the Civil War and their dominance in the remembrance culture was not a self-evident result of the war or a clear-cut road to success. Similar counter-revolutionary paramilitary home-guard-type organizations were not unusual phenomena in post-World War I Europe, but nowhere would they become as integrated with civil society as in Finland. Even though the Civil Guard (*suojeluskunta*) was a Finnish contribution to a European anti-revolutionary movement, it was never marginalized or radicalized beyond what the majority of the bourgeois Finland could accept. Key to the establishment of the Guards and the character of the public memory of the War of Liberation were the political circumstances in the spring of 1919 and the momentary ideological mobilization of the community of the Whites, with far-reaching consequences not only for the public commemoration of the war but also for the image of the interwar era.

8 A characteristic pre-history of the Civil War is presented, for instance, in the first part of the six-volume history by Hannes Ignatius et al.: *Suomen vapaussota vuonna 1918: Vapaussodan edellytykset ja valmistelu* (Helsinki: Otava, 1921).

### Resurrection of the White Front

One year after the bloody scenes during the great battle of Tampere, the railway platform in that town was crawling with armed men wearing crisp new uniforms. The air was filled with cheerful buzz, smiling faces, and occasional commands when the clusters of men slowly moved onto the streets. A few hours later, the men, numbering a couple of thousand, clashed into each other on the outskirts of the town, in front of a big audience of interested townspeople and high military officials. They fought close to the graveyard of Kalevankangas, where hundreds of Whites had been wiped out by effective Red machine guns the previous year and where bullet scars in the gravestones would remind of the battle still a century later. They continued fighting alongside the now-closed POW camp that had turned into a hell for the Reds after the battle. However, on this early morning in April 1919, all the fierce fighting, the shouting, and the gunshots were not for real but part of a huge re-enactment of the battle. After a couple of hours, the troops marched together through the suburb of Tammela, still in ruins after the heavy wartime bombardment, and continued the commemoration of the victory. The actors were all members of the Civil Guards, and many of them had actually taken part in the real battle. Whereas most of the men were playing the Whites, others were given the role of the Reds, a role they played, to the amusement of the public, with deep expression and using vulgar and ruthless language, in line with the common images of the defeated.<sup>9</sup>

The re-enactment was a prelude to a three-day commemoration of the first anniversary of the battle of Tampere. During the festivities, the town was filled with celebrating people – veterans of the war, Civil Guards, Army troops, and the wartime leadership – with General Mannerheim, at the time also the Regent of Finland, as the undisputed Guest of Honor. In speeches, lectures, and plays as well as in writings and in sermons, not only in Tampere but also everywhere, the battle had been cemented as one of the key experiences of the War of Liberation, a Finnish Verdun, where the White Army had sacrificed itself for the nation and where more than 300 parishes around the country could proudly point to local fallen heroes of the battle.<sup>10</sup> Tampere was The Experience of

9 *Kansan Työ* 9 April 1919; *Uusi Aura* 28 March 1919 & 5 April 1919; National Archives (KA), Sk 875/1, Archives of the Civil Guard, The Orders of the Commander of the Civil Guard district of South Ostrobothnia 1919–22, Order no. 2, 1 April 1919.

10 Compare with the symbolism of Verdun. See Antoine Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace: Representations of France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 51–52.

the nation, a legend that had to be incorporated into the common and local experience everywhere. For instance, in southwestern Finland, people gathered in the winter that followed the war in cold public halls to capture the drama of the battle in popular *tableaux vivants* that etched the symbols of Tampere and the war into the minds or to listen to lectures on the greatest battle ever in the history of the Nordic countries. Tampere was nothing but equal to the legendary battles in world history and the ultimate and successful test of the readiness of the Finnish nation to step into independence.<sup>11</sup>

The spectacular commemoration of the Battle of Tampere was part of an intensive commemorative movement that filled the public sphere in spring of 1919 with the narrative of the War of Liberation to an extent never seen before or after. The festivities had begun in the middle of January in Vyborg, where a failed attempt to seize power by the Civil Guards the previous year was the subject of a “humble” commemoration, as a local paper expressed. The humbleness included a two-day festival with shops and schools closed, triumphal arches and ornaments on the streets, military parades and processions, speeches and salutes, and several evening events. The nationwide commemorative movement hyped the first time in late January, when the beginning of the war was commemorated in several localities. The most spectacular was in Vaasa, the wartime capital of White Finland.<sup>12</sup> The start of the war was commemorated both as the “anniversary of high treason” and “the anniversary of disgrace,” as commemoration of “the beginning of the most beautiful turning page in our history” and as “the rise of White Finland.”<sup>13</sup> The second hype of the commemorative movement appeared in the final weeks of April, when practically all the towns and parishes in southern Finland celebrated the first anniversary of the end of the Red regime. In many localities, the local Liberation Days were turned into great national celebrations, as urged by the Civil Guard’s

11 *Uusi Aura* 26 April 1918; on the renaissance of the *tableaux vivants* during World War I, see George Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 146–47; and John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 115–16.

12 In Vaasa, the occupation of the city and the disarmament of the Russian garrison the previous year were re-enacted with great accuracy in front of cheering crowds. The start of the war was commemorated, for instance, in Lapua, Teuva, Tampere, Rovaniemi, Hämeenlinna, Jalasjärvi, Ilmajoki, Lammi, Oulu, Loimaa, Alavus, Kurikka, Ylihärmä, Kauhava, Vaasa, Laihia, Ylistaro, Mikkeli, Turku, Pori, Kajaani, Raahe, Tervola. See *Uusi Suomi* 26 January 1919 & 28 January 1919. See *Uusi Suomi* 31 January, 1919.

13 *Uusi Aura* 26 January 1919.



organ.<sup>14</sup> The celebration-filled spring of 1919 ended in the grand finale in Helsinki: on Victory Day, 16 May, 10,000 army troops and Civil Guards paraded through the streets in front of the political establishment – the Left excluded.<sup>15</sup>

The intensity and magnitude of the White commemorative movement just one year after the Civil War was partly a reaction to a complex ensemble of threats and insecurities in society. The movement can be seen as a resurrection of wartime White Finland, a renewed White front boosting its profile and popularity in the winter following the war. The fall of 1918 became a period of rising threats and fears, all the way from the political and the military milieu to everyday life on the local level. With the collapse of Germany in October–November 1918, Germany's northern satellite, White Finland, was plunged into a condition of emergency, losing its military and political guarantee. The German collapse in World War I put an end to plans of making Finland a monarchy in a German-dominated Eastern Europe. In a politically tense atmosphere, the Finnish Parliament had, as late as on 9 October 1918, elected Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse, the brother-in-law of Emperor Wilhelm II, as king of Finland (with the proposed regnal name of Väinö I). After the German defeat in World War I, he renounced the throne on 14 December 1918.

The collapse of the major power meant automatically a strengthening of the crumbling Bolshevik state and the international revolution, inspired by the complete abrogation of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as part of the armistice. The gates for a Bolshevik push westward were open, and the threat was immediately felt in the neighboring states. Further, Finland had to submit to the demands of the Allies, including the renunciation of its pro-German and monarchic policy and a strengthening of democracy, with free parliamentary elections open also to the social democrats. The eight-month period from the late fall of 1918 until July 1919 was indeed extraordinary in Finnish history, with the election of a new Regent and government, the first democratic municipal elections with socialists taking part in them, amnesty for most Red prisoners (a rather late reaction to the massive failure of the POW policy), the first parliamentary elections after independence, the founding of modern Finland's major political parties, the composing of the constitution, and the first presidential elections, just to mention the major cornerstones. It was an electrifying time in Finnish history; it was a flood of events, acts, aims, and thoughts that would actually form the new state and society for decades to come. All these events took place in an atmosphere still sharply divided and inflamed by the split of

14 *Suojeluskuntalaisen lehti* no. 6 (1919).

15 Tuomas Tepora, *Sinun puolesta elää ja kuolla: Suomen liput, nationalismi ja veriuhuri 1917–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011), pp. 134–39.



the Civil War and colored by the continuous upheaval in Russia and the neighboring regions, which partly hindered the demobilization of the war-time society.<sup>16</sup>

The turmoil and the uncertainty both domestically and internationally fostered a united front in bourgeois Finland. The renewed patriotic front against the Reds was largely a reaction against a development that was seen by many as endangering the victory of 1918 and the future of Finland. The reaction may not have ended the struggles inside the non-socialist bloc, where the wartime unity had changed to stiff disputes between monarchist and republicans, but it did create a widely accepted stage of common enemies and fears, in which the experience of the War of Liberation and the antipathy towards the Left became key elements.<sup>17</sup> The narratives and images of the war of 1918 offered a well-known and comfortable identification in a time of turmoil, and in winter 1918–19, the uncertainties and fears motivated people to organize and take part in the remembrance-acts of the war, turning the commemoration into a popular movement.

The White front and the remembrance of the White victory became an irresistible part of the parliamentary elections of spring 1919, partly because of the activity of the Left. The inclusion of the social democrats in the elections – municipal and parliamentary – meant a definite end to the White monopoly.<sup>18</sup> Even though the social democrats were led by persons who mostly condemned the revolutionary policy, the party and its voters were the very same persons who had made the uprising a year back.<sup>19</sup> The campaign of the party was named “Stand up from the night of repression” (“Sorrion yöstä nouskaa”)<sup>20</sup> and focused on the White atrocities, namely, the executions and the POW catastrophe. The aggressive nature of the campaign of the Left, seen by bourgeois Finland as humiliating the victors, was met with an intensified rhetoric calling for unity against the threats. Several parties organized “White popular celebra-

16 The period was characterized also by an aggressive Finnish Irredentist policy. See Aapo Roselius's chapter “Holy War” in this volume.

17 Vesa Vares, *Vanhasuomalainen Lauri Ingman ja hänen poliittinen toimintansa* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1996), p. 167; Matti Lackman, *Suomen vai Saksan puolesta? Jääkäri liikkeen ja jääkäripataljoona 27:n (1915–1918) synty, luonne, mielialojen vaihteluita ja sisäisiä kriisejä sekä niiden heijastuksia itsenäisen Suomen ensi vuosiin saakka* (Helsinki: Otava, 2000), pp. 681–89; Matti Virtanen, *Fennomanian perilliset*, pp. 128–29.

18 The municipal elections were held in one-third of the municipalities during early winter of 1919.

19 On the renewed Social Democratic Party after the Civil War, see Tauno Saarela's chapter in this volume.

20 The slogan refers to the Finnish lyrics of the *Internationale*.

tions,” strongly indicating an experience of unity based on the memory of the Civil War. Election Day headlines stated, “The graves of our heroes obligate” and “Do we wish to save the achievements of freedom or to destroy them?”<sup>21</sup> The White and Red rhetoric even to some extent overshadowed the deep tensions between former monarchists and republicans within the White ranks. The unity theme figured also as a political weapon that allowed the bourgeois parties to accuse the others of not joining the White front.<sup>22</sup> It can even be argued that the intense political struggle between the bourgeois parties in 1919 did accentuate the importance of keeping the public memory of the War of Liberation and the Civil Guards free from party politics. The remembrance of the war represented a more all-inclusive and “apolitical” White front, united in the national mission, not mired in the domestic party struggle.

The symbolic resurrection of the White Finland during the winter of 1918–19 was most evident with the re-establishment of the Civil Guards and the return of General Mannerheim. The General who had led the White Army to victory had opposed a too strict pro-German policy and had left the country already a couple of weeks after the war. After the collapse of the German-policy, the government called for Mannerheim to return and become Regent, instead of the pro-German Pehr Evind Svinhufvud. The Mannerheim regency (from December 1918 until July 1919) became an important ingredient of the White front. One of the first things the new Regent urged after taking office was securing the establishment of the Civil Guards – calling them the core of the Liberation Army – as a strong nation-wide organization.<sup>23</sup>

In wartime, the Guards had been only a hastily organized armed force, an anti-revolutionary organization intended to be temporary and charged with the mission of stopping the Red Guards and the revolution from spreading. After the war, the movement had, as a wartime popular front, become more or less useless and even unwanted by the Finnish and German officers who were focused on creating a regular national army. Regardless of some opposition, the Civil Guards in the summer of 1918 were a movement in dissolution. The turning point came with the collapse of Germany. The winter of 1918–19 saw hundreds of local Civil Guards reactivate, eagerly propagated by a network of local activists. The re-establishment of the Guards advanced rapidly, and in just half a year there were more than 100,000 men in the Guards, more than the

21 *Uusi Aura* 1 March 1919.

22 *Karjalan lehti* 1 January 1919.

23 KA, Pk 637/7, Uusi Metsätoimisto (political organization of the activists) files; Martti Ahti, *Kaappaus? Suojeluskuntaselkkaus 1921, fascismin aave 1927, Mäntsälän kapina 1932* (Helsinki: Otava, 1990), pp. 108.

number of soldiers who had been in the White Army. Local branches were set up in nearly all municipalities, and an effective organizational model with four levels was created. The achievement was impressive, a display of the unity and enthusiasm of all levels from the Regent, the political parties (that Left excluded), and the cadres of the people in the countryside and towns, but foremost it showed the sense of threat, the very basis of the White movement of 1919: "the enemy has still not given up his devious intentions of trying again to destroy our society, inherited from our ancestors."<sup>24</sup>

So, in the spring of 1919, the resurrected White General and the White Army in the form of the Civil Guards turned back the clock to May 1918 and continued their victory parades and homecomings throughout the country. The Civil Guards symbolized the local attachment and civil society, and Regent Mannerheim was the adored war hero and the father-like leader of the nation, a holy union of the father and sons. The importance of the commemorative scene for the White front is shown by the Regent's grand tours during the spring of 1919. Mannerheim made five several-day-long tours in the country, visiting all regions, practically all the towns, and stopping at numerous railway stations in the countryside. Even though the tours were officially made as inspection visits, they formed *de facto* more of a great patriotic campaign for promoting the Civil Guards and the White front, all surrounded by the myth of the war. The monarchist choreography of the visits and their patriotic substance allowed people to commit themselves to the narrative of the Whites, to experience the patriotic spirit, and subsequently to become part of the White community. The public setting of town squares, railway stations, and churchyards was filled with endless rows of honor guards, Civil Guard parades, and impressive audiences ready to burst into applause and tributes to Mannerheim, White Finland, and the newly established Civil Guards.<sup>25</sup> The speeches and ceremonies clearly articulated the need to support the new Civil Guards. When Regent Mannerheim's envoy made a short stop at the station in the parish of Hiitola on the Karelian Isthmus, the audience of nearly 1000 persons listened when Mannerheim criticized the people for showing too little enthusiasm over the Civil Guard movement and urged local activists to work even harder for the cause. Typically, the enthusiasm could not be faulted, and the Guards could elicit impressive results. The commemorations in spring of 1919 and the parades during the visits of Mannerheim were, for many Guards, their first major

<sup>24</sup> *Karjalan lehti* 7 February 1919.

<sup>25</sup> KA, The Regent and President files (Tasavallan presidentin kanslian valtionhoitajan sotasaiain kanslian arkisto); Kari Selén, ed., *Mannerheim: Puheet 1918–1947* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2008), pp. 40–82.

public appearance. With newly bought uniforms, weapons, and banners they prominently marched into the community and took their place in local society. The appearance and activity of Mannerheim in promoting the commemoration of the White victory made a great impact on this first “spring of commemorations.” He was the ultimate hero of the Whites and had now been given the role of father of the nation. Although Mannerheim later stages in his career as Commander-in-Chief and President was credited as the great unifier of the people, in 1919 he was fully committed to creating a public memory, based on the wartime White agitation, that laid the foundation for a commemorative tradition that renewed rather than decreased the split of 1918.<sup>26</sup>

The intensity of the first anniversary of the war was sometimes almost unreal in its black-and-whiteness. For instance, in Loimaa region, a rural area in southwestern Finland with a population of about 20,000, there were no fewer than ten commemorative events in the spring of 1919 and just as many events with a clear link to the White experience of 1918. As in every community, also in Loimaa the local White fallen and their shared grave became the epicenter of the patriotic movement, proof of the sacrifice of the local community in the national struggle for freedom. All this activity and euphoria in a region where the overwhelming majority of the population had sympathized with the Reds, where there had been ten Red guardsmen to every White soldier taking part in the war, and where the local Reds had lost 500 men compared to approximately a dozen on the White side. For years to come, the tensions inherent in these numbers could not find any public channel.<sup>27</sup>

In Loimaa, as elsewhere, the spring of 1919 would set the standards for the public memory of the war. However, the rich flora of specific remembrance days somewhat decreased in time – for instance, the tradition of commemorating the days of local burials of the fallen or the anniversaries of the death of local war heroes. Also, although the commemorations did not receive as much publicity and did not attract so large an audience as in 1919, the commemorative traditions founded that year continued more or less undisturbed within the Civil-Guard-dominated public memory for two decades. With the local Remembrance Days and other commemorations, the Guards recreated each year the united White front of 1918. “Let the united spirit for the protection of

26 *Karjalan Aamulehti* 7 February 1919; V.H. Vainio, *Hiitolan historia: Myöhäisin osa vuodesta 1865 lähtien seurakunnan ja pitäjän hallintoelinten lakkauttamiseen 1950-luvun alussa* (Pieksämäki: Hiisi-säätiö, 1959), pp. 340–41.

27 Aapo Roselius, *Kiista, eheys, unohdus: Vapaussodan muistaminen suojeluskuntien ja veteraaniliikkeen toiminnassa 1918–1944*, Bidrag till kännedom av Finlands natur och folk, 186 (Helsinki: Suomen Tiedeseura, 2010), pp. 61–63.

Finland again start to spread from the brave and beautiful town of the Cross of Liberty throughout the country, leading to the unification of our scattered forces.”<sup>28</sup>

### Civil Guards and Local Commemoration

The introduction of the massive public memory of the War of Liberation was linked with the political turmoil during the long transition from war to peace in 1918 and 1919. The intensity of the White front and the sense of threat that enabled the mobilization diminished, though, with society inevitably returning to a more complex normality. In the early 1920s, the more radical cadres of the White front, those living and breathing the conflict of 1918 and continuously creating new causes to save the nation, lost some of their positions. A member of the Karelian Citizen League (*Karjalan kansalaisliitto*), a counter-revolutionary political coalition enjoying great success in the town of Vyborg in 1918–19, commented on the growing passivity of the once-virile League: “when there is no immediate threat to the society and when people have had the possibility to act in peace, they have not felt the need of unity for the protection of the society that the League and its activity requires.”<sup>29</sup> However, the transition did not essentially affect the public memory of the War of Liberation. The effects of the cultural and political demobilization in the years after the war were partly blocked in the sphere of remembrance by the patriotic movement of the paramilitary organizations of the Civil Guard and its female counterpart – the Lotta Svärd organization.

The dominance of the Civil Guards in the sphere of public memory depended both on their willingness to act as memory activists (people who gather together and have a desire to give a public cultural expression and form the memory of their experiences) and on the dominant position they achieved within the society, especially on the local and regional levels. According to Timothy G. Ashplant, the possibilities for a group to act as a successful memory activist depends on how well it can function as a voice for the larger public and how much visibility it can bring to their public expressions. From these aspects, it can be argued that the Civil Guards achieved the position from which they could dominate the public memory.<sup>30</sup>

28 *Uusi Aura* 28 January 1923.

29 KA, Karelian Citizens League files (*Karjalan kansalaisliitto*), Reports.

30 T.G. Ashplant, Graham Dawson, & Michael Roper, “The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration: Contexts, Structures and Dynamics,” in Ashplant, Dawson & Roper, eds,

In becoming a common commemorative platform for bourgeois Finland, the movement had to move itself into the political center. Already by the beginning of the 1920s the movement had marginalized the impact of its more radical elements, in order to soften the image of the movement as an anti-democratic and too obvious political tool.<sup>31</sup> In the context of the interwar period in Finland, this did not mean an open conflict between the radicals and the rest, nor did it mean that the radicals were humiliated or definitely sidelined from the movement; after all, many of these radicals were seen as war heroes of the War of Liberation and had been central in the White front both before and after the war. For the Civil Guard, however, some distance from the radicalism of the past was a prerequisite for maintaining their influential role in the civil society, even though the threats of the past and the images of 1918 were central components of the movement's identity.<sup>32</sup> Still in the 1920s, outbursts were possible and quite usual, like in a Civil Guard regional organ in southern Finland: "Moral fatigue, political party life, the weakening and deterioration of everything has dissolved the lines. And the result has been that the enemy, the very same that four years ago was crashed [...] is now threatening to destroy the memorials of our heroes and blemish our blood-washed honor."<sup>33</sup>

From the very beginning, the movement was considered by its supporters to be more than a simple Home Guard. It was the new national movement, rising above all other popular movements, a conservative answer to the challenges of modernity.<sup>34</sup> The Guards represented not only their members but also the entire local community, region or province – and, in the end, the whole of the nation – and these pretensions could be strengthened by positioning the movement in the center of the independence process and the liberation myth. Further, from the very onset, the movement was highly ideological, with a mission to shape the nation into a morally and physically healthy, nationally minded entity; a mission for which the legacy of the White victory in the Civil War was an essential brick. The new movement was to lead the field of public memory of the war and assure that "hundreds of battlegrounds in the heartlands and along the waterways will stay as eternal memory-filled sites of

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*The Politics of War Memory and Commemoration* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 16–17, 22–26.

31 Kari Selén, *Sarkatakkien maa: Suojeluskuntajärjestö ja yhteiskunta 1918–1944* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2001), p. 104.

32 Erkki Vasara, *Valkoisen Suomen urheilivat soturit: Suojeluskuntajärjestön urheilu- ja kasvatustoiminta vuosina 1918–1939*, *Bibliotheca historica*, 23 (Helsinki: SHS, 1997), pp. 179–83.

33 *Varsinais-Suomen Vartio* no. 9 (1922).

34 Tikka, *Valkoisen hämärän maa?*, pp. 21–25.

pilgrimage for the Finnish people.”<sup>35</sup> It was a movement that wanted to become the all-inclusive national movement of modern times, with the “main aim of unifying all the Finns to protect independence and freedom.” It desired, above all, to rise above the political quarrels of everyday life – a key element in the cultural identity of the remembrance movements in the interwar Europe. It is noteworthy that even if many of these principles and strategies for the movement were written down just after the Civil War in a war-torn and tension-filled climate, they remained more or less unchanged during the 25-year span of the movement. It can be also argued that the movement partly succeeded in actually reaching the desired aims. The Guards did achieve an official position as representatives of the municipalities and managed mostly to keep the political quarrels outside its sphere. It must also be considered an achievement that during the whole interwar period, bourgeois society largely supported the idea of a paramilitary popular movement. Nonetheless, all the Guards' success took place only within bourgeois society. Without the backing of the Left, the main aim of the movement – to unite the nation – failed.

With a parallel female organization, the *Lotta Svärd*, the Guard movement attracted between 100,000 and 200,000 members throughout the 1920s and 1930s, stretching to all regions, towns, and municipalities. In the field of public memory, the movement overshadowed everything that had existed before. With eagerness and a united front, the movement became a dominant player on all levels of public memory, with a special focus on the commemoration of the War of Liberation. The White narrative of the War of 1918 offered the Civil Guards the emotions and identifications they needed. Images of gray uniformed men and women, young and old, in front of a local war memorial became iconographic for the interwar epoch in Finland. And the dominant role of the Guards established an almost exceptional ideological, symbolic, and visual unity of the public memory, both on the vernacular and the official levels.

An important part of the success of the paramilitary movement was its deep roots in the local soil and the community, a fact that would affect strongly the public memory of the war. The local image was boosted by a multiple of factors, all reflected also in the commemoration of the war. First, although the movement was an integrated part of the Finnish Defense Forces, it had a rather autonomous and even to some extent an anti-authoritarian identity. The movement had been established for the first time in 1917, when the authorities had lost their grip on power and the country was sliding into chaos. Hence, it can be argued, the Guards were a result of a decentralization process, a local

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35 *Suojeluskuntalaisen Lehti*, Sample issue, 1918.



solution to a problem the centralist government could not handle. Second, the Guards also built their traditions on the Finnish resistance movement, i.e., the activist movement from prior to independence. The activists had acted in a black-and-white culture of conspiracy and had possessed reservations about the central government, a tradition that introduced the concept of strong and independent regional actors, men whose patriotism was not dependent on loyalty to the government but, rather, on loyalty to a Cause. Even if the most radical activists (who, in spite of independence, never did step out of the culture of resistance) were losing ground within the Civil Guards, the culture and the tradition were reflected in the movement and its propaganda that emphasized a strong local identity and activity, that saw the Guard as not only the bottom level of the national defense chain but also an active, proud, and independent actor in society.

Finally, the Civil War had, to a large extent, been fought on the local level or at least had been experienced locally. The fears and threats were right there in the middle of the communities and were based on personal experiences and collective memories of the domestic war, making them tangible for the local community. The war had been fought with limited resources, civilian troops, and few weapons and trained military leaders. The local aspect that permeated the conflict and the public memory can be attributed both to the way in which the armed forces were formed and the nature of the conflict. The hastily organized civic troops had their minds and hearts mostly on the local level. As Civil Guards, defense of the home region offered the primary aim of and legitimacy for any action. Furthermore, the division that resulted in the split into Red and White Finland occurred in most regions and communities, resulting in an inner threat. The fact that the enemy, or those suspected of sympathizing with the enemy, were part of the local society created a need for manifestations and demonstrations of strength on the local level. In fact, in many districts, local hegemony was taken by resolute acts, saber-rattling, and manifestos. The specific local threat contributed not only to the massive retributions and mass killings of the Red guardsmen at the end of the war but also overlay the public memory of the war. The war had been a battle for the hegemony of the public space, and this battle continued, of course with different weapons, in peacetime. During the war, military parades and all kinds of ceremonial acts had not only strengthened the home front and mobilized the masses. They had also functioned both as demonstrations of power towards possible enemies in the community and as a way to show loyalty in an environment where the enemy could not be pointed out by language, outlook, or even social class.

Returning each year in the commemorations to the memories of the War of Liberation also reactivated the fears and threats connected to the events of

1918. These emotions were useful and even essential for the continued existence of a popular paramilitary movement. The words of the commander of the Civil Guard in Mellilä in 1921 reflected the institutionalized sense of threat in the movement:

An independent, strong and a happy Fatherland. When this goal is achieved we can maybe rest. For the moment, is not the time, because we can never know when the East and the Southeast will bring us destruction oppressing all that we achieved in 1918.<sup>36</sup>

When remembering the actions of the Reds of 1918 or the vilified communists or the Russians, the threat was always there, felt and understood locally, as expressed by the city council of Turku: "The still ongoing propaganda of the communists, strengthened even more recently, requires in the name of order and peace a strong Civil Guard in our community."<sup>37</sup> The threat of a local enemy was used effectively, especially during the first years, but still in the 1920s the threat of an inner enemy, i.e., the Reds, could be referred to, usually accompanied with the image of them as underdogs to the Russian Bolsheviks:

[w]e have to re-strengthen the White front against those who are again to open right into our country a road for Russian barbarism and reign of terror; we are commonly living in the unfortunate misunderstanding that our fight for freedom ended the same time as the War of Liberation in the spring of 1918. This is not the case! The fight continues and will continue as long as the "Russkie" is the neighbor in the East.<sup>38</sup>

Although the rhetoric changed as the years went by and the Finnish "Red" as an image of the enemy was increasingly replaced by Russians and Bolsheviks, the aspect of the local enemy tracing back to 1918 was never totally eradicated during the interwar period.

The local level offered the Civil Guard an honorable history of their own connected not only with the 1918 narrative of the local town or parish but also with more ancient narratives. More or less every local Civil Guard created a history that conflated the boundaries of the Guards with the image of the whole community to produce a local history of the War of Liberation that described the Civil Guard as the natural main actor. Portrayed as a freedom fight

36 KA, Sk 1282, Archives of the Civil Guard, Mellilä Civil Guard.

37 Turku City Archives (TKA), Turku City Council, Presentations, 4 November 1920.

38 *Suojeluskuntalaisen lehti* no. 21 (1920).

and a national uprising, the spring of 1918 more or less had to be included in every community commemoration, with local war heroes, martyrs, and a unifying sacrifice; and the local Civil Guard stood there ready to fill the requirements. During the yearly commemorations, the Guards became not only an indivisible part of the local history but also of the local sacrifice and contribution to the historical struggle for independence.

The historical awareness of the Guards went hand in hand with regional identification and the concept of a romanticized homeland, both offering ready-made and largely known national templates. Influenced by the German idea of *Heimat*, the concept of “homeland” formed a strong ingredient of the Finnish national movement. In line with the meaning of the German concept, the homeland should form a microcosmos of the nation, the emotions and pride in the homeland should be equal to the love for the fatherland.<sup>39</sup> Romanticized regionalism introduced the image of ancient regions, with specific peoples and special natures, each contributing to enriching the glorious nation. Regional identification and the very well established concept of homeland were incorporated in the White movement during the war, offering traditional identifications in a time of great distress and upheaval. This emotional value in the concept of homeland and the romantic approach to the region became central building blocks for the Civil Guards. During the tumultuous period of 1917–19, the homeland could offer a peace and sobriety opposed to the dramatic events far from home. In the worldview of right-wing movements, the homeland became a sort of insurance against the city and state authorities, a place of sober and patriotic men opposed to the corruption and cosmopolitanism of the cities. Regional identity became an important image for the Guards, as a romanticized gathering of the free men of the homeland to protect the region and the homes, and the regional level of the organization was made important with own magazines, banners, sport and shooting competitions, and last but not least regional commemorations of the War of Liberation.<sup>40</sup>

The almost total hegemony the Civil Guards concerning the public acts of commemoration of the war was also a result of the representative role of the movement. Whereas on the top level the movement was incorporated into the

39 Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 6; Pasi Saukkonen, “Kansallinen identiteetti,” in Pasi Saukkonen & Jussi Pakkasvirta, eds, *Nationalismit* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2005).

40 Antti Paasi, *Neljä maakuntaa: Maantieteellinen tutkimus aluetietoisuuden kehitymisestä* (Joensuu: Joensuun yliopisto, 1986), p. 64; Antti Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border* (Chichester: Wiley, 1996), p. 33.

Finnish Defense Forces, a development that actually intensified in the 1930s and during World War II, the lower levels of regional and local status resembled more of a popular movement, with volunteers, fundraising, and evening entertainment.<sup>41</sup> Actually, as a volunteer paramilitary organization, the Civil Guards were strongly dependent on the potential and readiness of the locals to support the activity economically and offer the Guards new cadres of members. The Guards simply had to be able to win over the hearts of the local community, constantly justify their existence, and confront criticism from adversaries. The ability to simultaneously represent civil society, the local area, and the nation and the ability to act between the vernacular and the official was indeed useful in the sometimes strained and politicized atmosphere involving the memory of 1918.

Although the official history derived from the White narrative, the cold fact remained that the war had been a domestic catastrophe. A considerable number of Finns did not endorse the War of Liberation myth and even felt humiliated and disgusted by the utterly one-sided public memory of the war, criticizing it whenever possible. As long as the critics flourished in the socialist papers alone there was no reaction, but once the criticism broke into the wider public sphere, it became problematic – as, for instance, in the municipality councils or within the more moderate centrist bourgeois groups in the late 1930s. When the socialists were re-established as a political party on the local and state levels in 1919, it did strongly affect the public memory of the war. The active initiation of and participation in the commemoration of the war by the municipal organs nearly came to an end. During the first anniversaries, leftist members of the councils protested against official municipal participation and could sometimes even hinder the official ceremony. Also, when the political Left did have the majority in the councils needed to effectively alter the ceremony, many bourgeois citizens found the protests and the quarrels in municipal council meetings outrageous. The sacred memory of the Whites should not be a platform for political quarrels.<sup>42</sup> The commemorative acts were not supposed to be channels of discussions between different positions but, rather, were to produce images of a united people. Here the Civil Guard could function as an intermediary between the officials and the civil society. The organization was independent so could take its own decisions, free from municipal control. At the same time, the Guards acted as representatives of the municipality; they were shadow councils. When standing at soldiers' graves or when

41 *Satakunnan Karhu* no. 12 (1925).

42 ТКА, Turku City Council, A Committee established for the commemoration festivity of the liberation of the town of Turku from the revolutionaries. Presentations 10 April 1919.

parading during Remembrance Day, they were far more than simply one of the local actors. Instead, the grey lines of Guardsmen were the embodiment of the people of the parish, the patriotic representation of all the people, the military, and the nation.

### Memory Boom

The first memory boom of the War of Liberation was part of the slow demobilization process and the introduction of the Civil Guards on the local level all over the country. The boom continued until the early 1920s, including local war memorial projects. Whereas the fallen Whites and those Whites who had been shot by Reds had been usually buried in common military graves in the home parish, memorials to the gravesites needed to be erected. The first were erected already in 1919, and five years after the war there were almost 400 grave memorials in as many parishes. The memorials were usually the first displays of public art in the mostly rural parishes, and the projects demanded engagement and co-operation within the White community. The Civil Guard usually played a central role in the projects, which strengthened their position as pillars of the community, gave them visibility, and inspired people to act together to accomplish a specific goal. The unveiling ceremonies were usually the highlight of the local commemorative movement and a special event also in the history of the Civil Guard. The event was also the end of what can be called the first memory boom of the War of Liberation. This did not mean an end to the commemoration traditions but, rather, it meant a stabilization of the traditions after the first hectic and intensive years.

A second memory boom can be identified in the early 1930s, colored by both cultural and political fluctuations. The worldwide economic recession in the late 1920s strengthened right-wing radicals in Finland, as elsewhere. In Finland, from the end of 1929, a popular anti-leftist movement called the Lapua Movement launched an aggressive political campaign with a strong anti-democratic and fascist flavor. The movement enabled small groups of radical activists to re-establish themselves for a short period of time in the forefront of the nation, as had been the case during the turmoil of 1917–19. The right-wing popular movement grounded itself in the concept of White Finland and the War of Liberation and identified itself as a direct successor to the White front of 1918. The popular movement was strongest in the heartlands of wartime White Finland but found popularity all over the country. The movement became strong enough to shake the political system in the early years of the 1930s but was too weak to profoundly change it. As a matter of fact, the movement with its fascist

ideals and violent methods of using mobs to beat and even kill “communists” – a self-defined category that encompassed all the Left – actually gave rise to a strong centrist political block that included the social democrats. The parliamentary system successfully defended itself against the challenge from the extreme right. The main political result of the movement was that it split the political right more clearly into radicals and conservatives and brought the political center and the social democrats closer together. Even if the movement lost its main influence early, it continued to have an electrifying impact on the political and cultural field for years to come as a political party, the Patriotic People's Movement (*Isänmaallinen kansanliike*, IKL), which garnered support especially from the conservative intelligentsia. One field in which the effect was clearly seen was the public memory of the War of Liberation.

In the course of the gradual marginalization of the extreme Right strong elements in society supported a less political commemoration of the war. Finnish society in the late 1930s was moving towards something of an embryo of a welfare state. Wealth increased, democracy was sustained, and the Nordic countries and especially Sweden seemed to offer the model for the future. Parties in the middle of the political map were in power, and the social democrats were given responsibility. Overall the situation was very different compared to the first post-independence years when the young nation could be more categorized as one of the unstable post-World War Eastern European states with multiple domestic and foreign disputes. As pointed out by Miika Siironen, the erosion of the common legacy of the White front became possible when the Right block radicalized. Whereas during the first phase of the Lapua Movement in 1930 bourgeois Finland stood more or less united behind it, in 1931–32 the movement witnessed the beginning of a clear distinction between the political center and the right wing in Finland.<sup>43</sup>

The development was automatically reflected in the public memory of the war, and the overall impetus of the War of Liberation as a symbol of an anti-leftist front was somewhat erased. The passage of time also began to affect public memory. Each year the experience of 1918 became more and more distant from everyday life and memories. Thus, it became for an ever-growing number of Finns a less emotionally laden and more historicized event. Also, each year the Civil Guard renewed itself with new youngsters sworn into the ranks, which resulted in fewer members who had experienced the war. The position of the movement as a guardian of the White legacy became more and more symbolic, more of a part of tradition than of an everyday identity. The vocabulary and the symbols used in the public memory did not change that

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43 Siironen, *Valkoiset*.

much but became more banal, losing some of their previous emotional power. The Civil Guard continued to dominate the public memory on the local and regional level, but in their memory-production and image-making there was a clear push towards the more grandiose and the all-inclusive memorialization, which, although never openly stated, meant a smooth distancing from the memory of the 1918. Instead, the movement accelerated deeper into a mythical national past, the timeless eternity where the ancient Finnish past shook hands with the modern nation state and where the warrior of the past stood side by side with the White soldier of 1918.

The most popular historical event to be “whitened” by the Civil Guards was the Finnish War, a war between Sweden and Finland in 1808–09 that had been eternalized in the mid-19th century by the hugely popular poet Johan Ludvig Runeberg. In a short period of time, the Guards produced dozens of locally linked monuments of the war, and the history of the war was interpreted to serve the requirements of the Guards. Especially in Ostrobothnia, the central region of the White movement in 1917–18, the legacy of the Finnish War had been strong and had been used effectively to create the image of a century-long national fight for freedom. In northern Karelia, the memory of the Finnish War focused on the mobilization of the peasants of the region that had taken place in 1808 and suited perfectly as a prehistory of the modern Civil Guard movement.<sup>44</sup>

The strengthening of the historical identity of the movement was exemplified not only by the production of monuments but also by changing the name of the Guards’ official organ to *Hakkapeliitta* – a term used for the Finnish cavalrymen during the Thirty Years’ War of the 17th century – and naming the Ostrobothnian regional organ *Nuijasoturi* – a term used for the Finnish peasant rebels at the end of the 16th century. In their content also, the organs reflected the historical names. Both regional and national organs started to publish more and more historical articles about ancient Finnish warfare and battles. A battle against Muscovite troops on the Karelian Isthmus in 1555 was hailed as the prototype for a peculiar Finnish military strategy, and proto-Civil Guards built ancient pre-Christian hill forts. In the parish of Antrea, for instance, the local Guard started to organize annual patriotic festivities in 1929 at the hill fort of Sokaanlinna, and the Guard in Kivennapa organized the

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44 *Karjalainen* 7 August 1928; National Library (HYK), Coll. 74.2, Antti Hintikka files; Jukka Partanen, “Isänmaan asialla,” in Kimmo Katajala & Jaana Juvonen, eds, *Maakunnan synty: Pohjois-Karjalan historia 1809–1939*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran toimituksia, 1089 (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), p. 384.



anniversary of the War of Liberation on the ruins of a hill fort from the ancient times.<sup>45</sup>

The historical approach offered a sense of solidity and safety in an insecure world and constituted a mirror that could reflect the problematic war of 1918 and the existence of the Civil Guards. With the help of history, myths, and classical and Christian legends offering meaningfulness and a sense of humanity, it became easier to release the history of 1918 from its political context and turn it into a part of a timeless national narrative.<sup>46</sup> All this smoothing of the aggressive War of Liberation remembrance happened, however, without any public debate about the public memory and the one-sided interpretation of 1918. It can be argued that the fascination with ancientness within the Civil Guards forced history down the path leading to the White victory of 1918, a process of whitening and militarizing the national narrative by the Civil Guards who dominated the public memory production and at the same time served the lofty ambitions of the movement. The historical boom also indicated the change in rhetoric where "Red" (understood as a Finnish Red) was changed to "Russkie," changing the focus to an external enemy in line with the overall change in nationalistic rhetoric. This change aimed to strengthen the unity of the nation and close the gap between the social classes. The aim was rather one-sided, though, as exemplified by a meeting of the leaders of the propaganda departments of the Civil Guards in 1926 during which Pastor Arvi Järventaus claimed that the contrast between Red and White would be diminished with the change in rhetoric from Reds to Russkies. This would, according to Järventaus, give at least the impression that the workers were proper citizens and would make it possible to foster "White material" out of them.<sup>47</sup>

Simultaneously with the development in which the War of 1918 and the Civil Guards were encased increasingly in a mythical past, the public memory of the War of Liberation was influenced by two largely European phenomena. First, there was a narrative shift in the remembrance of war in Europe whose effects can be seen also in Finland.<sup>48</sup> Annette Becker and Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau describe the change as a demobilization of the war myth.<sup>49</sup> The

45 *Kannaksen Vartio* no. 6 (1929); *Karjala* 23 April 1919; *Rintamamies* no. 14 (1931).

46 Compare with Christian legends as images of World War I and in the post-war public memory. See Lina Sturfelt, *Eldens återsken: Första världskriget i svensk föreställningsvärld* (Lund: Sekel, 2008), p. 76; and Goebel, *The Great War and Medieval Memory*, p. 29.

47 KA, Sark 763/3, Civil Guard General Staff files (Suojeluskuntain yliesikunta), Propaganda Department C 1, Summit of the propaganda instructors of the Civil Guard 29 March 1926.

48 Daniel Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon, 2005), p. 222.

49 Audoin-Rozeau & Becker, *Understanding the Great War*, p. 170; Lina Sturfelt, *Eldens återsken*, pp. 220–25; Gregory, *The Silence of Memory*, pp. 188–226; Jay Winter & Emmanuel

romantic and patriotic narrative was challenged by new perspectives that grew from the imbalance between the wartime experiences of privates fighting in mud and despair and the incapacity of the post-war society and politics to fulfill the high hopes of those who had given their best years to the war. Characteristic of the new memory-wave, best symbolized by the novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Remarque, were the stories about ordinary soldiers, usually accompanied by negative images of the high command and the politicians. Cultural influences spread rapidly, although the critical narrative as it was presented in Western Europe never found popularity in Finland. When one of the leading radicals and right-wing conspirators Paavo Susitaival published a novel on the experience of his unit during the Civil War, it was immediately praised for its psychological approach and was called “Remarquan.”<sup>50</sup> Whereas the first memory boom following the Civil War was marked by incorporation of the local communities in the White narrative and the creation of a locally anchored public memory, the second boom in the 1930s was focused more on the veterans and the war experience. The new wave was exemplified by several projects of documentation work and collecting memories by the Civil Guards, the Finnish Army, and other organizations. There was a new understanding of the value of the memory from below, a sense of true, uncorrupted, and nonpoliticized history that would, if enough collected and documented, give a truthful picture of the War of Liberation. Also the social awareness, so crucial in the new interest towards the veterans, could be traced in the images of the veterans as poor, unselfish, and to a great part forgotten by the society they had fought to liberate.

The new memory boom in the 1930s resulted in a massive memory production with a large range of memorials and memorabilia: medals based on specific battles or units, history books and booklets of the war with a strong local focus, veterans’ meetings, excursions to battlegrounds, banners, magazines focusing on the war stories of the veterans, and new commemorative organizations. Legacy and veteran organizations sprung up in the 1930s, most focusing on extraordinary units and events during the war. Among popular themes were the resistance movement and the Irredentist campaigns. For instance, in 1935 an association was founded for members of the resistance movement whom the Russian authorities had imprisoned during World War I. In White mythology, they were called the “Prison Bar Jägers” (*Kalterijääkärit*). In the

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Sivan, eds, *War and Remembrance in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 33; Prost, *Republican Identities in War and Peace*, pp. 300–05.

50 L.J. Niinistö, *Paavo Susitaival 1896–1993: Aktivismi elämänasenteena* (Helsinki: SHS, 1998).

same year a union for the recruiters of Jägers was founded, and some years earlier there had been founded an association for those who had taken part in the hijacking of a Russian ship in Helsinki during the war.<sup>51</sup>

The memory boom, though it did intensify the commemorations, can actually be seen more as a normalization of the remembrance culture in that the passage of time rendered the memories less politicized and threat-filled. Partly the change in remembering the war during the 1930s can be described as cultural, as a process where the war itself became more distant due to the fact that more and more people had no firsthand experience of it. Also the generation that had participated in the war had passed through what was likely their most intensive phase in life and started in their 40s to have time and interest to look back on their achievements and share them collectively. It is noteworthy that the boom of the 1930s, although the cultural shift meant new perspectives and a more vernacular and social approach to the memory of the war, did not break the dominance of the White narrative in the "official" history and public memory.

### Veterans and the Challenge to Unity

Another major phenomenon affecting the public memory of the War of Liberation and that character of the memory boom of the 1930s was the rise of the veteran movement. Right-wing radicals had tried to establish a White veteran movement in the 1920s but without success. Throughout the 1920s there had been only a few minor veteran organizations, most due to the success of the Civil Guard movement, which especially in the early years acted partly as a veterans' union.<sup>52</sup> In fact, the Guards even opposed the idea of a new special organization for veterans as in 1928, when extensive plans for establishing a union during the grandiose tenth anniversary of the war had been laid out. A year later, an association named the Veterans' Union of the War of Liberation (*Vapaussodan rintamamiesten liitto*) was finally established in Tampere, but initially it was nothing but another far-right and hopelessly marginal enterprise. However, success came in the same year, fuelled by the sudden rise of the anti-leftist Lapua Movement. Gaining maximum publicity and support from the end of 1929 as a part of the popular movement, the Veterans' Union grew in just one year into an organization with more than 100 local branches and more

51 *Rintamamies* no. 7 (1935); *Rintamamies* no. 30 (1935); *Rintamamies* no. 8 (1933); *Rintamamies* no. 30 (1933); KA, State Police Files (EK-Valpo II), A 66 A 7.

52 Selén, *Sarkatakkien maa*, p. 204.

than 10,000 members. At the end of the 1930s, the organization had more than 20,000 members and more than 200 local branches.<sup>53</sup>

The Union, inspired by the right-wing German paramilitary veteran unions, was a political organization that used the veteran status and the commemoration of the war to introduce political ideas. In the name of the War of Liberation, the leadership of the Union advanced changes that would lead towards a more totalitarian society, demanded that the veterans should be handed a leading role of the country, and depicted veterans as victims of acts of terror by the socialists. The target group for the insults, provocations, and outrageous criticism of the Union was mainly the centrist and liberal politicians and the political Left, no matter whether social democrat or a communist. As had been the case with the Civil Guard movement in 1919, the commemorations of the war became central stages at which to introduce the Union and their policy.<sup>54</sup> Whereas the leadership was more or less openly fascist, most members of the local branches were more interested in the social benefits and the welfare agenda.

From the viewpoint of the Civil Guards, the Veterans' Union posed a problem. The Union was a new actor with the will to take on the role within the field of public memory that had previously belonged solely to the Civil Guards. The newcomer did not bring any new interpretations that would have shaken the war myth but instead took the politicization of memory to a new level. Ignoring political caution and the unifying bourgeois image of the remembrance of the war, the politics of the Union resulted in a rupture within the public memory of the War of Liberation. Like ideological organizations all over Europe and like the rhetoric within other veteran organizations, political parties and politicians were described as possessing negative attributes, whereas the political activity of the veterans were seen as differentiated from and more honorable than ordinary politics, a fact that could always be strengthened by referring to the status of the war: "We have been discredited for being political, for the establishment of a political organization. Our politics is the politics of the War of Liberation."<sup>55</sup> For the Civil Guards, the problem was that it was impossible to level too harsh a public condemnation of the Union. After all, it was comprised of veterans of the war, and to antagonize them was impossible,

53 Henrik Ekberg, *Führerns trogna följeslagare: Den finländska nazismen 1932–1944* (Helsinki: Schildts, 1991), p. 99; *Helsingin Sanomat* 4 May 1928; KA, Ministry of Justice, Registry of associations (Oikeusministeriön yhdistysrekisteritoimiston arkisto); The foundation of Finnish history 1920–40, Säätiö 35.

54 KA, The foundation of Finnish history 1920–40, Säätiö 35, Union minutes 24 May 1931.

55 Yrjö Raikas in his speech at the Union summit in 1931 in Vyborg. *Rintamamies* no. 12–13 (1931).

considering the importance of the myth of the War of Liberation for the Civil Guards. Condemning the veterans or other far-right members of the Guards was also against the ideal of the Guards as an apolitical patriotic community that unified all Finns. Another circumstance entwining the two movements was the fact that most members of the veterans' Union were also members of the Civil Guards. Furthermore, the Guards comprised a large and complex community with a considerable number of members who sympathized with the radical right and the popular front of Lapua. Though the Civil Guards never followed the Union in the path of radicalism, they usually co-operated in the remembrance acts on local remembrance days. It also should be noted that the veterans never directed any criticism toward the Civil Guards, even if one of their major themes was the claim of a rapidly fading memory of 1918, which could be seen as an indirect criticism of the Guards.<sup>56</sup>

The Veterans' Union, compared to the Civil Guards for whom the local level was at the core of the commemoration of 1918, was more concerned with regional and nationwide publicity in their more aggressive style of politicizing the memory. The same policy also accentuated the commemoration of the nationwide remembrance days as the January Sunday and the 16 May. The former especially became a key issue for the Union and exemplifies the nature of the movement as a popular protest movement aiming to provoke. January Sunday (*tammisunnuntai*), commemorating the beginning of the War of Liberation in Ostrobothnia, had resonated in the nationwide public memory during the first years after the war but had been reduced to mainly a regional remembrance day in Ostrobothnia (where the day actually had resonance in the actual local war history). For activists of the White front, the start of the war was of great importance as a time of spiritual purity, clean from political intrigues and opportunists. It had been a time when "the Finnish nation, faithful to the ancestors' ideals, was unanimous in its great deeds!"<sup>57</sup> January Sunday became the symbol of the White utopia of a nation and a people harmoniously united in the freedom fight, and for the Union the task was to "uphold the spirit that made the victory of 1918 possible."<sup>58</sup> The Left heavily criticized the ceremony, and questions were raised why the beginning of a national catastrophe should be celebrated. The more it was challenged, the more the veterans tried to pursue the commemoration of the day and proclaimed its status as the "real Independence Day" instead of the official date and the more neutral 6 Decem-

56 KA, The foundation of Finnish history 1920–40, Säätiö 35.

57 *Suojeluskuntalaisen lehti* no. 4 (1920).

58 *Rintamamies*, Sample issue, 24 May 1930.

ber.<sup>59</sup> The “beginning of the war” symbolized for the Union a phase of war when the White spirit was in its purest form and the war was still more of a national insurrection led by unselfish and noble men as opposed to all the political wheeling and dealing that soon led the country to forget the achievements and promises of the White Army.

The Union has righteously been seen as a political right-wing organization, but the political approach is not enough to explain its success. It is noteworthy that when the veterans de-escalated their political radicalism in the mid-1930s, after several political catastrophes including the support of the Mäntsälä Rebellion – a failed right-wing uprising in 1932 – the numbers of members continued to increase. To some extent it can be argued that the radical elements were mainly concentrated in the Union’s leadership, whereas most of the members on the local level were less keen to support a political agenda. It can even be argued that the original idea of a veteran movement as a political tool for right-wing fundamentalists had ended in a situation where the leadership had to become less radical because of the influence of the more moderate members. During the 1930s, the leadership was partly changed, and the influence of the most hardcore right-wing radicals was pushed out to the margins, where they founded new fascist projects of their own. The members within the Union retained focused on the public memory of the War of Liberation, whereas the political agenda began to concentrate more on social aid to poor veterans and their families. From this point of view, the success of the Union was part of the cultural memory boom that focused more on the individual veteran and his sufferings, including rhetoric that emphasized how the deeds of the veterans had been forgotten and how the veteran as the martyr had been left alone in the darkness after giving everything for the nation. These narratives, and naturally the social equity aspect, found resonance in the homes of veterans to such a degree that almost one-third of all veterans had joined the ranks by the end of the interwar period.<sup>60</sup>

The Union contributed to the commemorative movement with Union Days, an annual rally of veterans organized at the end of May in different regional centers. The Days, patterned after events organized by the right-wing German veteran organization, usually gathered thousands of veterans and high-profile guests such as General Mannerheim and representatives of foreign veteran organizations, especially from Estonia and Germany. Especially the Union

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59 The Independence Day commemorating the day of the declaration of independence had been introduced in 1919. On the local level, the commemoration of the day was dominated by the Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd organization. *Varsinais-Suomen Vartio* no. 23–24 (1922); *Suojeluskuntalaisen lehti* no. 24 (1919).

60 Aapo Roselius, *Kiista, eheys, unohdus*, pp. 192–93.

Days of 1933 and 1938, synchronized with the pompous fifteenth and twentieth anniversaries of the War of Liberation in Helsinki, became important proclamations of the Union. Parading army troops and Civil Guards were superseded by thousands of self-aware veterans who marched the streets to the main national arena, the Senate Square in Helsinki, and showed their strength and will in front of the political and military leadership of the country. Whereas 16 May 1933 had been filled with radical statements by the veterans and even threats of a *coup d'état*, the spectacle five years later reflected the more sober political line the Union had been forced to take after the most radical years. The 16 May 1938 was the greatest jubilee of the Veterans' Union and also the most spectacular official Remembrance Day of the interwar period. Among army troops and Civil Guards, almost 20,000 veterans took part in the festivities. The stage could not have been more suitable. Helsinki welcomed the participants with shining white facades of newly built functionalistic public buildings built for the Olympic Games of 1940. Radicalism was kept at a minimum while almost 20,000 veterans were transported to the city to take part in the festivities. The Remembrance Day had activated the whole movement, which reached new highs in the number of members and local branches.<sup>61</sup> However, the country was governed by the coalition of the Agrarian League and the social democrats, and the hegemonic interpretations showed their first, albeit small, signs of cracking.

### Towards the End

In 1938, during the grandiose commemorations of the twentieth anniversary of the War of Liberation, the author and one of the most prominent memory activists of the interwar period, Bertel Gripenberg, claimed in an interview that a re-evaluation of the status of the War of Liberation was quite impossible. Only in the case of a new war that would unite all the Finns could he and his comrades in arms think of distancing themselves from the memory of the war.<sup>62</sup> Gripenberg's comment and the question asked describe well the position of the White narrative at the end of the interwar period. After 20 years, the War of Liberation myth was still as problematic as ever. It was unable to renew itself. The myth had not become the cornerstone of the nation that the virile groups of memory activists had desired. Gripenberg and his fellows were clearly aware

61 KA, Preparation Committee for the Celebration of the 20th Anniversary of the End of the War of Liberation, 1938 (Vapaussodan päättymisen 20-vuotisjuhlien valmistelutoimikunta 1938); KA, Pk 1742.

62 *Rintamamies* no. 3 (1938).



of the failure to create a uniting narrative around the White victory, but they were unable to find another solution and instead hung on to the traditional interpretations.

Although in the late 1930s there was in Finnish society clear movement away from the confrontation linked to the Civil War, as described by Tuomas Tepora in “The Changing Perceptions of 1918” in this volume, the memory boom of the War of Liberation upheld by the Civil Guards and the Veterans’ Union showed no signs of fading. It also can be argued that efforts within the Civil Guard to liquidate the political obstacles standing in the way of an incorporation of the Left into the movement were lame – and that the uncompromising victors’ interpretation of the Civil War remained unacceptable for the Left and people who identified with the defeated. Although the political and social climate of the late 1930s may have been ripe for some sort of co-operation between the proponents of the former adversaries, there was no real backing for these efforts from the Civil Guards. The inability to acknowledge the political impetus of the War of Liberation within the Guards was evident during the national Civil Guard rally in Vyborg in 1936, when the commander-in-chief of the Guards, General Lauri Malmberg, declared that a special “spirit of the Guards” was the most precious factor of the movement behind the Civil Guards and that this spirit was a direct descendant of the White spirit of the War of Liberation. Furthermore, he declared that the protection of the spirit and the “political openness” were the main tasks of the movement.<sup>63</sup>

Once the memory of the War of Liberation became more and more distant, it gave rise to legacy organizations and their memory production. For these actors, the twentieth anniversary of the war in 1938 became the high point of the commemoration. For the Veterans’ Union, the commemoration of 1918 meant rather explicitly the preservation of a utopian spirit of the White front. There seemed to be no end to new memorial projects or to the establishment of new organizations. Especially the fascination of memorial projects reached almost a state of statuomania in the latter part of the 1930s. Characteristic of the time were monuments to the victims of the Red Terror and of the fallen. The monuments were usually of substantial dimensions and symbolically far away from the more humble grave monuments of the early 1920s. The Veterans’ Union was not alone in triggering the statuomania but was certainly the most active in the field. During the last year before the outbreak of World War II, the veterans were deeply involved in a new project that would have further

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63 KA, Civil Guard General Staff files (Suojeluskuntain yliesikunta), Civil Guard Propaganda Department, Ee 2, Newspaper review 1935–1936; *Karjala* 17 September, 1936; KA, T 15833/9, The Veterans’ Union of War of Liberation annual reports 1932–36.

strengthened the image of the War of Liberation in the memory landscape. They designed specific areas in cemeteries across the country for the graves of the veterans of the White Army. These new sites were intended, if possible, to be placed around the grave of the fallen and the enlarged sanctuaries were to be decorated with new monuments. The plans were mostly unfulfilled when the new World War began.<sup>64</sup>

The twentieth anniversary of the war became the year of the monuments, with tens of unveilings around the country, including the Memorial of the Liberation in Vaasa, a national memorial that had been initiated by General Mannerheim already 20 years earlier. The production of war memorials continued at a high rate until the beginning of the World War II. One of the last monuments of the interwar period was unveiled in April 1939 in Kerava, a small town north of Helsinki. The memorial project evoked quite well the major lines of the commemorative field of the interwar period. The monument was a result of the work by the patriotic troika of the local branches of the Civil Guard, the Lotta Svärd organization, and the Veterans' Union. During the unveiling ceremony, in which more than 500 Guardsmen and veterans participated, the monument was officially given over to the local Lotta Svärd branch because, as expressed in the inauguration speech, the town of Kerava was too "Red" to be able to care for the monument of the War of Liberation. The regional commander of the Civil Guard, who was also the chairman of the memorial committee, expressed how "here in the Red Southern Finland we need these kinds of visible and impressive proofs of the significance of the White Cause."<sup>65</sup> More than twenty years after the war, the public memory of 1918 was still occasionally very far away from the idea of reconciliation.

The scenario described by Gripenberg of a new uniting war revolutionizing the remembrance culture become reality with the Russo-Finnish war of 1939–40, the "mythical" Winter War described in length by Tuomas Tepora later in this volume. The development in the field of public memory of 1918 after the strong unifying experience of the Winter War revealed the differences among the memory activists of the interwar period. The main upholders of the legacy of the War of Liberation, the Civil Guards and Lotta Svärd, started to actively fade the image of 1918 from their public appearance and rhetoric.

Whereas the Civil Guards led the dismantling of the public memory of the iconography of 1918, the Veterans' Union chose another path. Like the Civil

64 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, p. 211; *Vapaussodan rintamamiesten liitto 1929–1939* (Helsinki: Vapaussodan rintamamiesten liitto, 1939), p. 56; KA, T 15833/9, The Veterans Union of War of Liberation annual report 1939.

65 *Rintamamies* nos 13 & 17 (1939).

Guards, the Union was thrilled by the possibilities of the wartime unity and saw the potential to enlarge their organization by including veterans of the Winter War into a mass-movement of hundreds of thousands.<sup>66</sup> In contrast to the Civil Guards, however, the Union did not see any need to renew the narrative at the expense of the status of the War of Liberation. For the veterans, the new war had been nothing but a proof of the righteousness of the White cause, something even the Left was supposed to finally understand.

The following years became a prolonged death dance for the veterans and their agenda. In the Union's Hall in Tampere at the end of 1940, Jalmari Pusa, one of the Union leaders, delivered a bitter speech in which he blamed the social democrats for destroying the unity achieved the previous year by demanding that every trace of the War of Liberation be erased from the public memory. Pusa ended his speech by convincing the audience that "when returning to normality, the foundation we build will be the very same foundation the future of Finland will be built on."<sup>67</sup> Behind Pusa's back, everyone could see physical proof of the dramatic change in the public memory of the War of Liberation: barely able to fit in the room was the monument of General Mannerheim, posing in the uniform and symbols of 1918. A few years earlier, during the memory boom of the twentieth anniversary of the War of Liberation, the Union had commissioned a monument to Mannerheim that was to be erected in the center of Tampere in 1939, but the advent of the Winter War altered the plans. Mannerheim as the White General was an impossible symbol after the Winter War and had no place in the public space. Later, years after the war, the monument was placed in a forest outside Tampere, far enough away that it could not disturb the new national narrative.<sup>68</sup>

The last remnants of the once intensive and widespread commemorative movement of the interwar period disappeared in 1944 when the Soviet Union, according to the Moscow Armistice (ending the war between Soviet and Finland), demanded that Finland ban all anti-Soviet and fascist organizations. Among them were the Civil Guards, the Lotta Svärd organization, and the Veterans' Union.<sup>69</sup> The War of Liberation would never reclaim its status in the public memory.

66 *Rintamamies* nos 7–14 (1940); KA, EK-Valpo II, Vapaussodan kenttäharmaat, minutes 1931–44.

67 *Rintamamies* no. 43 (1940); KA, Pk 1438/7, Veterans' Union minutes 8 December 1940.

68 Riitta Konttinen, *Suomen marsalkan ratsastajapatsas* (Helsinki: Suomen marsalkka Mannerheimin perinnesäätiö, 1989), p. 47.

69 Mikko Uola, "Suomi sitoutuu hajottamaan": *Järjestöjen lakkauttaminen vuoden 1944 välirauhansopimuksen 21. artiklan perusteella* (Helsinki: Suomen historiallinen seura, 1999), p. 29; Jyrki Smolander, *Suomalainen oikeisto ja "kansankoti": Kansallisen kokoomuksen*

## Summary

During the interwar period, the Finnish Civil War was remembered every year in all the parishes and towns of the country. Characteristic of the very official public memory was the total hegemony of the interpretation of the victors: the War of Liberation. The successful establishment of the paramilitary Civil Guards movement and its female counterpart the Lotta Svärd organization were essential for the formation of an intensive and extensive commemorative movement. The Civil Guards acted symbolically and during the first post-war years also practically as a resumption of the White Army; they actually hindered a full-scale demobilization of the White front of 1918. As guardian of the legacy of the Whites, the Guards militarized and standardized the public memory and cemented the narrative of the Whites.

A distinctive feature of the commemorative movement was the strong local emphasis, with hundreds of locally commemorated Remembrance Days instead of a single national day of commemoration. Each year the commemoration movement, beginning in January and ending in May on the Senate Square in the capital, assembled the White community for a brief moment and recreated the image of unity of the White front of 1918. For the local Guards, the War of Liberation offered tools to strengthen local identity and justify the activities of the paramilitary popular movement as well as a means to create a heroic history that linked the movement to the local soil and the life of the nation as well.

Even if Finnish society in the interwar period and especially in the late 1930s took firm steps towards an embryonic welfare state, and even though political life reflected less and less a division between Red and White Finland, the public memory of 1918 propagated by the Civil Guard failed to follow the same process. Dominated by the Guards, the utterly one-sided public commemoration of the War of Liberation continued, and the Red narrative was kept beyond the margins of "official history" as effectively as the silence surrounding the White Terror in the public memory.

During the 1930s, the remembrance culture of the War of Liberation was affected both by a memory boom that focused on the individual and the social aspects of the soldiers and by the brief but influential rise of the right-wing radicals. The former resulted in a horde of new veteran organizations and a vast memory production and the latter in a further politicization and radical-

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*suhtautuminen pohjoismaiseen hyvinvointivaltiomalliin jälleenrakennuskaudelta konsensusajan alkuun* (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), p. 46.

ization of the public memory that, in the end, threatened the at least officially non-political status of the Civil Guard-led commemorative movement.

The dominance of the intensive but excluding public memory of the victors of the Civil War came to an end during the Winter War. The unifying experience and the creation of a new myth that could be shared by all demanded the marginalization of the divisive experience of 1918, and the Civil War could figure only as part of the narrative leading to the miracle of the Winter War and the actual national liberation. The effective dismantling of the vast commemorative movement of the War of Liberation reflects the power of periods of crisis for the public memory and the strength of the new narrative, but the smooth but active distancing from the War of Liberation myth was also possible because the utterly one-sided public memory had even before 1939 come to a dead-end, unable to comprehensively reflect the changing society.

## To Commemorate or Not: The Finnish Labor Movement and the Memory of the Civil War in the Interwar Period

*Tauno Saarela*

The Finnish labor movement suffered heavy losses in the Civil War and especially in its aftermath. After the war, it was under the strict control of the White regime. However, the first steps in its revival were taken already in late spring of 1918. In some municipalities, the labor associations were able to start their activities properly during the fall, and some of them managed to participate in the municipal elections in December 1918. Success in the parliamentary elections in early March 1919 – the social democrats won 80 seats out of 200 – was strong encouragement for the working people, and the work of the labor movement became more efficient as arrested members were released from POW camps, publication of the labor newspapers became possible, labor associations re-established control of the Workers' Halls during the spring of 1919, and martial law ended in June 1919.

### The Division of the Labor Movement

The labor movement was not the same as before the Civil War. There had not been any major splits in the Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP) before 1917, although there had been different kinds of emphasis in the party regarding co-operation with the bourgeois parties in the defense of Finland's autonomy in the Russian Empire.<sup>1</sup> By 1920, there were two labor parties – the SDP and the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland, SSTP (*Suomen sosialistinen työväenpuolue*) – in Finland. In addition, the Communist Party of Finland, SKP (*Suomen kommunistinen puolue*), worked underground in the country, although its headquarters were in Petrograd, Soviet Russia. Its leadership even claimed that it guided the activities of the SSTP.

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1 Jouko Heikkilä, *Kansallista luokkapoliittikkaa: Sosiaalidemokraatit ja Suomen autonomian puolustus 1905–1917* (Helsinki: SHS, 1993).

The division of the labor movement was connected with the results of the abortive revolution and the Civil War in the winter and spring of 1918. The three parties formulated their political lines in relation to these significant events but also to the political line of the pre-Civil War labor movement and to each other. Also, the place and the moment had a strong effect on the character of the assessment; the conditions of those who had stayed in Finland were considerably different from the conditions of the leadership of the revolution and approximately 10,000 others who had escaped to Soviet Russia. In Finland, stepping away from the past and talking mainly to a bourgeois audience were vital for the labor movement wishing to restart its activities, while in Soviet Russia, the refugees attempted to adapt themselves to the doctrines and working methods of the ruling Bolsheviks and to their expectations of world revolution in the near future.

Those who had not participated in the revolution laid the basis for the re-foundation of the Social Democratic Party in the spring of 1918. Among these, Väinö Tanner had been a member of the party committee and Parliament and belonged to the prominent leadership of the SDP, while Evert Huttunen and Hannes Ryömä were not as well known. Huttunen, though, had achieved importance in the negotiations between Finnish and Russian labor movements in 1917. Ryömä, a physician by trade, made his first significant political contribution during the winter and spring of 1918 as he publicly criticized the revolutionary policy of the SDP.<sup>2</sup>

The re-founders of the SDP wanted to distance the new movement from the pre-Civil War labor movement. According to them, leadership of the old party had made a serious mistake by forsaking reform politics and cooperation with the progressive bourgeois parties in 1917 and had allowed the spread of Bolshevik ideas among the labor ranks, propagated class hatred, and started an armed revolution. The re-founders wanted to give priority to work in Parliament and the municipal councils and help the labor masses understand the significance of reform policy and cooperation with the bourgeois center parties. They regarded spontaneous activities of the labor masses as suspicious and had a tendency to reject extra-parliamentary activities or to strictly control them. The

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2 On the persons, see, e.g., Jaakko Paavolainen, *Väinö Tanner: Senaattori ja rauhanentekijä. Elämäkerta vuosilta 1912–1923* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1979); Hannu Väisänen, “Evert Huttunen – oikeistososialisti idän suhteiden hoitajana v. 1917”; and Hannu Soikkanen, “Hannes Ryömä – työväenliikkeen uuden linjan viitoittaja 1920-luvun alussa,” in Hannu Soikkanen, ed., *Tiennäyttäjät*, vol. 3: *Suomen työväenliikkeen merkkimiehiä Ursinista Tanneriin* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1968), pp. 83–112 and 113–65.



fact that many of the re-founders had been active in the cooperational movement gave background for their political line.<sup>3</sup>

There was also another trend in the re-founding of the SDP. In his book published in December 1918, Karl Harald Wiik, an important social democrat with international contacts, who had not been an active participant in the revolution, also wanted to get rid of spontaneous actions but studied them from the point of view of party ideology and education. According to Wiik, the rank-and-file workers had not understood that the preconditions for a social revolution were not yet present in Finland in 1917–18. The leaders who had not been able to explain the character of the revolution were responsible for that. They had also relied too much on the instincts of the masses and followed them. Wiik advocated for better interaction between the leadership and the rank-and-file and regarded the liberation of the masses from their original instincts as the important educational task of the new party. He was also of the opinion that the party should control all extra-parliamentary activities better than they had before the Civil War.<sup>4</sup>

The Finnish Communist Party (from 1920 onwards the Communist Party of Finland) was founded in Moscow in August 1918 by the leaders and functionaries of the Red government who had escaped to Soviet Russia. While in Soviet Russia, these refugees concluded that the Finnish revolution had failed because the labor movement had stayed within the boundaries of Finnish nation and the bourgeois democracy. The new party wanted entirely to abandon the working methods of the Finnish labor movement – working in Parliament, trade unions, and co-operative movement – and propagated armed revolution and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. These slogans reflected strong support for the Russian revolution and Bolshevik ideas. They were also in line with the practical situation in Soviet Russia – the Finns participated in the armed defense of the Bolshevik power. But this policy was not an appropriate ground for activities in Finland, and by the summer of 1920, the party chose a more flexible approach. Due to its illegal status in Finland, the

3 Hannu Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, vol. 1: 1899–1937. *Suomen Sosialidemokraattinen Puolue 75 vuotta* (Helsinki: SDP, 1975), pp. 309–44; Pauli Kettunen, *Poliittinen liike ja sosiaalinen kollektiivisuus: Tutkimus sosialidemokratiasta ja ammattiyhdistysliikkeestä Suomessa 1918–1944* (Helsinki: SHS, 1986), pp. 94–102; see also Hannes Ryömä, *Vallankumousvuoden tapahtumista* (Helsinki, 1918); E. Huttunen, *Sosialidemokraattinen puoluejohto ja kansalassota* (Helsinki: Kansanvalta, 1918).

4 Karl H. Wiik, *Kovan kokemuksen opetuksia: Sananen Suomen työvälle* (Helsinki: Kansanvalta, 1919), pp. 48–61, 70–79, 100–07; on Wiik, e.g., Erkki Tuomioja, *K.H. Wiik – itsenäisyysmies ja internationalisti: Ellämäkerta vuoteen 1918* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1979).

SKP was forced to work underground, and until 1944 its principal organs were located in the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup>

Those who had participated in the revolution could not express their views in Finland in 1918, as most of them were still in the POW camps. The ideas of the rank-and-file men and women on the character of the war were expressed in songs both in and outside the POW camps. These songs were passed on orally and later were written down and circulated within the labor movement. Although the songs were often characterized by sorrow and hopelessness, they also told about fighting for an idea and freedom and also reminded of the White Terror.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the songs put a more positive spin on the fighting than did the writings of Tanner, Ryömä, or even Wiik. The underground Red folklore was vivid in the interwar period and functioned partly as an emotional countermeasure against the experienced defeat. At least in oral tradition, if not in real life, it became possible to punish the White “butchers.”<sup>7</sup>

The SDP tried to achieve the support of those who had participated in the war, as indicated by the message of the extraordinary party congress in December 1918 and the election campaign.<sup>8</sup> That was not enough; criticism of the party leadership in the summer and fall of 1919 proved that there was dissatisfaction with its political line and its contribution in Parliament among party members all over the country. The dissatisfaction concerned, above all, the fact that the prisons were still full of those who had participated in Red activities. For those who had been involved in 1917 and 1918, it was difficult to understand the condemnation of the revolution. It was also hard for these groups to come to terms with the fact that the new leaders of the SDP had forsaken the strict line of the class struggle of the pre-Civil War labor movement as they had rejected extra-parliamentary actions and given priority to the work in Parliament and municipal councils. It was difficult to find support for any ideas of co-operation with the center parties – all the bourgeois parties, for instance, interpreted the strike of the longshoremen in the spring of 1919 as preparation

5 Tauno Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty 1918–1923* (Helsinki: KSL, 1996), pp. 36–100.

6 See, e.g., “Laulu rakkaimmalle vankileirissä,” “Vankilan muurit,” “Laulu Hennalasta,” and “Kapinavalssi,” in Ilpo Saunio & Timo Tuovinen, *Edestä aatteen: Suomalaisia työväenlauluja 1890–1938* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1978), pp. 131–33, 136, 142; and Ilpo Saunio, *Veli sisko kuulet kummat soitot: Työväenlaulut eilen ja tänään* (Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri, 1974), p. 249.

7 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Punakapinan muistot: Tutkimus työväen muistelukerronnan muotoutumisesta vuoden 1918 jälkeen*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 657 (Helsinki: SKS, 1996).

8 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, pp. 329–37.

for a new revolution.<sup>9</sup> Some critics regarded the new line as an accommodation to the views of the victors of the Civil War. Further, they did not like the attempts of the SDP leadership to increase centralization and change the system of the pre-1918 labor movement which had allowed districts to enjoy their own independence; guidance from the party leadership had increased along with the parliamentary elections. These critics started to gather their forces in the fall, and, after the failed attempt to conquer the majority in the party congress of the SDP in December 1919, they founded the Socialist Workers' Party of Finland in May 1920.<sup>10</sup>

Although the birth of the SKP and the SSTP demonstrated different ideas about the character and tasks of the revolutionary labor movement, their representatives started to work together in the summer of 1919. By the fall of 1920, a model had been created that saw some of the SSTP leaders discussing political matters with underground representatives of the SKP in Finland. Some Finnish activists participated in the congresses of the Communist International and the SKP in Soviet Russia from the summer of 1921 onwards. The connections with the SSTP indicated that the SKP had changed its political line, but the parties were still living in two quite different conditions, which affected their respective political lines. Those in Soviet Russia/the Soviet Union were captivated by the idea of the world revolution and found their salvation in Bolshevik ideas. In a country where communists were in power, it was easier to follow the instructions of the Bolsheviks and the Communist International than it was in Finland, where the movement tried to overcome the fundamental defeat in the Civil War and to fight for its existence. The politics of the SSTP was characterized on the one hand by expressions of solidarity towards the new communist movement and on the other hand by attempts to secure the civil rights of the workers and their associations in Finland, including attempts to get all imprisoned workers released. Thus, SSTP leadership did not follow the instructions of the communist party and the Communist International obediently but, instead, quite often resorted to the practices of the pre-Civil War party.<sup>11</sup> Despite these differences, however, the SKP and the SSTP together formed the Finnish communist movement.

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9 On the strike and reactions, see, e.g., Tapio Bergholm, *Kovaa peliä kuljetusalalla: Kuljetusalan ammattiyhdistystoiminta vuoteen 1924* (Helsinki: AKT, 1988), pp. 324–30.

10 On the background and the character of the SSTP, see Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 120–92.

11 Tauno Saarela, "Finnish Communism, Bolshevization and Stalinization," in Norman La Porte, Kevin Morgan, & Matthew Worley, eds, *Bolshevism, Stalinism and the Comintern: Perspectives on Stalinization 1917–53* (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 188–201.

The Socialist Workers' Party met with difficulties from the very beginning, and in August 1923 all activities of the party were forbidden, and its national and local leaders and the members of Parliament were arrested and sentenced to prison. After the ban, the movement was organized into looser electoral, cultural, and other associations, which attempted to keep up national and regional co-operation on the basis of the Socialist Workers' and Smallholders' Electoral Organizations, STPV (*Sosialistisen työväen ja pienviljelijäin vaalijärjestö*). Even these organizations were forbidden, and all the public activities of the STPV were outlawed in the summer of 1930. From then until the fall of 1944, Finnish communism, beyond the SKP leadership in Moscow and its underground functionaries in Finland, consisted of individuals or small groups trying to work inside political organizations, trade unions, and underground.<sup>12</sup>

Varying interpretations on the events in 1917–18 made the co-operation between the labor parties difficult. The re-founders of the SDP gave priority to co-operation with the bourgeois center and thought that the united activities of the whole labor movement would only strengthen the unity of the bourgeois parties. The representatives of Finnish communism regarded this as the social democrats' commitment to the existing social order, and by branding them with various names they included the social democrats among their opponents. Thus, the only united activity between the SDP and the SSTP was a demonstration week in January 1923. Not even in Parliament did the representatives of the labor parties work together; both parliamentary groups made their own motions regarding the release of the imprisoned Reds, the support for Red orphans, or other matters.

Although the division of the labor movement was connected with the Civil War, it was not the case that those who had participated in the war joined the SSTP and those who had stayed out of it joined the SDP. The division of the labor movement took place roughly so that the SDP received more members and support in those regions which had been part of Red Finland and which had encountered severe battles and heavy losses during the war, while the SSTP and the STPV were successful in those areas which had been under White power from the very beginning of the war or had fallen into their hands after small skirmishes. There were exceptions, but the division born in the beginning of the 1920s was preserved without great changes for decades.

The division of the labor movement was not, however, a direct reaction to the geographical part of the country in which one had been at the end of the war, but it had significance after the conflict, when working people started to

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12 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 350–56; Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 64–92, 779–81.

take a stand on the character of the reviving labor movement. Although the actions of the Whites in and after the war were experienced as unjust among the Reds all over the country, the intensity of involvement in the war determined the intensity of those feelings. In those areas where the battles had been limited but the punishment of the labor organizations and their members had been rough, it was easier to consider the punishments as unjustified. In those areas, the eagerness and willingness to engage in political activity had not been drowned by the war and its aftermath like it had been in areas that had greatly suffered both the battles and executions. Thus, the criticism against the leadership of the re-founded SDP in those areas which had mainly been outside the real fighting materialized more often in a separation from the SDP than in those areas which had suffered severe battles and great human losses. Despite their criticism, they were willing to stay within the SDP.<sup>13</sup> The losses could be of significance in towns or municipalities, too. The insistence of the labor associations in Varkaus in northern Savonia to stay in the SDP, although the great majority of associations in the surrounding district separated from the party, was partly based on the heavy loss of human lives during the Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

The Civil War as such was important for the division of the labor movement, but there were also indirect influences on the division. The political lines presented by the parties appealed in different ways in the workers in different industries. The workers in those industries where the main option to defend their interest was extra-parliamentary activities were more pleased with the SSTP and the SKP than with the SDP. Thus, preparedness to resign from the SDP and join the SSTP was great among the workers in industries which were prone to seasonal variations and quick local actions or which otherwise had a tradition of defending their interests by strikes.<sup>15</sup> In the countryside, the parliamentary-centered line of the SDP was obviously enough for the former crofters and new independent farmers in southern Finland, while the smallholders in northern and northeastern Finland had to work in the forest work sites in order to earn their living and thus were connected with the working methods and political orientations of the trade unions in those industries.<sup>16</sup>

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13 See, e.g., Pertti Laulajainen, *Sosialidemokraatti vai kommunisti: Vaaliekologinen tutkimus Suomen poliittisen työväenliikkeen jakautumisesta kansalais sodan jälkeen* (Mikkeli: Itä-Suomen instituutti, 1979), pp. 64–70; and Leevi Norrena, *Talonpoika, pohjalainen – ja punainen: Tutkimus Etelä-Pohjanmaan Järviseudun työväenliikkeestä vuoteen 1939* (Helsinki: SHS, 1993), pp. 236–39.

14 Hannu Soikkanen, *Varkauden historia* (Varkaus: Varkauden kaupunki, 1963), pp. 644–47, 652–54, 658–60.

15 Kettunen, *Poliittinen liike*, pp. 163–88.

16 Kettunen, *Poliittinen liike*, pp. 228–29.

The position of the labor movement in Finnish society and its influence on the political and social questions was not as significant as it had been before 1918. On the national level, it was in a secondary position up to the end of the 1930s and had to accommodate to decisions made by others, although it received 40 per cent of the votes in the parliamentary elections and 78 to 82 seats in Parliament in the 1920s; and, after a decline in the early 1930s, it reached the same level at the end of the decade. Measured by election results, the social democrats were more numerous, receiving approximately two-thirds of the labor votes in the 1920s and all the votes in the 1930s. Supporters of the Socialist Workers' Party, however, held the majority in the trade unions, but it lacked influence because the employers' organizations did not recognize trade unions as equal partners in negotiations. In some municipalities, the labor movement was strong and could exercise its own politics, although it was constrained by the demands of a large majority on important decisions and was under the control of central authorities.

The weak position of the labor movement became manifest in the questions concerning the civil rights and liberties. Although the victors of the Civil War dominated the ideological apparatus of Finland, they easily resorted to administrative measures and repression in order to eradicate opposing thoughts. Especially those who advocated revolution and had contacts with the new international communist movement were eyed with suspicion, and the discussions on the principles of the labor movement were easily regarded as a crime.<sup>17</sup>

The mistrustful attitude of the victors of the Civil War towards the extra-parliamentary activities of the working masses influenced activities in the labor movement. The re-founders of the SDP expressed suspicion towards spontaneous activities of the masses. There were no such doubts within the Finnish communist movement, and under the pressure, its activities were also concentrated in Parliament – only a couple of times did the movement try to challenge the bans on demonstrations. A mistrustful attitude toward initiatives of the rank-and-file was evident also in the trade union movement. It preserved its list of conditions for the start of a strike, although the membership in northern Finland, in particular, saw the need for a more flexible system.

The Civil War had still other kinds of influences on the labor movement. Due to attempts by the authorities to limit and control the activities of the labor movement, especially the SSTP and the STPV, it advocated more strongly for civil rights than it had prior to the Civil War. The promise of a better future, in

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17 See, e.g., Lars Björne, "... syihin ja lakiin eikä mielivaltaan ..." *Tutkimus Turun hovioikeuden poliittisista oikeudenkäynneistä vuosina 1918–1939* (Helsinki: Suomalainen lakimiesyhdistys, 1977), pp. 49–71.

general, was connected with abolishing the injustices implemented after 1918. Due to the results of the Civil War, the social-policy activities of the labor movement also increased, as it founded organizations to take care of those still in prison and also the Red widows and orphans.

### Amnesty of the Reds

The revolutionary policy in 1917–18 was not the only subject of discussion in the reviving labor movement. The fate of Red prisoners was one of the most important questions. Immediately after the war, there were more than 74,000 Red POWs. By the end of August 1918, the number had fallen to 27,400 due to parole for those condemned to imprisonments of three years or less. This number was further reduced when Regent P.E. Svinhufvud pardoned 16,700 persons in October and December 1918. These measures were partly due to the attention the social democrats managed to arouse in the Scandinavian and European countries during the summer.<sup>18</sup>

In December 1918, the extraordinary congress of the SDP demanded – in addition to the removal of all the restrictions on civil rights – amnesty for all who had been sentenced to prison for crimes against the state in 1918. Moreover, the sentences of those convicted of murder or arson should be re-investigated. Amnesty was also important in the parliamentary elections in early March 1919. After the return of the social democrats to Parliament, amnesty became a central item in the parliamentary group's program, and the group made a motion in support of general amnesty in April. The party was not satisfied with the decision of the then-Regent, C.G.E. Mannerheim, in June 1919 to pardon 2071 persons and 12 former Members of Parliament.<sup>19</sup>

Although the amnesty in January 1920 reduced the number of the imprisoned and almost 40,000 persons regained their civil rights,<sup>20</sup> it was not enough for the SSTP. It was not considered proof that the position of working people had been elevated from its secondary status. Thus, the founding congress of the SSTP demanded that all those sentenced for political reasons in 1918 or afterwards should be released immediately and their civil rights restored. The party was not quite satisfied with the policy of amnesties: the imprisoned

18 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa 1918* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1971), pp. 114–20, 310–11, 314–20.

19 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, pp. 332, 338–39, 352–54; Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa*, pp. 311–12.

20 Paavolainen, *Vankileirit Suomessa*, p. 313.



needed not amnesty but justice and freedom, and the best way to make that happen was to annul all laws enacted by the so-called Stump Parliament (*tynkäeduskunta*) that reigned after the Civil War until March 1919 with virtually no labor members. By keeping the matter in the public mind, the party also wanted to challenge the idea, propagated by the bourgeois parties, that the question was no longer a burning issue.<sup>21</sup>

The social democrats were not quite unanimous about who should be included in the amnesty; some members wanted to exclude the leaders, initiators, and activists, while others were of the opinion that the bourgeoisie was responsible for the Civil War and therefore it would be consistent to include all, even those who had escaped to Soviet Russia. The SSTP had no doubts, as it wanted to give those in exile the right to return to Finland without any punishment, while the social democrats were not as enthusiastic in speaking for their return.<sup>22</sup>

Both labor parties resented the fact that many well-known leaders of the movement were not granted an amnesty, although they, according to the SDP, had not even been supporters of the revolution. The social democrats regarded that as punishment of the labor movement as a whole, while the SSTP connected the continued imprisonment of these persons to the injustice of the amnesty policy.<sup>23</sup> Still in the mid-1920s, working-class newspapers wondered before Independence Day why persons who, from their point of view, had fought for Finland's independence remained in prison.<sup>24</sup>

The SSTP was more eager to bring up those groups the bourgeois parties had earlier excluded from the amnesty. Thus, it was anxious to challenge the determinations of "those labeled as individual criminals." According to the party, the imprisoned had been branded as criminals because they had participated in the revolution. Thus, an honest revolutionary had been reduced to a shameful criminal. The attitude towards these "criminals" was not, however, unanimous; some forgot entirely about the robberies or murders the Reds had committed and emphasized the war conditions as the root of all violence,

21 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 183; on the attitude of the bourgeois parties, see Mauno Jääskeläinen, "Itsenäisyyden ajan eduskunta 1919–1938," in *Suomen kansanedustalaitoksen historia*, vol. 7 (Helsinki: Eduskunnan historiakomitea, 1973), pp. 24–25.

22 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, pp. 332, 352; Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 183, 295–96.

23 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, p. 353; Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 185–86.

24 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 666.

while others considered murders unacceptable even in the revolutionary conditions.<sup>25</sup>

While demanding the release of the imprisoned Reds, it was typical for both parties to question the competence of the courts in 1918 and the legitimacy of the sentences. By means of several examples, *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, the main organ of the SDP, demonstrated in January 1919 the random nature of the sentences and explained how the courts were called “lotteries” by the prisoners.<sup>26</sup> In the SSTP, it was usual to connect the sentences in 1918 with the later sentences concerning the party and its members. Sentences for the founding congress of the SSTP in particular were regarded as a proof of the odd decisions made by the courts.<sup>27</sup>

For the social democrats in 1919, it was typical to try to convince the center parties that an amnesty was a necessary condition for gathering Finns behind a common cause. Without it, peaceful development and fruitful work in Parliament would not be possible; instead, bitterness would grow among the workers. The amnesty would also give Finland recognition of other states.<sup>28</sup> The rhetoric of the SSTP representatives was different; they attempted to add strength to their words by emphasizing how the workers’ army was knocking on the gate of the prison and would soon break it, or they appealed to the opinions of the workers of the world. The socialists were also more eager to present the voice of the imprisoned. Although the attitude of the SSTP gave the impression that it demanded everything at once, the party, however, tried to contribute to practical issues as often as was possible. Thus, demands for release of all the convicted remained in the background, and they became evident only in discussions concerning the limited scope of the amnesty.<sup>29</sup>

Concerning the question of amnesty, the labor movement concentrated mostly on the work in Parliament. When the amnesty did not proceed quickly enough for the labor party, the social democrats discussed in May 1919 the possibility to press the bourgeois parties by means of a strike. In the fall of the same year, they made amnesty the condition for accepting other laws. The latter question resurfaced in November 1921 when there was discussion within both labor parties whether it would be possible to connect the amnesty question with the laws on self-government of the Åland Islands in order to arouse

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25 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 185.

26 See, e.g., *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 25 January 1919.

27 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 184.

28 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, pp. 352–53.

29 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 184–85; on publishing the opinions of the prisoners, see, e.g., *Suomen Työmies* 23 March & 1, 19 and 30 April 1921.

international attention. The idea was considered doubtful by the social democrats, however.<sup>30</sup>

The parties of the left did not try to organize workers' demonstrations in support of their demands, but local labor associations arranged mass meetings on the amnesty question. At the national level, the trade union movement took the initiative and proposed to the labor parties in January 1921 that a one-day general strike be declared in March in order to exert pressure in support of the amnesty demand. The proposal was accepted by the SSTP, although it obviously was rather skeptical and did not make much noise, as the SDP denied the proposal on the grounds that it would only strengthen opinion against the amnesty. After that, the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (*Suomen ammattijärjestö*, SAJ) urged labor organizations to demonstrate for the liberation of political prisoners. In order to challenge the views of the victors of the Civil War, it proposed that the demonstrations be organized on 16 May, when the Whites celebrated their victory. Although the labor parties did not participate in them officially, demonstrations took place all over the country.<sup>31</sup>

In January 1923, the parties were more active; on the initiative of the SSTP, they signed a common manifesto urging workers to demonstrate for amnesty but also for the reduction and abolition of customs duties. The latter items were included at the request of the social democrats, who regarded the amnesty question as merely reproducing the juxtaposition of 1918. The demonstrations were considered satisfactory by both parties, although they were banned from the central squares and had to be arranged near workers' halls. The co-operation did not continue, however, although the SSTP made new proposals on the same subject. The social democrats did not believe its advantages outweighed the reaction among the bourgeois parties.<sup>32</sup>

Activities on behalf of the prisoners were not restricted to Parliament, newspapers, and demonstrations; district and local organizations also helped political prisoners, and in a more practical way. The best example was given by the southern party district of the northern Ostrobothnian town of Oulu, which

30 Soikkanen, *Kohti kansanvaltaa*, pp. 352, 394–95. The Åland Question concerned the planned incorporation of the monolingually Swedish-speaking southwestern archipelago to Sweden in the wake of Finnish independence. The move was initially promoted by the inhabitants of the Åland Islands. Eventually, the League of Nations decided the dispute in favor of Finland in 1921, and to appease the islanders, the Finnish Parliament granted autonomy to the Åland Islands.

31 Pirjo Ala-Kapee & Marjaana Valkonen, *Yhdessä elämä turvallisiksi: SAK:laisen ammattiyhdistysliikkeen kehitys vuoteen 1930* (Helsinki: SAK, 1982), pp. 536–37; Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 186.

32 See, e.g., Kettunen, *Poliittinen liike*, pp. 295–98.

founded a relief committee for political prisoners as early as December 1919. This committee delivered all the prisoners who had come from the district food parcels twice a month and books for Christmas and helped prisoners' families with food and money deliveries. The money for these deliveries came from the local associations, which were ordered to arrange evening entertainment to raise money for the political prisoners four times a year. These evening entertainments attempted, in vain, to get an exemption from the amusement tax. In other districts, it was, rather, the local workers' associations that helped their own members in prison. In some municipalities, the associations would even ask the municipal organs to deliver allowances for the help of the families of the political prisoners.<sup>33</sup>

### Red Orphans

Along with the Red prisoners, the Red orphans were central for the politics of the left. When a bill was passed in April 1919 guaranteeing a state pension to the widows and children, it only reckoned those on the winning side. Support for the orphans of the defeated – the majority of all war orphans – was left to poor relief. Among the workers, this and the attempts to place Red orphans in foster homes was regarded as a great injustice and an expression of a mistrust that Red widows were capable of raising their children.<sup>34</sup> The labor movement tried to correct the situation by making motions in Parliament to include Red widows and orphans in the state pension. As the motions did not bring any results in the interwar period, the labor movement resorted to its own muscles.<sup>35</sup>

As early as August 1918, the social democrats in Helsinki founded The Relief Committee of the Finnish Workers (*Suomen työläisten avustuskomitea*) in

33 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 186–87.

34 Mervi Kaarina, "Punaorpojen huolto – köyhäinapua ja kasvatusta," in Juha Hannikainen, Markku Hyrkkänen, & Olli Vehviläinen, eds, *Väki voimakas*, vol. 4: *Suomi 1917–1918* (Tampere: THPTS, 1990), pp. 341–50; Panu Pulma, "Kerjuuluvasta perhekuntoutukseen: Lapsuuden yhteiskunnallistuminen ja lastensuojelun kehitys Suomessa," in Panu Pulma & Oiva Turpeinen, *Suomen lastensuojelun historia* (Helsinki: Lastensuojelun keskusliitto, 1987) pp. 128–36.

35 Maria Lähteenmäki, *Mahdollisuuksien aika: Työläisnaiset ja yhteiskunnan muutos 1910–1930-luvun Suomessa* (Helsinki: SHS, 1995), p. 195; Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 281; Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 367; for a discussion of granting pensions to former Reds and widows since World War II, see Tuomas Tepora's chapter "Changing Perceptions of 1918" in this volume.

order to support Red families and raise money by organizing evening entertainment and fund collections. In April 1920, this committee was replaced by the Relief Committee of the Labor Organizations (*Työväenjärjestöjen avustus-toimikunta*), which consisted of the central organizations of the labor movement. The division of the SDP made the relief work more scattered, and in January 1924 the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions tried to gather the activities together by founding a relief committee for the Red orphans and political prisoners. It worked until 1929, although it could not monopolize all the activities – the social democrats continued the work in their own organizations, and the STPV founded a special organization for political prisoners in 1925 (*Valtiollisten vankien huoltoyhdistys*).<sup>36</sup>

A particular day was created for promoting the cause of the Red orphans. The SSTP and the STPV organized their “Red Orphans’ Day” celebrations in July from 1921 until 1929, while the social democrats arranged their “Day for the Helpless” in September until 1926. These occasions demonstrated respect for those who had sacrificed their freedom and life but were also intended to strengthen the feeling of class solidarity. Reference to Red orphans was enough to remind that the victors of the Civil War had orphaned a number of children. By keeping the matter alive and demanding that Red orphans receive support commensurate with that given to White orphans, the labor movement wanted to remind of the injustices of the victors and present disapproval of the fact that Red orphans were foisted onto the poor relief or the support of the working class.<sup>37</sup> The advice of the SKP leadership to make the Red orphans an inspiration for working masses in their general fight was not followed, although the celebrations demonstrated respect for those comrades who had sacrificed their lives and also strengthened “the feeling of class power and solidarity.”

The celebrations organized during these days were important for raising funds for Red orphans and widows. This form of relief demonstrated that the labor movement remembered the sufferings of the Red orphans and wanted to “show them the love of a father and the affection of a mother,” as *Työn Ääni*, the STPV newspaper in Vaasa, stated. In general, the economic survival of the children was the main concern, but the aim of the Whites to raise Red children as “decent citizens” was also mocked, and speakers at these occasions reminded

36 Kaarina, “Punaorpojen huolto,” pp. 352–53; Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 442–47.

37 Mervi Kaarina, *Punaorvot 1918* (Helsinki & Jyväskylä: Minerva, 2008), p. 96; Lähteenmäki, *Mahdollisuuksien aika*, pp. 220–21; Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 570.

of this aim as late as the end of the decade.<sup>38</sup> The labor movement organized summer camps in many municipalities for the Red orphans, or the working-class children in general –perhaps a belated attempt to arrange activities for workers' children that differed from the bourgeois education.<sup>39</sup>

### Not a “War of Liberation”

Attempts by the labor movement to solve the practical problems caused by the Civil War were closely connected with the struggle over the interpretation of the character of the war. Those who wrote of the events characterized them; for the social democrats, “kansalaissota” (“the Civil War”) became the term used to describe the events as early as the fall of 1918, although Hannes Ryömä wrote of “valtiokaappaus” (*coup d'état*) and Evert Huttunen of “kapina” (“the rebellion”) in the spring of 1918.<sup>40</sup> In addition to civil war, the social democrats also spoke of a war between various classes.<sup>41</sup> Otto Wille Kuusinen characterized the events of 1917–18 as a revolution, Kullervo Manner also as “luokkasota” (“the class war”).<sup>42</sup> They were the names favored by the communists, although Tuure Lehén, the Finnish “rebellion expert” of the Communist International, also used the expression “punakapina” (“Red rebellion”).<sup>43</sup> Within the SSTP there was much more variety; such terms as “class war,” “revolution,” and “civil

38 See, e.g., *Pohjan Voima* 3 January 1925, editorial; *Työn Ääni* 10 July 1925; *Savon Työ* 6 July 1929, editorial.

39 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 571–72.

40 Ryömä, *Vallankumousvuoden*, pp. 37–54; Huttunen, *Sosialidemokraattinen puoluejohto*; K.H. Wiik used the term “kansalaissota.” See Wiik, *Kovan kokemuksen*, p. 100.

41 See, e.g., Karl H. Wiik, “Mistä johtui vuoden 1918 Suomen sota,” in *Kuoleman kentiltä: Muistojulkaisu vuoden 1918 ajoilta* (Hämeenlinna: Hämeen eteläinen sos.-dem. piiritoimikunta, 1924), pp. 9–24; and “Vapaussota vaiko kansalaissota?” in *Kärsimysten teiltä: Kymmenvuotismuistoja*. 2nd edn (Hämeenlinna: Hämeen Kansa, 1928), pp. 222–27.

42 O.V. Kuusinen, *Suomen vallankumouksesta: Itsekritiikkiä* (Moskova: SKP, 1918); Kullervo Manner, “Suomen luokkasota: Piirteitä sodankäynnistämme” & “Vuoden 1918 vallankumouksen tappion syyt,” in *Suomen työväen vallankumous: Arviota ja itsekritiikkiä* (Leninград: Kirja, 1928), pp. 43–64.

43 Tuure Lehén, “Hiukan ’punakapinasta,” in A. Halonen, ed., *Suomen luokkasota: Historiaa ja muistelmia* (Superior, Wis.: Amerikan suomalaisten sosialististen kustannusliikkeiden liitto, 1928), pp. 302–08; cf. Tuure Lehén, “Suomen luokkasodasta,” in J. Lehtosaari, ed., *Punakaarti rintamalla: Luokkasodan muistoja* (Leningrad: Kirja, 1929), pp. 7–23. On Lehén's activities, see, e.g., Tauno Saarela, “Kommunistinen internationaali ja suomalainen kommunismi 1919–1945,” in Natalia Lebedeva, Kimmo Rentola, & Tauno Saarela, eds., *Kallis toveri Stalin! Komintern ja Suomi* (Helsinki: Edita, 2002), p. 55.

war” were usual, but also expressions such as “rebellion” and “Red rebellion” were used.<sup>44</sup> There were no arguments in January 1923 when the SDP and the SSTP accepted a common manifesto and the name “Civil War.”

There was, however, one name that was not acceptable. It was very important for the whole labor movement to turn down the interpretation of the war as a War of Liberation – as Finland was already independent when the war broke out. Nor had the labor movement, contrary to the claims of White Finland, been in alliance with the Russians in order to fight against the independence of Finland. On the contrary, the labor movement had long worked for independence. The whole labor movement emphasized that the activities of the working people in 1918 should be assessed in the context of the economic and political conditions in 1918 and the unwillingness of the bourgeois parties to co-operate or institute reforms. It was also very typical for the whole labor movement to remind of the White Terror.

Beyond the White Terror, writers touched on the question of who was responsible of starting the war. Even the social democrats, who rarely presented their views, regarded the non-socialists as the initiators. The social democratic view charged that the Right had, after the beginning of the World War, oriented towards Germany and adopted Germany’s despotic political system as their political ideal. As for the labor movement, it had not had any plans for revolution but had, rather, prepared itself for defense.<sup>45</sup> Not even the Socialist Workers’ Party was eager to emphasize the attempt to take the power. Accordingly, it stated in January 1921 that the war had been “a defensive action of the workers who had been caught in a desperate situation after the attack of the bourgeoisie,” not “a rebellion against the legal social system.” It was also typical to emphasize that the war had been a struggle between the new and old society or that people had been caught by the course of history.<sup>46</sup>

The Socialist Workers’ Party used more irony against the interpretations of the victors of the war. In its manifesto *Ihmisyden ja oikeuden puolesta* (“For Humanity and Justice”) in January 1921, the party committee wondered what the “heroes” of the war were afraid of when they had locked the defeated rebels in prisons. If they had been fighting for a noble cause, as they repeatedly said, they would not have needed oppression and prisons but would have been able to outweigh any other interpretations by means of spirit and education.<sup>47</sup>

44 See, e.g., Emil Tuomi, “Luokkasodan kauhuja muistella”; Hj. E. Eklund, “Rintamalla”; and Kalle K-i, “Suomen kommunistien teloitus,” in *Työläisnuorten muistoalbumi*, pp. 6–8, 18–20, and 30–31.

45 See, e.g., Wiik, “Mistä johtui,” pp. 9–12.

46 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, pp. 179–80.

47 *Suomen Työmies* 23 January 1921.



Wondering had a point – the bourgeois side of Finland did not limit its actions to the criticism in the press towards the views of the labor movement but also started legal actions against the articles. For instance, the court found that the manifesto, published in all of the SSTP newspapers in January 1921, had propagated groundless information, defamed the authorities of the country, and held the legal social system in contempt. On that basis, the chief editor of *Suomen Työmies*, the SSTP newspaper in Helsinki, was sentenced to prison for two months. In Swedish, the declaration did not obviously sound as bad, as the chief editor of *Folkbladet*, the SSTP newspaper in Vaasa, received only a 1000-mark fine.<sup>48</sup>

The attempts by the Finnish authorities to silence the labor newspapers, especially the SSTP newspapers, were most numerous in 1921 and 1922, when there were 102 and 47 cases against the labor press. After that the number fell, but in 1928 and 1929, libel actions against articles that presented the labor movement's views on the events in 1918 increased.<sup>49</sup> In March 1928, after the libel actions against *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* and *Pohjan Voima*, the STPV newspapers in Helsinki and Oulu, the STPV parliamentary group made an interpellation on the matter. The parliamentary group wondered why the ideas presented by the newspapers, if they were wrong, were not corrected through written response. For members of the bourgeois parties, interpretations regarding the events of 1917–18 that differed from their own interpretations were only paying tribute to treason and suggesting the violent overthrow of the existing social system.<sup>50</sup>

After 1923, interpretations of the events of 1918 diminished in the labor newspapers, but literary magazines and youth periodicals contained stories on the topic. These stories did not attempt to characterize the whole process of the revolution or rebellion, however, but were limited to various incidents, for instance, the battles of the Red Guards or even women's participation in the battles. These descriptions did not give the battles any heroic glory but, rather, were in harmony with the gloomy picture painted by other literary stories in magazines in the early 1920s. The sublimity of the "War of Liberation" stories was more clearly challenged by stories about the brutality of the Whites, POW camps, fatherless children, and hunger and begging by orphans. Legends tell-

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48 Saarela, *Suomalaisen kommunismin synty*, p. 180; Jaakko Mäkelä, "Valtakunta vai kansakunta – repressio vai integraatio? Itsenäistyneen Suomen kontrollipolitiikasta," in Timo Soikkanen, ed., *Turun koulu: Juhani Paasivirran 70-vuotisjuhlakirja* (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 1989), pp. 242–45.

49 Mäkelä, "Valtakunta vai kansakunta," p. 242.

50 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 425.



FIGURE 10.1 *Red realm of memory in the interwar period. The Left photographed execution sites for memorial albums. This one was in Lahti, southern Finland.*  
PHOTO: PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.

ing of Whites who were haunted by their guilt and became insane or committed a suicide reminded of the baggage of the past.<sup>51</sup>

Beginning in the 1920s, the social democrats paid less attention to the issue of correcting injustices caused by the Civil War than did the Socialist Workers' Party and its followers. That was partly because representatives of the latter entered the public discussions on these matters later than the social democrats, but it also indicated that the Finnish communist movement identified with the oppressed and the losing side more strongly than the social democratic sympathizers because they themselves were persecuted in the 1920s and pushed into a secondary position in society.

Both labor parties criticized the victors of the war for organizing large commemorations, but their attitude towards own commemorative practices differed. The social democratic leadership was not as eager to organize commemorations concerning the events of 1918 as the SSTP and the STPV.

51 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 559–60, 695–97.

### The Dead and Their Commemoration

One of the immediate tasks of the reviving labor movement concerned the dead. In order to find out the number of the Red losses in the war, of which there were no official figures, to satisfy the questions made by the members but also to challenge the White interpretation of the war, the Social Democratic party committee in January 1919 started to collect information on war casualties, including those who had been executed and died in POW camps. By the end of May, the party committee had received estimations from 450 municipalities. Next the party committee asked local labor associations for more detailed information.<sup>52</sup>

In some local labor associations, especially the youth associations, the collation resulted in published memorial albums, which included names and pictures of the dead. The album published by the Social Democratic Youth Union in 1920 consisted also of articles that provided the readers with justifications for participation in the war and described executions and life in the camps. Despite the gloomy picture, the album also attempted to encourage the readers.<sup>53</sup>

Although the leadership of the SDP had collected a great amount of information on the fates of the Reds, it did not publish any memorial albums. The party committee of the Häme southern district, however, was active in this respect. *Kuoleman kentiltä* ("From the Fields of Death"), published in 1924, presented the fallen in 30 municipalities of the district, together more than 3500 persons. The White Terror had been severe in the region. Otherwise, the book was rather laconic in its expression; the words "shot" or "murdered" were obviously deemed sufficient to describe the way of death of the local activists.<sup>54</sup>

Funerals of those perished in prison or POW camps were usually of local importance, but the death of Eetu Salin, the well-known agitator of the Social Democratic Party, in prison in April 1919 gave the reviving labor movement an opportunity to make the funeral a national occasion. In addition to honoring

52 Jaakko Paavolainen, *Poliittiset väkivaltaisuuudet Suomessa 1918: "Punainen terrori"* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1966), pp. 11–12; Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä: Valkoisten väkivalta Suomen sisällissodassa* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2006), pp. 78–80.

53 O. Suikkanen, ed., *Suomen sos.-dem. nuorisoliiton Turun osaston ja V. ja U.-seura Veikkojen yhteinen muistojulkaisu kansalaissodan uhreiksi joutuneiden muistolle* (Turku: s. n., 1919); *Muistojulkaisu 1918 kumoustaisteluun sortuneista Porin ja lähiseudun työläisistä: vallankumoustaisteluun sortuneiden muisto* (Pori: Kehitys, 1920); *Työläisnuorison muistoalbumi MCMXVIII* (Helsinki: Suomen sos.-dem. nuorisoliiton toimikunta, 1920).

54 *Kuoleman kentiltä: Muistojulkaisu vuoden 1918 ajoilta* (Hämeenlinna: Hämeen eteläinen sos.-dem. piiritoimikunta, 1924).

the veteran, it also provided a chance for the party to present its views on the imprisonment of those who had participated in the activities in 1918. The eulogy at the funeral emphasized how Salin did not forsake the labor movement, although it started to act in “stupid ways.” Thus, Salin was portrayed as a reluctant and passive participant whose punishment was out of proportion.<sup>55</sup>

The concern for those who had died in the Civil War was not limited to presenting their names and pictures on the pages of memorial albums or magazines or arranging their funerals but also reached their graves.<sup>56</sup> As early as the summer of 1918, efforts were being made to locate the graves of those executed, in or outside cemeteries. After the war, the Ministry of Education granted permission to exhume bodies buried outside cemeteries and rebury them in the cemetery at the request of relatives, friends, and other interested individuals. In many places, however, there were so many victims in the remote graves that it fell to the local labor associations to take care of them as they were.<sup>57</sup> The youth organizations often took the initiative to get the other labor organizations of a town or a commune to create a special committee to keep the graves in repair. These committees started their work by collecting money for tidying up the graves every spring. In practice, they bought soil, spread it on the graves, and planted grass and flowers. In some places, the committees even tried to persuade the municipal councils to give money for the upkeep of the graves. These efforts were not usually successful, as the non-socialist parties were against them.

The labor movement was not content only with flower-bedecked graves. In September 1919, a proposal was made in a congress of the social democratic youth to erect monuments in memory of all the Red victims. The same idea lived in the minds of the workers almost everywhere, especially in those towns and villages where the number of dead was high. It was not easy to make this dream come true, because both ecclesiastical and secular authorities were usually against it. The communal or town councils turned down appeals for money for the monuments. Therefore, the appeals were sometimes mere demonstrations. In Helsinki, for instance, the local socialist municipal association decided in 1921 to apply for the sum of one million marks in order to put up a monument.

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55 Tuomas Tepora, *Sinun puolesta elää ja kuolla: Suomen liput, nationalismi ja veriuhuri 1917–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011), pp. 131–34.

56 This section of the text is based on Tauno Saarela, “Class Struggle in the Cemetery,” *Socialist History* 9 (1996): 82–89, if not stated otherwise.

57 For a discussion on reburials of civil-war Red victims during World War II, see Tuomas Tepora’s chapter “Changing Perceptions of 1918” in this volume.



FIGURE 10.2 *Execution and burial site of Red guardsmen from Helsinki parish, in the woods of today's northern Helsinki. Commemoration on the 8th anniversary of the execution of six guardsmen on 17 May 1926. The remains of the victims were exhumed and reburied in the Red gravesite in the nearby Malmi cemetery in 1971.*  
PHOTO: PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.

That kind of a demonstration was not enough for everyone. In Turku, it was decided to resort to more strenuous measures. At the end of April, just before May Day, the local workers were able to celebrate the appearance of a monument in the local graveyard. It was worth celebrating – the monument, made of red granite, was almost three meters high and weighed more than a ton, and yet it made a sudden appearance in the cemetery during one night, even though the cemetery was surrounded by a high stone wall and its iron gate had been locked. *Turun Sanomat*, the local liberal newspaper, believed that the monument had been dropped from an airplane. The explanation was more earthly, however: stoneworkers who were members of the local youth association had cut the monument in stone and transported it by a cart hauled by three horses near the cemetery. Twenty-five young men had made a hole for the horses and the cart in the stone wall, driven the monument to the gravesite, and put it up. After that, the horses and the cart were taken away, the hole closed, and all the tracks were covered – a miracle had been wrought. The monument stayed on the grave, although the authorities had no enthusiasm for it. Only the metal plaques and the red flag, which were to be fixed to the monument, were confiscated.



In other places the efforts were not as successful. In the Savonian town of Varkaus, where the Whites had executed 100 Reds, the governor ordered the local policemen to prevent the erection of a monument because nobody had requested a permission to put it up. In his opinion the epitaph engraved on the monument, "You gave your best for your ideas," was designed to disrupt the public order. The dispute with the governor was not yet resolved when the monument, which weighed about two tons, disappeared one night and was submerged in the nearby lake.

The next spring, even the people of Häme, where the heaviest battles of the Civil War had been fought, reacted quickly when there were plans to erect monuments on the Red graves. The ecclesiastical administration asked the local governor in Hämeenlinna to have the monument removed from the grave. The policemen visited the grave during one night and broke down the monument, leaving its three parts scattered on the grave. Those in charge of putting up the monument removed the parts to another grave. But that was not enough for the police and the church council. They demanded the total removal of the monument from the cemetery. This was not done before the monument was blown up during the dark hours of one night. During the same spring, other monuments were broken or stolen elsewhere in Häme.

The removal of the monuments was a clear manifestation of opposition by the right-wing elements towards paying any honor to the Reds, even dead ones. According to *Uusi Suomi*, the main organ of the conservative Coalition Party, the Finnish people could be grateful only for those who gave their lives in order to liberate Finland from Russian oppression. From this point of view, visits to White graves were natural, but similar ceremonies beside Red graves "offended grossly the peace of the burial grounds and brought deep shame upon White Finland." It was indecent to honor those who had risen "against the independence and freedom of their own country and whose hands were directly or indirectly stained with blood of the peaceful people loyal to the laws of their nation."<sup>58</sup>

Even though the victors of the Civil War clearly had the upper hand in Finland, they did not trust their ability to establish their version of the war by the means of their own anniversaries, monuments, and strong propaganda alone. In addition, the victors considered it necessary to resort to authoritarian orders and punishments. Thus, the Ministry of the Interior issued instructions at the end of May 1923 regarding visits to gravesites and the erection of monuments. According to these instructions, relatives and friends were allowed to express their mourning and lay flowers on the graves, but the authorities were to

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58 *Uusi Suomi* 17 June 1923, editorial.

prevent large numbers of people from gathering at the cemeteries with the intent of staging a demonstration. These included visits arranged by special organizations, processions, depositing of wreaths, agitating speeches, and other ceremonies near the graves. These kinds of visits were considered to be demonstrations in favor of rebellion and acts of rebellions, and according to the law, such acts were criminal offences. Permission was required from the ecclesiastical authorities to erect monuments at the cemetery. The monument or the epitaph on it could not be insulting or offensive. If the monument expressed something more than the natural and rightful mourning of the relatives, it could be removed at the discretion of the ecclesiastical authorities.

After the Ministry of the Interior issued the instructions and after the Court of Appeals in Turku ruled that the effort to put up the monument in Hämeenlinna constituted a crime, efforts by the grave committees to erect monuments diminished. By the end of the 1920s, the labor associations, however, managed to erect monuments on Red graves in 11 localities.<sup>59</sup> They also challenged the Ministry's instructions by keeping the graves in repair and organizing memorial ceremonies at the gravesites. The program of these occasions sometimes included marches to the graves, but usually only speeches, songs, music, and laying funeral wreaths on the graves.

In May 1926, the commemoration committee elected by the labor organizations in Helsinki even suggested that memorial occasions be made more impressive and arranged everywhere in the country on the same day, the second Sunday of June. The Helsinki committee wanted to make these ceremonies comparable to the War of Liberation celebrations, arranged everywhere by the Whites, but also a counterpoint to them.<sup>60</sup>

The initiative was important in reminding working people of the memorial occasions and in inspiring them to participate in them. According to the newspapers, 3000 people participated in the memorial occasion in the suburban Malmi graveyard just outside of Helsinki in June 1926, and almost 2000 persons participated in Vyborg.<sup>61</sup> The proposal was not very successful in co-ordinating the occasions. The date was not changed, and the gatherings at the gravesites took place as before. The visits could occur on the day the fighting during the Civil War had ended in that district. At some locations, the May Day march took participants to the graves. Usually the memorial occasions took place during late spring and early summer. Then there was also more free time

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59 Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta* (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), pp. 222–25.

60 *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 8 May 1926.

61 *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 14 June 1926; *Työ* 14 June 1927.



to spend the day at the gravesites remembering dead. The date could alternate even within one locality: in Kotka and in Vyborg, the occasions took place one year in June, another year in August or September.<sup>62</sup>

There was another attempt at co-ordination in 1929, as the committee in Helsinki and the SKP leadership proposed that the occasions should be arranged on the second Sunday of July. The proposals obviously had as impact in that there were more activities at the gravesites on that day – in some municipalities they were connected with the Red orphan celebrations. However, the date was not successful; the activities did not attract as many people as they had previously. In Vyborg, for instance, there were only between 600 and 700 persons at the gravesites.<sup>63</sup>

The success of the memorial occasions was, without question, influenced by the attitude of the authorities, which, despite orders, was inconsistent from place to place. In Helsinki, the police were usually content to only watch the proceedings, while in Turku and Vyborg, the whole occasion was sometimes forbidden, sometimes only songs and speeches were permitted, sometimes not even them. If the police could not prevent the event beforehand, they could punish the speaker later on. Usually the speaker was fined, but in Vyborg, the court once sentenced the person to prison for two months.

The occasions at the gravesites were intended as an opportunity for workers to express their grief and commemoration of the dead, but that was not the only intent. Visits to the gravesites as such challenged the view that those who rested in the graves were mere “Red crooks” or “rebels” and did not deserve any respect. According to the speeches given on the memorial occasions, the Reds had defended workers’ rights, ideas, and future and had fought for a just cause. The remarks that the terror caused by the workers was minor compared with that of the “civilized” bourgeoisie also broke the usual narrative told by the Whites. Thus, occasions were intended to remind the winners of their unjust deeds in 1918. Even the red flowers on the graves were supposed to tell the “butchers passing by of those terrible acts which they, in their thirst for blood, had committed and of the love that working people felt for those victims.” To remember and be horrified by the deeds of the Whites was a central idea in *Kumpujen virsi* (“Hymn of the Graves”), which was often sung during memorial occasions.

The monuments and commemorations were also an expression of encouragement: “We do not cry forever; weak are those who are overwhelmed by their

62 See, e.g., *Pohjan Voima* 3 February 1927; *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 14 June 1926; 23 August 1926; 9 June 1927; 3 July 1928; and *Työ* 14 June 1927.

63 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 568.

grief," reminded *Kumpujen virsi*. The power of grief could be exceeded by acts such as the appearance of the monument in the Turku cemetery. These acts suggested that workers could do something extraordinary, which would seem incredible at first sight. Gathering beside the graves was aimed also at strengthening one's own attitudes. At least Villiam Rossi, the chairman of the socialist municipal association in the town of Kajaani in Kainuu region, said that to visit the graves was "to multiply by ten thousand the revolutionary power of the class struggle."<sup>64</sup> Moreover, visitors beside the graves felt "as if they got new enthusiasm to fight for the liberation of the working class."<sup>65</sup>

By insisting that the dead had worked for humanity, the speakers strengthened trust "on the justice and victory of a great cause" and belief in a bright future. The example of the fallen was regarded as an obligation for all to work energetically and to carry on the fight without paying attention to the consequences – the noblest ideas of mankind had always demanded sacrifices. There were even occasions when an oath was sworn that the fight started by those who rested in the graves would be carried on up to the final victory.<sup>66</sup> The oath was an attempt to tie the new generation with the past. In Lappeenranta, its success was described by the text in the wreath: "The death was opened for you, brothers. You are replaced by the new generation."<sup>67</sup>

The mournful speeches and the articles in the newspapers did not please the leadership of the communist party. In summer of 1926, they claimed that tears of sorrow hid a partial resignation and made the participants think that the movement should avoid future victims. The communist party leaders wanted to include more class hatred against the oppressors and expropriators in the speeches, which should "picture the perspective of the future struggle." The occasions at the gravesites should, rather, demonstrate that the armed struggle was the most decisive means in the class struggle. The day should become "a day for summoning in the fight."<sup>68</sup>

The message of the occasions at the gravesites in Finland did not, however, respond to the hopes of the SKP leadership. Kalle Toppinen, a former member of the SSTP parliamentary group, spoke of a fight but saw the working class end up in the fight as the result of "the iron law of the progress," not because it deliberately wanted to take up arms.<sup>69</sup>

64 *Työväen Lehti* 10 August 1920.

65 *Itä ja Länsi* 31 August 1925.

66 See, e.g., *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 18 August 1925, 11 June 1926; and *Työväen Lehti* 9 June 1927; on the oath, see *Työväen Lehti* 10 July 1928.

67 *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 3 July 1928.

68 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 569–70.

69 *Ibid.*, 570.

### The Tenth Anniversary in 1928

The widespread public commemorations by the Whites were seen as an offense by the labor movement. For them the commemorations celebrated the killing and imprisonment of workers.<sup>70</sup> During the tenth anniversary in 1928, the labor movement's interpretations of the events in 1917–18 became more common as a reaction against the eagerness of the bourgeois side to celebrate the White victory, but also as an attempt to strengthen the status of its own interpretations. The social democrats regarded celebrations concerning the Civil War as indecent. According to them, the unhappy historical event did not deserve any celebrations, as they were not constructive and would only open the old, partly healed wounds. It would be more important to forget the sad memories of the war and look forward.<sup>71</sup>

Although the social democrats were not in favor of public celebrations, they wanted to present their views on the Civil War. These views assigned responsibility for the outbreak of the war to the armed bourgeoisie. According to this interpretation, the Whites had consciously committed themselves to Germany and neglected negotiations with Russia, which had acknowledged Finland's independence. The Russian troops in Finland were not a threat to independence, and their withdrawal was a matter of time. Thus, the bourgeois side was responsible for not taking that road. *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, the main organ of the SDP, emphasized that all responsible persons in the labor movement had worked to prevent war. Among the workers, however, there were those who got enthusiastic about the Russian revolution and could not consider matters dispassionately but acted in a manner that forced the whole bourgeoisie into the arms of reactionaries. The labor movement had not, however, attempted to bring Finland under Russia. In order to strengthen their stand, the social democrats pointed to the agreement the People's Delegation and the Bolsheviks had made that guaranteed more areas to Finland in East Karelia.<sup>72</sup>

The SKP, in particular, was very active in attempts to strengthen its message; it regarded the interpretation of the events in 1918 as a very important question of struggle against not only the bourgeoisie but also the social democrats. Fighting against bourgeois and social democratic interpretations was not actually in harmony with the theses the SKP accepted in December 1927. Their

70 See, e.g., *Vapaa Sana* 26 January 1923 editorial; and *Savon Kansa* 22 February 1923.

71 *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 22 January 1928 editorial; Väinö Voionmaa, "Vuoden 1918 yleishistoriallinen tausta," in *Kärsimysten teiltä: Kymmenvuotismuistoja*, 2nd edn (Hämeenlinna: Hämeen Kansa, 1928), pp. 9–14.

72 *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 27 January 1928, editorial.

starting point was, rather, severe self-criticism. Having escaped after an abortive revolution to Soviet Russia, where the revolution had won, the newly converted Finnish communists learned from the very beginning to compare their own abortive revolution in Finland to the victorious Russian revolution and on that basis to assess the shortcomings of the Finnish labor movement. In 1927–28 this tendency was strengthened by the interpretations the Finnish communists made of the Bolshevization of the communist parties initiated by the Communist International in 1925. These interpretations were influenced by the disputes within the SKP and also by the leftward orientation of the international communist movement.

In the theses accepted in December 1927, the SKP claimed that the revolution would have been more successful for the workers if the general strike in November 1917 had been developed into a complete conquest of power, the SDP had been aware of imperialism instead of being too nationalistically oriented, the People's Delegation had put the dictatorship of the proletariat into practice and had not isolated itself from the Russian revolution, and if there had been a Bolshevik party in Finland. The theses also blamed the pre-Civil War SDP for not arming the working masses, not giving any military training, not teaching military discipline, and not mobilizing the working masses. Because of its indeterminate attitude, the party had lost the support of the revolutionary workers, and the masses had remained scattered and behaved in an undisciplined fashion. The theses also claimed that the "butchers" would not have won without the help of the Germans. The theses emphasized the mistakes of the labor movement but also reminded of the need to propagate the terror of the Whites and to maintain "the righteous hatred." The interpretation was strongly influenced by hindsight, concentrated on the defects of the labor movement and entirely forgetting the assessment of the political conditions or other forces in 1917–18.

In 1928 also, the earlier interest of the SKP in the interpretation of the year 1918 resurfaced. As early as July 1918, Yrjö Sirola, a central figure in the SKP leadership in Soviet Russia, who longed for information on events during the winter and spring, had attempted to organize the activities of the refugee Reds around discussions of the recent past. Therefore, he proposed that the Finns should found an editorial committee for the history of the revolution. Although Sirola became the first chairman of the SKP, the history of the revolution did not become the main task of the new party. It took some years before Sirola returned to the idea; on his initiative, a research club for the Class War in Finland was founded in Leningrad in February 1925. In its meetings, the club studied events on various fronts in 1918. In the spring of 1927, the club proposed to the SKP leadership that research concerning the years 1917–18 should be

increased, and the SKP decided to found the “Research Group for the Finnish Revolutionary Movement” (*Suomen vallankumousliikkeen tutkijakunta*). Beyond collecting and preserving material, the task of this group, which intended to extend its activities into Finland and the United States, was to publish research and memoirs.<sup>73</sup>

*Suomen luokkasota* (“The Finnish Class War”), published in the United States in the beginning of 1928, was a result of this collection work and the initiative of the research club. The book consisted of some chapters on the prehistory of the “class war” and the organization of the Red government in some fields, but the main part of the book was dedicated to descriptions of the situations on various fronts and in various battles. The stories of the White Terror and the POW camps also consumed a large part of the book. The book ended with a section on the influence of the war on Finns in America.<sup>74</sup>

*Suomen luokkasota* was supposed to be distributed also in Finland in order to provide members of the movement with material to challenge White interpretations on the events of 1918. However, the book did not reach Finland in time, because smuggling the book into the country through Sweden did not succeed properly. In the northern Finland, the book was received only in the spring of 1929.<sup>75</sup> The SKP did not try to replace this loss by smuggling *Suomen työväen vallankumous* (“The Workers Revolution in Finland”), a book that was printed in Leningrad and consisted of republished articles by leading persons of the SKP. It was intended as a textbook for Finns in the Soviet Union.<sup>76</sup>

The SKP aimed to create a united view concerning the events of 1917–18 among the organized workers. It could not, however, decide how much it should ponder on its own mistakes, how much to remind of the White Terror and correct the White views. The SKP wanted to prioritize the first, but those in Finland the latter. The fact that *Suomen luokkasota* was not distributed in great numbers in Finland and the imprisonment of the central functionaries of the SKP in Finland and some of the important members of the STPV in the spring of 1928 obviously dampened any celebration of the tenth anniversary, although *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja*, the organ of the STPV, started a column

73 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 562–63.

74 *Suomen luokkasota*, pp. 3–5, 526–27.

75 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 563; Matti Lackman, *Kommunistien salainen toiminta Tornionlaaksossa 1918–1939* (Oulu: Pohjoinen, 1991), pp. 77–80.

76 *Suomen työväen vallankumous*; Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, pp. 563–64.

*Kymmenen vuotta sitten* (“Ten years ago”) that repeated the events and the activities of the Reds in 1918.<sup>77</sup>

The theses of the SKP obviously had influence in Finland, as measured by an increase in self-critical remarks on the activities of the labor movement in 1917–18. In the articles published in the STPV newspapers, November 1917 was considered to have been better for taking power than January 1918, because working people had the initiative at that time. The criticism also included the commitment of the SDP leadership to the idea of non-violent revolution. Even the constitution proposal by the People’s Delegation was regarded as un-historical and un-Marxist; it had aspired to a bourgeois democracy as perfect as possible and therefore was not good enough for the workers— or the bourgeoisie, for that matter. Some writers led the readers to understand that these defects could have been avoided if there had been a communist party before the aborted revolution.<sup>78</sup>

The criticism, however, was not as total as that in the theses of the SKP. In Finland, the writers remembered that there had also been other actors in 1917 and 1918. The STPV newspapers, for instance, criticized the pre-Civil War labor movement for neglecting relations between workers and peasants but at the same time reminded of the other political forces, which had tried to win the support of the peasants and managed to “betray” them.<sup>79</sup>

Not all, however, were willing to change the way to assess the years 1917–18. *Itä ja Länsi* (“East and West”), a pictorial magazine published by Väinö Vuorio,<sup>80</sup> a prominent figure in the Finnish communist movement in Finland, in particular continued along traditional lines and reminded of the White Terror. In contrast to the SKP leadership, the magazine did not want to incite “righteous hatred” but was confident that the Finnish bourgeoisie would be judged as the wheels of history proceeded. For that judgment, *Itä ja Länsi* wanted to present evidence and published three double issues with the photographs of 2650 persons who had fallen in the war, had been executed, or died in the POW camps. Along with the photos of these “revolutionary fighters,” the magazine presented photographs of locations where Reds had been executed and buried. *Itä ja Länsi* did not criticize the leadership of the labor movement or

77 See, for instance, *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 27, 28, & 31 January; 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 22, & 25 February; 9 March; & 4 April 1928.

78 Saarela, *Suomalainen kommunismi ja vallankumous*, p. 564.

79 *Pohjan Voima* 23 December 1927 editorial; *Työväenjärjestöjen Tiedonantaja* 23 December 1927; *Työn Ääni* 28 December 1927, editorial.

80 On Vuorio, see Tauno Saarela, “Tulisieluinen reaalipoliitikko – Väinö Vuorio,” in Marita Jalkanen, ed., *Elämää Arkistossa: Kansan Arkisto 60 vuotta* (Helsinki: Yhteiskunnallinen Arkistosäätiö, 2005), pp. 113–24.

the People's Delegation. By introducing organs and decrees of the People's Delegation, the magazine rather wanted to remember the Red government as an achievement. It did not, however, focus solely on the Red government but also gave room for stories on battles and their backgrounds.<sup>81</sup>

The tenth anniversary of the Civil War revealed that the activism of the social democrats had decreased, while the SKP and the STPV did their best in order to increase their contributions to the discussion on the character of the events ten years earlier. The communist party directed its assessment to the defects of the Red leadership but was not entirely followed in Finland, where the main emphasis was given to the terror wrought by the victors.

### Betrayal?

The total prohibition of the Finnish communist movement in the summer of 1930 and the rise of right-wing and fascist extra-parliamentary activities decreased the number of public opinions expressed by the labor movement on the events of 1918, although the social democrats were still able to write about them.<sup>82</sup> Commemorations in the graveyards became rare and more secret, but policemen still had to go to the cemeteries to blow out the candles lighted on Red graves on Christmas Eve and take off the red ribbons of funeral wreaths secretly laid on the graves.<sup>83</sup>

There were, however, active discussions on the history of the Finnish labor movement among the Finnish communists in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s. Those discussions concerned not only the events in 1917–18 but also the more recent past, the summer of 1930; the ban on the legal activities without resistance was connected with the fact that the communist movement had not disassociated itself effectively enough from its social democratic traditions. Thus, the history discussions concerned the political goals and power in the party, too.<sup>84</sup>

Initially, the discussion revolved around the question of why there had not been a Bolshevik party in Finland in 1918, but in 1932, Kullervo Manner, the chairman of the Communist Party of Finland, wanted to tie this together with discussion of the accusations of “betraying” the revolution that the Bolsheviks

81 *Itä ja Länsi* 16 April–15 May 1928; 16 June –15 July 1928; 1–15 September, 1928; see also *Itä ja Länsi* 31 January–15 February 1928; & 31 July 1928.

82 See, e.g., *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 27 & 28 January 1938.

83 Saarela, “Class Struggle,” p. 89.

84 Saarela, “Kommunistinen internationaali,” pp. 52–53.



had leveled against the social democrats during and after World War I. Manner repeated the earlier argument that November 1917 would have been a better moment to take the power, but he went further in accusing the social democratic leaders of various mistakes. According to him, the leaders had neglected the opportunity to split from the right-wing social democrats, who, as a matter of fact, were helping the bourgeoisie. In addition, the fight in 1918 had not been energetic enough. The other leaders of the SKP, Otto Wille Kuusinen and Yrjö Sirola, were not pleased with Manner's ideas on "betrayal," although they were willing to ponder why the Social Democratic Party had not been able to lead the revolutionary fight in 1917–18 in a correct way. The thesis, accepted for the fifteenth anniversary of the Finnish revolution, did not say anything about betrayal.<sup>85</sup>

The discussion within the communist party undoubtedly increased the critical attitude towards the too meager decisions and activities of the labor movement in 1917–18. This was, however, not immediately seen in the work of the Research Group for the Finnish Revolutionary Movement; the books it published in the late 1920s and early 1930s dealt above all with military activities in the Civil War; battles in various fronts but also memoirs of individual members of the Red Guards. The books were a response to – or an imitation of – the military presentations of the White side but also an attempt to learn for the future armed revolution.<sup>86</sup> The books also revealed the willingness of the Research Group for the Finnish Revolutionary Movement to collect individual memoirs and make generalizations on their basis.<sup>87</sup>

The work of the Research Group, however, faced difficulties as suspicions of the Soviet authorities towards various nationalities grew from 1932 onwards. Finns discussing Finnish matters and material bought from Finland started to appear as suspicious in the eyes of the central Soviet law enforcement agency, NKVD, in 1933. The arrests of the Finns and the convictions which characterized them probably influenced history studies; after the arrest of former Red Jägers<sup>88</sup> (volunteers in the German Army in World War I who did not want to participate in the Finnish Civil War on the White side, many of whom had

85 Joni Krekola, *Stalinismin lyhyt kurssi: Suomalaiset Moskovan Lenin-koulussa 1926–1938* (Helsinki: SKS, 2006), pp. 237–69; Jukka Paastela, *Finnish Communism under Soviet Totalitarianism: Oppositions within the Finnish Communist Party in Soviet Russia 1918–1935* (Helsinki: Kikumora Publications, 2003), pp. 290–95.

86 J. Lehtosaari, ed., *Punakaarti rintamalla: Luokkasodan muistoja* (Leningrad: Kirja, 1929); *Punakaartilaisten muistelmia Suomesta v. 1918* (Leningrad: Kirja, 1933); see also E. Nissinen, ed., *Proletaarisen vallankumouksen rintamilta* (Leningrad: Kirja, 1935).

87 *Punakaartilaisten muistelmia*, pp. 4–5.

88 On the Jäger movement, see Anders Ahlback's chapter in this volume.

moved to Soviet Russia, and some of whom had written their memoirs), it was not possible to publicize their experiences. The removal of the Finnish leadership in Soviet Karelia and the denial of Finnish activities in Leningrad indicated the end of the history work. Stalin's Great Terror in 1937 and the denial of the publications in Finnish sealed that.<sup>89</sup>

At the same time, during the twentieth anniversary in 1938, there was a small revival of publications on the events of 1918 in Finland. These publications also discussed members of the Red Guards and the battles, as indicated by *Suomen punakaarti* ("The Finnish Red Guard"), the book published by Arvid Luhtakanta alias Emil Saarinen, a social democratic member of Parliament, in 1938. Luhtakanta's book, however, emphasized the break of the social democrats with the Red Guards in 1918.<sup>90</sup>

The perspective of those who fought in the Red Guards was also present in the book *Viimeinen taisto* ("The Last Battle"), written by Jalmari Parikka, a former leader of the Red Guard in Vyborg. Publication of the book demonstrated that the hot feelings concerning the years 1917–18 were cooling down; Parikka was asked by his 1918 enemies to write his memoirs on his experiences as a commander of Red troops on the Karelian front. Parikka was not allowed to present his views alone; the book also included comments by a White war expert. The fact that the book was released by WSOY, one of the largest and most established publishers in Finland, however, indicated an increased openness for the Reds to present their views.<sup>91</sup> At least it demonstrated a different attitude compared to the incidents from the fall of 1937, when the authorities confiscated memorial pictures from the walls of workers' halls because they insulted the memory of the "War of Liberation."<sup>92</sup>

### Summary: The Labor Movement and the Commemoration of 1918 in the Interwar Period

The labor movement tried to solve the question of commemorating the events of 1917–18 in different ways. First came attempts to create space and orienta-

89 Kimmo Rentola, *Kenen joukoissa seisot? Suomalainen kommunismi ja sota 1937–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1994), pp. 31–60; Markku Kangaspuro, *Neuvosto-Karjalan taistelu itsehallinnosta: Nationalismi ja suomalaiset punaiset Neuvostoliiton vallankäytössä 1920–1939* (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), pp. 260–353.

90 Arvid Luhtakanta, *Suomen punakaarti* (Kulju: E.A. Täckman, 1938).

91 Jalmari Parikka, *Viimeinen taisto: Punaisen rintamapäällikön muistelmia v:lta 1918* (Porvoo & Helsinki: WSOY, 1938).

92 Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, p. 248.

tion for the movement's new activities. Therefore, the movement's mistakes – or, rather, its leaders – were emphasized. The mistakes were defined differently depending on the evaluator's participation in the activities and the place and the moment of the assessment; the attitude in Finland in the spring or summer of 1918 was different from that held in Soviet Russia in summer of 1918 or in Finland in late 1919 or 1920. These different views were closely correlated with the division of the labor movement and created the basis for the orientation of the three parties to the question of commemoration of 1918: the Social Democratic Party, which regarded the attempt to take power as a grave mistake, did not want to give these past events a significant part in its politics; while for the Socialist Workers' Party and the Communist Party, challenging the views of victors was of great importance. This difference became more evident in the late 1920s.

It was not possible, however, even for the social democrats to entirely neglect those who had participated in the revolution and the Civil War. Accordingly, the release of the imprisoned and improvement of the condition of Red orphans and widows received significant attention in the politics of the party. That indicated a change in the orientation: it became important to talk about the terror of the Whites than about the mistakes of the labor leaders. And in so doing, the whole labor movement challenged the view of the White victors who wanted to make their view, according to which the war had been a "War of Liberation," the dominant and only interpretation of the war in 1918. Therefore, the bourgeois-dominated authorities resorted to administrative measures in order to silence other kinds of opinions.

Albums presenting the names and pictures of the dead, commemorative occasions at gravesites, and attempts to erect monuments on Red graves demonstrated that the labor movement wanted to commemorate its fallen members. These activities also reminded of the brutality of the White victors and, in that sense, were also a protest against them. The speeches at the gravesites presented occasionally also the example the dead had set for the living. The dead had sacrificed themselves for their ideas, and to follow their example, committed to the labor movement and its cause, became the duty of the movement's current members. This attempt to present the dead as heroes was not, however, without contradictions; the dead also reminded of the defeat and premature deaths of working people.

## Changing Perceptions of 1918: World War II and the Post-War Rise of the Left

*Tuomas Tepora*

An established academic consensus states that Red interpretations and memories of the Civil War entered the mainstream publicity and the “grand narrative” in the 1960s. This view is definitely accurate insofar as it concerns the transformation of the pre-World War II Red narrative from an underground script into a generally accepted one. It is also historiographically accurate, as until the late 1960s the academic history of the Civil War had belittled the scope and purpose of the White Terror and effectively downplayed – if not denied – the class conflict in the background of the events of 1918. Nevertheless, the first, even if small, steps towards reconciliation between drastically different White and Red interpretations had been taken already in the late 1930s. The political center of the small farmers and the social democrats strengthened its status as a worthy political force after the tumultuous early 1930s. This process was signified in the rejection of the uncompromising White interpretation propagated by the Veterans’ Union of the War of Liberation, many of the Civil Guard leaders, and the far Right in general, for whom the War of Liberation myth served as an ideological guarantor not only against communism as such but also against everything associated with socialism and social change. For the far Right, the War of Liberation cult served as a vehicle of the interwar European trend of fascism.

World War II continued reshuffling the collective memories of 1918 and established for the first time shared commemorations of the Civil War victims on the state level and locally. It is interesting that popular opinion and popular historiography have emphasized the impact of World War II and especially the Winter War (1939–1940) on reconciliation in the society more than academic historiography. The latter has perhaps treated the unifying effect of the “miracle of the Winter War” as, if not superficial, at least to some degree a propagated concept. According to this view the reasons behind the changes in the interpretation of the Civil War were the establishment of the welfare state policy and generational rebellion in the 1960s. This chapter sets out to show, however, that both the popular and academic narratives as described above may be somewhat biased. First, contrary to the widely popular layman’s view, the

conciliatory gestures and memory politics and practices began before the Winter War. Second, World War II had a profound effect on the collective memories of the Civil War. Namely, World War II replaced the “flawed” birth myth of the nation with a viable one, and this downplayed the narrative frictions between the Reds and the Whites. Obviously, this is not to deny the fact that during the Cold War the influence of the Soviet Union limited the expression of Civil War remembrances. The Soviet presence strengthened the turn of focus of remembrance of class conflict away from Russian or Bolshevik involvement to the conflict propagated in the interwar period.

### The Changing Political Landscape at the End of the 1930s

The coalition of the Agrarian League and the social democrats together with other centrist parties (so-called “red-earth coalition”) formed in March 1937 and governed until the beginning of World War II.<sup>1</sup> The government initiated the first move towards Nordic welfare state policy by establishing, for instance, the Social Insurance Institution and started a universal pension program. Finnish society recuperated from the depression, and economic activity increased markedly towards the end of the decade.

The Independence Day celebrations on 6 December 1937 marked the twentieth anniversary of independence. The wintry date had, during the last two decades, been undermined in favor of 16 May, which celebrated the end of the War of Liberation. However, Independence Day had constituted a somewhat neutral date that even some social democrats had been able to celebrate before they held a governmental position. Now, in the late 1930s, the importance of Independence Day rose. In 1937, the partly “socialist” government organized this important national anniversary. This motivated the best-known female character of the far-right Hilja Riipinen, an MP of the Patriotic People’s Movement, to renounce the celebrations altogether.<sup>2</sup> The far Right, which had already started to lose its credibility in the eyes of the general public, became further marginalized, and the liberal press continued to ridicule their fascist postures under national symbols.<sup>3</sup>

The War of Liberation cult, however, still retained its character as a unifying element among the middle classes. The view was not uniform – a couple of

1 Practically, the government lasted until the end of the Winter War, although the key ministers changed immediately after the war began.

2 *Ajan Suunta* 8 December 1937; *Helsingin Sanomat* 8 December 1937.

3 *Helsingin Sanomat* 3 May 1934.

works of fiction, for instance, had slightly rocked the boat in the early 1930s<sup>4</sup> – but the attitude towards the events still drew a class difference and, from the bourgeois point of view, separated the “patriots” from the “non-patriots.” For instance, today a practically forgotten author Ilpo Kaukovalta won the first prize in a debut novel competition and afterwards published his psychological novel *Lippujen hulmutessa* (“The Flags are Flying”) in 1938 depicting the events of 1918 – naturally from a White angle, with Reds seen as a suggestible crowd.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the twentieth anniversary of the ending of War of Liberation on 16 May 1938 had a huge ideological and emotional charge. The whole winter and spring of 1938 saw numerous local festivities commemorating local liberations, and the Civil Guards published commemorative literature.<sup>6</sup> The Civil Guards and the Veterans’ Union made a concerted effort to display that the spirit of the White heroes remained alive – and that the spirit still led the nation towards the idea of the conservative White nation identical to that espoused in 1918. However, in the spring of 1938, it became clear that, in spite of the effort of the White protagonists, the consensus within the middle classes had crumbled. The press representing the governing partner Agrarian League and even some conservative newspapers began to question the usefulness of the unconditional War of Liberation cult and criticized the far-right celebrations as alien, outdated political maneuvering.<sup>7</sup> An editorial in an Agrarian newspaper from poor northeastern Kainuu proposed to abandon the name “War of Liberation” and adopt the “Civil War” used by the socialists. This was not because of its socialist connotation but because of the shared tragedy that “Civil War” conveyed.<sup>8</sup> These examples are definitely not sufficient evidence to lead us to

4 The notable works were published in Swedish. Jarl Hemmer, *En man och hans samvete* (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1931); in Finnish, *Mies ja hänen omatuntoensa*, trans. by Eino Palola (Helsinki: Otava, 1931); in English, *A Fool of Faith*, trans. by F.H. Lyon (New York: Liveright, 1935); Elmer Diktonius, *Janne Kubik: Ett träsnitt i ord* (Helsinki: Schildt, 1932). The author translated the book himself into Finnish only in 1946 as *Janne Kuutio: Puupiirroksen sanoin* (Helsinki, Tammi, 1946).

5 Ilpo Kaukovalta, *Lippujen hulmutessa* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1938); another late-1930s novel on the events of 1918 was Jalmari Jyränkön *Korpi routii* (Hämeenlinna: Karisto, 1937) or “Frozen Wilderness,” which painted a picture of the Reds rather similar to that in Kaukovalta’s award-winning novel but nevertheless illuminated the events from an under-class point of view.

6 See, e.g., *Helsingin valtaus 12.4.1918 – Helsingfors intagning* (Helsinki: Vuoden 1918 Helsingin valkokaartin työvaliokunta, 1938).

7 *Aamulehti* 27 January 1938; *Svenska Pressen* 28 January 1938; *Kainuun Sanomat* 27 January 1938.

8 *Kainuun Sanomat* 27 January 1938.

think that the splits were overcome, but they denote certain cracks in the defense of the previously enclosed camps.

The Agrarian–Social Democratic Party coalition solved the problem posed by the main commemorative festival in Helsinki with the gathering of White veterans by emphasizing the date's status as the Flag Day of the Defense Forces, the army of the state. This strategy allowed the social democrats to participate in the celebrations without outright losing face among its supporters. Moreover, the social democrats made a symbolically important gesture that aroused passions within its own ranks. The Workers' Hall in Helsinki, the building from where the revolution had started 20 years earlier, hoisted the national flag for the first time on the day that had, for the last 20 years, represented a mournful day for the workers. Not everybody accepted the conciliatory gesture initiated by the leading social democratic politicians, and one of the veteran Marxists in the party, Karl Harald Wiik, voiced a surly dissenting opinion.<sup>9</sup> However, the next year, in May 1939, the social democratic leaders renewed the gesture. The party even adopted the national colors of blue and white that the middle classes had vigorously contrasted against red during the interwar period in their parliamentary election advertisement.

When two local workers' associations in collaboration with the Church reburied victims of the White Terror in church yards in two neighboring parishes in southern Finland in May 1939, the orators in the ceremonies used a metaphor of "conciliatory handshake" between former adversaries and gave the Civil War a new significance as the "birth pains of the nation." The tragic fratricide, a concept used earlier by the both parties in rather bitter way, gained for the first time a position in the *national* narrative when the social democrats injected this mythical concept with regenerative meaning. Birth pains were a necessary phase in the development of the nation. The Red sacrifice became integrated into the national story of regeneration that was written in blood. Not everyone accepted this. After one of the reburials, a group of local "patriots" demolished the funeral wreaths from the graves and attacked in the press against "agitating" slogans in the commemorative bands.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, before World War II, the splits between social classes and former adversaries had become somewhat less strict. The editorial of the Swedish-language organ of

9 Tuomas Tepora, *Sinun puolesta elää ja kuolla: Suomen liput, nationalismi ja veriuhuri 1917–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2011), pp. 189–90.

10 Ville Kivimäki & Tuomas Tepora, "Meaningless Death or Regenerating Sacrifice? Violence and Social Cohesion in Wartime Finland," in Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations, History of Warfare*, 69 (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 240–41.



the Social Democratic Party testifies to the changed atmosphere when it declared in May 1938 that the parties may still be in conflict but were no longer separated by moats.<sup>11</sup>

### The Idea of Unity and the Remembrance of the Civil War during World War II

Finnish participation in World War II, from the Finnish point of view, is separated into three conflicts. The Winter War began on 30 November 1939 after Finland refused to concede to Soviet demands for areas and naval posts. The Russo-Finnish war was ended by the Moscow Peace Treaty on 13 March 1940 and resulted in Finland's loss of eastern parts of the country, notably Karelia. The short peace before Finland participated in the German Operation Barbarossa to the Soviet Union in June 1941 became quickly known as the Interim Peace. The Continuation War (1941–44) explicitly tells that the public saw the conflict as a continuation of the Winter War. Finland regained its lost areas and became an occupier in Soviet Karelia. After the battle of Stalingrad, Russian offensives gained strength on the Eastern Front, and Finland began to differentiate itself from the German war effort. Eventually, the Finnish leadership signed an armistice with Stalin in September 1944, restoring the Moscow Peace Treaty with added modifications. This led to a much-forgotten conflict in northern Finland, the Lapland War. According to the armistice, Finland was obliged to expel from its territory the German troops that had been stationed in northern Finland. This conflict lasted nominally until April 1945.

It is indisputable that the Soviet aggression in 1939 strengthened the bonds between social classes and political parties. It is also true that conservative circles feared the Left's reaction to the war. However, the social democrats held many key government positions in 1939 and took visible positions – and the middle-class elites deliberately gave them these positions – in wartime society. Even many communist supporters rushed willingly to the colors. At the same time, one should bear in mind that the “spirit of the Winter War,” somewhat comparable to the experience of August 1914 in Germany, France, or Great Britain, was a short experience.<sup>12</sup> Although one cannot describe Finnish society as

<sup>11</sup> *Arbetarbladet* 16 May 1938.

<sup>12</sup> There were marked differences between the Winter War and August 1914, too. The beginning of the Winter War led not to celebrations and expressions of war enthusiasm but to almost pious expressions of patriotism. Moreover, the war enthusiasm in Europe in 1914 has perhaps been somewhat over-emphasized, especially when it comes to working

crumbling during the Continuation War, new and renewed frictions occurred in the society that retained its parliamentary system in the alliance with Germany. In spite of discord regarding foreign policy and military goals, the war effort retained its symbolic unity throughout the war. One of the most interesting features in wartime events of commemoration and rhetoric was the rethought status of the Civil War and its victims in the national narrative. Understanding the continued significance of World War II to identities in Finland even today is incomplete without understanding the significance of the concept of the unifying sacrifices that symbolically unmade the reciprocal violence of the Civil War.

Let us begin our analysis from an image that even today holds a controversial position in collective memories. The person and the image of C.G.E. Mannerheim, the White general of 1918 and the Marshall of Finland during World War II, had, since the Civil War, been established as either an idolized or a hated character in the society depending on the political views of the citizen. Although the Jäger veterans had never truly accepted him due to his Imperial Russian career, he nevertheless represented an authority of the White political inheritance. The Left scorned at him regardless of party alliance. Mannerheim had resorted to conciliatory rhetoric already in 1933, during the fifteenth anniversary of the War of Liberation, when he stated that today “we” should no longer question the former allegiances of our fellow citizens. At this point the message had not reached the socialists – let alone the communists – but after the Winter War, the social democrats adopted Mannerheim as a guarantor of their bettered status and the changed ideological atmosphere in the society. In the early stages of the Continuation War, the social democratic press found his 1933 speech and tried to make it an exemplary of Mannerheim’s “decade-long” conciliatory politics. The Marshall’s rather revered and emotional position in wartime society came close to public worship. It is interesting that the social democrats consciously tried to rewrite their narrative of the White general and make him suitable to lead the nation as an unambiguously unifying figure. Also the middle classes endorsed Mannerheim as the leader and initiator of conciliatory politics.

The main commemoration date of interwar White Finland, 16 May, gave way to two new commemorative dates and ceased to be celebrated. The new date of the Flag Day of the Defense Forces from 1942 onwards became 4 June,

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classes, whereas in the Finnish case the popular opinion at first unambiguously seems to have been supportive of the war. The just cause behind the battle perhaps explains this firm resoluteness, which by the beginning of the Continuation War had already evaporated.

Mannerheim's birthday. On that day in 1942, the main thoroughfare of Helsinki was renamed after him, and some other towns also renamed streets after him. Workers' Halls hoisted national flags on Mannerheim's birthday, again arousing some discord among the supporters. The gesture would have been outright unacceptable before the war, in spite of concessions in the late 1930s.

Already in May 1940, the celebration of 16 May had been replaced with a new commemorative date for the fallen of the Winter War, Remembrance Day. The day was celebrated on the third Sunday of May, and, as it happened, the state also included remembrance of the victims of the Civil War on this new date. This process warrants a closer analysis, as it changed the national narrative and started a new myth concerning the modern origins of the nation.

The rhetoric in the state-organized memorial ceremonies commemorated the civil-war victims as men and women who had "fallen for their conviction." Initially, this new formulation was designed to mean Reds and Whites alike, but in practice, the "conviction" referred to the motivations of the Reds. The unifying effect of the Winter War sacrifices expanded to include the Civil War fallen. As we have seen, some of the social democrat supporters had proposed including the Red sacrifices in the national narrative instead of remaining solely in the class narrative before the war. In 1940, this became reality in official rhetoric. In the wartime, both middle-class and working-class foundations, trade unions, and the Civil Guards, whose membership became acceptable to social democrats, laid wreaths on each other's war graves and memorials (although at that point there were few memorials for the Reds). This practice, however, had local variations and did not attract equal enthusiasm in every place.<sup>13</sup>

When we look specifically at middle-class attitudes, the inclusion of the Reds is often revealed to be conditional. For instance, the wartime juvenile literature depicted the offspring of the former Reds as seeking absolution from their fathers' sins by participating eagerly in the war effort. Although the bad deeds of the fathers were no longer condemned as intentional crimes in the literature, merely as badly judged choices of fundamentally patriotic people, the script implied that only repentant Reds can be accepted as true patriots. They must recognize their sins.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the victors of the Civil War

13 Ulla-Majja Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seuran Toimituksia, 894 (Helsinki: SKS, 2003), pp. 226–27; *Helsingin Sanomat* 20 May 1941; *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 7 December 1942; National Archives (KA), State Police (EK-Valpo I) files, amp: V. 1918 kapinavainajain muiston kunnoittaminen, fol. 389, Kotka department report no. 12 from December 1943.

14 Tuomas Tepora, "Pyyteettömyden palkka on elämä: Toisen maailmansodan nuortenkirjallisuus," in Ilona Kempainen, Kirsti Salmi-Niklander, & Saara Tuomaala, eds, *Kirjoitettu*

announced that they were publicly prepared to forgive and forget the attempted revolution, but as a detective in the State Police illuminatingly wrote in a report, he thought it was outrageous that there were social democratic newspapers that, according to his interpretation, had revised the whole history of the year 1918. "As if forgiving and forgetting is not enough, now the rebellion should be declared as justified."<sup>15</sup> It is easy to see why the Civil War experience added an extra element to the otherwise strong emphasis on unifying sacrifices during World War II. It was as if the new conflict made the Civil War easier to forget, a phenomenon that is elaborated in more detail later in this chapter.

Common sacrifices were heralded in the Finnish Union for Brothers-in-Arms (*Suomen Aseveljien Liitto*) that was founded in August 1940 to represent the veterans of the recently ended conflict. This organization by design included all of the accepted political parties in its governing body, and trade union activists held important positions in it. The new veterans' body attracted 80,000 members in 1940 and more than 200,000 by the end of 1944, and became the biggest association in the country. Its political mission was to fight communism in the country. The new veterans organization visibly encouraged former Civil War adversaries to commemorate each other on Remembrance Day and Independence Day. Their rhetoric stressing the brotherhood between comrades across political boundaries descended into pseudo-religious metaphors. The sons of the former enemies expiated the sins of their fathers in trenches fighting a common enemy.

Moreover, the Union for Brothers-in-Arms practically replaced the Veterans' Union of the War of Liberation. At first, the old Union under its far-right leadership tried to compete with the new Union and attracted 9000 veterans of the Winter War to join it, but quickly lost popularity. Merging of the two unions did not succeed, as the Veterans' Union was not prepared to abandon its purely White heritage.<sup>16</sup>

Finnish society was not unique in its efforts to unify the people by encouraging them to cross class boundaries and practice at least ostensible economic leveling.<sup>17</sup> Not only the buried were harnessed to make peace between social classes and groupings within the society. Industrial employers accepted trade

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*nuoruus: Aikalaistulkintoja 1900-luvun alkupuolen nuoruudesta*, Nuorisotutkimusverkoston/Nuorisotutkimusseuran Julkaisuja, 117 (Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, 2011), pp. 132–33.

15 KA, EK-Valpo I Files, amp: Vapaussodan ja kapinan muisto, fol. 392, the notes on the newspaper clip from *Kansan Voima* 8 June 1942.

16 Tuomas Tepora, "Elävät vainajat": Kaatuneet kansakuntaa velvoittavana uhrina," in Sari Näre & Jenni Kirves, eds, *Ruma sota: Talvi- ja jatkosodan vaiettu historia* (Helsinki: Johnny Kniga, 2008), pp. 106–14.

17 Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1991).

unions as negotiation partners in January 1940. The Ministry of the Interior freed the use of the social democratic workers' associations' and trade union flags in April 1940 – the display of communist emblems and slogans remained banned.<sup>18</sup> As a symbolic gesture, this may have even surpassed the “January engagement” as the new bond between trade unions and employers became known. It may have surpassed even the right given to the relatives of the Red war dead and terror victims to apply for compensation during the Continuation War. After World War II, relatives of Civil War victims were integrated into the same compensation plan as the families of World War II victims. Also, Red invalids were given the right to apply for a modest pension already in 1941.<sup>19</sup>

Namely, the Red flags had since the Civil War carried the memory of the revolution and the perceived victimhood of the workers, and since the early 1930s their public use had been banned. The middle classes quite unanimously had an equally passionate, although inverted, relationship to these workers' banners. The red color had become a virtual antithesis to Finnishness of pure blue and white, one of whose public connotations had become youthful innocence. We may speculate to what extent it is possible to read signs of collective guilt and a White claim to its share of victimhood from the prevalent emotional charge of the national flag. It is clear, however, that in the interwar period, the flag issue was significant, as it was in other similar societies where political violence is ongoing or rooted in memories of the recent past.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the emotional significance of the flag issue that is perhaps otherwise easy to deem as symbolic becomes visible when we think about it against the symbolism of the Soviet Union. The middle classes had traditionally seen the red color and workers' symbols connected directly to the “constitutive other” in the East, which had now turned into a real-life enemy. Thus, it is remarkable that after the Winter War, symbols that had previously been associated with the enemy were released to the streets. In fact, the state did not experience them as threats anymore.

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18 The government's decision to free the social democratic banners in 1940, after an appeal by the SDP, involved only May Day festivities in designated grounds. In the next year, 1941, the display of workers' flags was allowed in May Day processions as well. Thus, the workers' flags made their way back to the streets, but only at designated times to avoid communist demonstrations, see Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 280–81.

19 Kaisa Suoranta, “*Ei kai ole syyni vuoden 1918 tapahtumat ...*”: *Punaleskien avustaminen 1918–1948* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Joensuun yliopisto, 2006), pp. 41–46.

20 Neil Jarman, “Pride and Possession, Display and Destruction,” in Thomas Hylland Eriksen & Richard Jenkins, eds, *Flag, Nation and Symbolism in Europe and America* (London & New York: Routledge, 2007); Dominic Bryan, “Between the National and the Civic: Flagging Peace in, or a Piece of, Northern Ireland?” in *Flag, Nation and Symbolism*.

The socialist press welcomed warmly the new coming of the red flags during the Interim Peace. It was as if the working-class identity had been accepted to have claims to citizenship equal to the middle class. Except it was not. The social democrats integrated themselves irrevocably into the establishment, but the remaining Left and their symbols continued to threaten the powers that be. As a safety measure, the state imprisoned more than 100 notable communists when the Winter War began, and after the war, politically active communist veterans established their own veteran organization, the Worker Veterans (*Työläisrintamamiehet*), differentiating themselves politically from the other veterans groups. The Worker Veterans, whose leaders were imprisoned in the fall of 1940, paid visits to the Red war graves and aroused public sentiment with their unapologetic commemoration.<sup>21</sup> Their impact, however, remained rather low. At the same time, due to the changed political circumstances made possible by the Soviet influence, the still-banned communist party organized a cover organization, the Finnish–Soviet Society for Peace and Friendship (*Suomen ja Neuvostoliiton rauhan ja ystävyyden seura*), which proved to be significantly more popular than the Worker Veterans. It attracted 35,000 members during the fall of 1940 before the authorities banned it in December.

The Society propagated the Soviet view on the reasons leading to the Winter War. Their views sprang from the bitter experiences of the Civil War combined with the close relationship of domestic communists to those exiled in the Soviet Union, of whom Stalin had purged many only a couple of years earlier. One can wonder about the enthusiasm professed by the leading communists, for they must have been at least partially aware of the fate of their comrades in the Soviet Union. Perhaps the enthusiasm of siding with the winners overcame any doubts, and, of course, belief and trust in the justification of reversing the defeat in 1918 renewed their faith in the cause.<sup>22</sup>

In any case, the Society formed a fifth column within the state. The revolutionary interpretation of the Civil War that had formed a strong but restricted current in the interwar period thus surfaced briefly after the Winter War. Interestingly, the Finnish–Soviet Society adopted Soviet songs, anthems, and symbols rather than the Finnish workers' anthems for their gatherings. All of the dissenters on the Left cannot, however, be labeled communists. When Finnish foreign policy shifted towards Germany, six notable social democratic MPs

21 KA. EK-Valpo I Files, amp: V. 1918 kapinallisten haudat, fol. 389, report on the visit of the Worker Veterans in Malmi Cemetery, 18 November 1940.

22 Kimmo Rentola, *Kenen joukoissa seisot? Suomalainen kommunismi ja sota 1937–1945* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1994).

critical to the development left the party in early 1941 and established a dissenting newspaper, *Vapaa Sana* ("The Free Word"), which exceeded in circulation the organ of the Social Democratic Party. The state authorities banned the paper quickly, and the MPs, including the above-mentioned K.H. Wiik, were imprisoned when the Continuation War began. The Left did not stand unambiguously unified in the face of the continued war in 1941. When the war resumed, many of those leftists who had fought in the Winter War avoided the call to arms and deserted for political reasons. More than 450 persons deemed as security risks were imprisoned by the state.<sup>23</sup>

### The Marginalized War of Liberation Commemoration

The far Right still clung to the myth of the War of Liberation. The Veterans' Union, which had dropped the "War of Liberation" from its name, continued during World War II to commemorate the important dates of the White military campaign, notably the beginning of the war that commemorated the disarming of the Russian garrisons in Ostrobothnia on 28 January and the Victory Day of 16 May. Some other local liberation ceremonies also continued to be organized. In 1943, on the 25th anniversary of the Civil War, the Veterans' Union organized a last concerted effort to commemorate the War of 1918 as a War of Liberation, but the festivities remained low key, primarily for two reasons. First, the one-sided commemorative narrative had lost its appeal during the war effort and propaganda that highlighted unity. Second, the authorities – notably the *Valpo*, the State Police that practiced internal surveillance – scrutinized closely any political activity that the state regarded as a threat to the united war effort.<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the organ of the Veterans' Union questioned the new policy, including the custom of former adversaries to lay wreaths on each other's graves. The last visible organ of White Finland portrayed the policy of retelling the narrative of 1918 as damaging to the unity of the nation. The new version in which the adversaries were treated as equals blurred the truth of the national

23 Jukka Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin? 1941–1944: Sotilaskarkuruus Suomen armeijassa jatkosodan aikana* (Helsinki: Painatuskeskus, 1995). Altogether 1500 men avoided the call to arms in the summer of 1941. Ideological reasons were influential in these desertions, perhaps more so than later during the Continuation War, when the number of desertions rose rapidly. See also Kivimäki & Tepora, "Meaningless Death," p. 243.

24 E.g., KA, EK-Valpo I Files, amp: Lippukysymys, fol. 485, Valpo Tampere department, reports to the headquarters nos 1019, 1044–45, 1054, August 1943.



liberation and undermined the sacrifices of not only the White veterans but also the contemporary fighting youth of the nation who were ready to put all the divisions aside.<sup>25</sup> The activists of the Veterans' Union resented the change in the date of the Flag Day of the Defense Forces from 16 May to 4 June. On 16 May 1943, however, the major conservative newspaper and the organ of the party, *Uusi Suomi*, declared in an editorial that the Reds had fought for independence in 1918. This nullified right-wing efforts to keep up with the War of Liberation narrative.<sup>26</sup>

After World War II, according to the peace treaty, the Veterans' Union was disbanded as a "fascist organization," along with other arguably less fascist organizations like the Union of Brothers-in-Arms.<sup>27</sup> The victors' de-whitening justice certainly helped in the post-war reorganization of the memory politics of the Civil War, but it should be emphasized that the War of Liberation interpretation was becoming old-fashioned before the Finnish defeat in World War II. In retrospect, it is interesting that the stately Victory Day vanished completely after World War II, whereas since the 1950s, the January Sunday, after a short break in the tradition in the wake of World War II, retained its position locally in Ostrobothnia, where the White heritage has been the most persistent and has survived until today.

It may even seem astonishing how easily new traditions replaced the celebrations of the White Finland. Nevertheless, the War of Liberation was not completely wiped out of the collective memories due to World War II. The language referring to and the narrative describing the War of Liberation had, after all, been unquestionably hegemonic in the interwar period. When we look at the rhetoric outside commemorative ceremonies, the "war of liberation" (meaning gaining freedom from Russia) still formed a basic narrative starting point.

For instance, during the Winter War, when the conflict remained yet to be named, it was a natural choice for many of the conservative politicians and writers to adopt the name "War of Liberation" as the name for a new war. It was rather customary to refer to the new conflict as the second War of Liberation, or the real war of independence now truly fought against the very same enemy that in the first case had been imagined as the enemy. Accordingly, the Continuation War was occasionally called the third War of Liberation. After the

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25 *Rintamamies* 22 January 1943.

26 *Uusi Suomi* 16 May 1943.

27 The veterans of World War II reorganized later in the 1950s. The heritage organizations and the maintenance of the White Civil War veterans resumed as well, although they kept a low profile.

Winter War, Mannerheim had avoided the War of Liberation vocabulary in his public addresses, but in July 1941, he – rather interestingly, considering his status as the wartime popular leader – used the War of Liberation rhetoric linking the War of 1918, the Winter War, and the Continuation War in his famous order that tried to justify the occupation of Soviet Karelia in terms of finishing the liberation of the native Finnish territories that had been left unfinished in 1918. The crusader phraseology and rather militaristic rhetoric was strikingly usual during the attack phase of the Continuation War in summer and fall of 1941 compared to the Winter War or the later phases of Finland's involvement in World War II. Usage of the War of Liberation rhetoric falls into this category and exposes the strong currents of White ideology beneath the surface of unity in common purpose.

### The Red Commemoration during World War II

There were only a handful of public Red memorials in 1939 compared to the flourishing memorial landscape of the Whites.<sup>28</sup> The war years until 1944 witnessed a few Red memorial projects that the social democrats initiated in the changed atmosphere. The projects turned out to be quite problematic. The state authorities backed these efforts, but the workers themselves were divided in their opinion of erecting memorials to the Reds under current circumstances. Towards the end of the Continuation War, when the political disagreements began to re-emerge, the middle-class elites in some parishes started to frown upon the memorial plans.

An example of the former case is the memorial erected in a suburban Helsinki cemetery, where fallen Reds were reburied from their central burial ground in 1918. The social democratic Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (*SAK*)<sup>29</sup> began to plan the memorial during the Interim Peace, but it became soon clear that some members of the local Helsinki-based trade-union branches felt unable to adhere to the memorial project initiated in line with the conciliatory policy. Presumably, according to the intelligence reports supplied by the Valpo, communist members of the trade unions saw that the planned memorial could not do justice to the Red victims and therefore believed that the workers should wait for the time when they could “approach these graves without the feeling of shame.” The feeling of shame, in this regard, emanated from their not being able to commemorate their fallen comrades

28 Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, p. 294, 299.

29 *SAK* replaced *SAJ* in 1930.

properly. The memorial depicting a muscular man flying a flag was, nevertheless, erected in May 1944.<sup>30</sup>

Local workers' associations actively tended the Red graves. The reburial of the Red Civil War victims in churchyards seems to have increased during in the early 1940s as a part of the conciliatory politics. Most of the reburied Reds were victims of terror and retribution who had been buried in mass graves in distant locations. The churchyard was sacred ground in the heart of the local parish, and the reburials, which had taken place every now and then during the inter-war period, thus had a highly symbolic charge. We should remember that the White fallen had been buried in local churchyards in 1918. This practice led the Finnish Army of World War II to repatriate its fallen to local parishes, so in every locality, a military cemetery existed adjacent to the local churchyard. This act of "consecrating" every parish with its own sacrifices tells about the symbolism connected to the reburial of the Red victims. Not only did the social democratic narrative gain its first, even if partial, engagement with the national narrative but also its dead became engaged with the sacred nucleus of the nation. However, just like with the memorials, the reburial efforts sometimes incited bad blood. There was at least one incident in Sippola, in Kymenlaakso region in southeastern Finland, where the local elites of White background managed to abort the planned reburial. The locals had experienced the class conflict in 1918 violently.<sup>31</sup>

One way to interpret the changed social democratic remembrance of 1918 is to look at workers' celebrations during World War II. There are three points of interest. First, the social democratic leaders used these occasions to manifest the importance of the workers in the defense of the nation. The workers' sacrifices composed the majority of the casualties.<sup>32</sup> Without their effort, the nation would crumble. This, evidently, could be used as an asset in negotiating a new social contract between the classes. Second, there were occasions when the orators took the workers' sacrifices as a proof of their own changed attitude toward the nation: the word "fatherland" had rung hollow and been even hated before, but the coffins of the fallen workers draped in the state flag had consecrated the nation and the fatherland in the minds of the working class. Third,

30 KA, EK-Valpo I Files, amp: V. 1918 kapinallisten haudat, fol. 389, report no. 861, 5 March 1941; and excerpt of report no. 1430 on the Seamstresses' Union Helsinki branch meetings, 9 April 1941. *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 14 May 1944.

31 KA, EK-Valpo I Files, amp: V. 1918 kapinavainajain muiston kunnioittaminen, muistojuhlia, fol. 389, Valpo Kotka department: situation review no. 1, February 1943 and no. 11, December 1943.

32 Timo Toivonen, "War and Equality: The Social Background of the Victims of the Finnish Winter War," *Journal of Peace Research* 35.4 (1998): 471–82.

social democratic sympathizers may have participated in otherwise middle-class national celebrations, but at the same time they retained and preferred their traditional celebrations. Moreover, the workers organized their own celebrations, for instance Independence Day ceremonies. The class-conscious attitude of participating in society as a defined group held sway. The message conveyed in the celebrations differed according to the occasion. May Day celebrations retained their character as demonstrations in support of better material living conditions for the working class. The old pre-Civil War-era workers' anthems and the *Marsellaise* were sung along patriotic songs and the national anthem; the publicly banned *Internationale* had been erased from the social-democratic public repertoire already after the Civil War. The workers' independence celebrations emphasized the national cause with markedly patriotic overtones. The bitter experiences of the Civil War were downplayed in these wartime ceremonies and replaced with new meanings that actively sought a merger of the national cause and class-consciousness.<sup>33</sup>

In a nutshell, the state-level rhetoric changed drastically after the beginning of World War II. Locally, the changes were not so dramatic, and the difference between collective memories and different sacrificial interpretations between the former Whites and Reds were occasionally acted out. Adding to the state-driven demand for overarching consensus, writers and propagandists in the contemporary press realized the potential of rewriting the national narrative for the benefit of mutual coexistence and national renewal. Nonetheless, we should acknowledge that when faced with the need to unite against a common enemy, political sentiments of strong attachment to the larger community, the nation, often reflected genuine feelings and wartime needs of the people.

### The Unmaking of the Civil War

Modern sacrifice may seem only a distant cousin of the fantasized mythical sacrifice of traditional societies. Yet, Finnish collective memories during the interwar period largely dealt with precisely similar sacred and "tribal" qualities of sacrifice and their power to renew and rejuvenate the nation. Despite some boundary crossings, however, until the late 1930s the nation as a collective was not able to draw unanimous strength from common sacrifices. The dividedness of the nation was eased by the powerful external scapegoat whose power reflected on the domestic communists.

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33 Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, pp. 282–86.

In terms of translating deteriorating internal violence into binding and socially conducive sacrifice, the beginning of the Winter War is telling. The changed susceptibility in accepting common sacrifices is aptly illustrated in the social democratic press. After the Winter War in 1940, the defeat of the nation was undermined in favor of celebration and marvel at the unity of former adversaries: "It feels so strange that we required a war to arrive at such a simple conclusion."<sup>34</sup> Many writers and thinkers in the bourgeois press perceived the beginning of World War II as a blessing in disguise.<sup>35</sup> The Winter War signified a harvest symbolically and, morbidly enough, factually. An explicit external enemy united the nation to fight a "just war," and the offspring of former enemies sacrificed for the common cause. Not even political conflicts and Finnish aggression during the Continuation War eradicated this "blessing," which made political quarrels inferior to a certain sense of consensus over the idea of national unity. The aggressive and bloodthirsty rhetoric of the Civil War was replaced by the collective self-sacrificing but re-creating rhetoric of the Winter War. Slogans such as the one below in a leading liberal newspaper abounded: "If our bodies will die, our souls will remain roaming in our beloved country of birth."<sup>36</sup>

It is understandable that the Finnish World War II experience of the unifying sacrifice – or sacrificial violence – has held the prime position in the present collective memory regarding the healing of the wounds of the Civil War. We cannot escape the fact that the Finnish experience of World War II in more than one way redirected violence outwards from within the collective, or the nation. This act of outsourcing in fact re-established the boundaries of the nation by claiming the monopoly on violence to the whole group, not just part of it. We just have to live with the fact that comradeship and mutual sympathy had the dark side of fighting the external enemy and scapegoating a few others. However, this overwhelming experience and commemoration masks the process of slow healing before World War II. The identity-shaping "cultural trauma"<sup>37</sup> originally created by the real-life tragedy of the Civil War had already started to become nuanced and even dissipated through acts of commemoration, but inevitably during World War II, it radically changed its shape

34 See, e.g., *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 6 December 1940; for descriptions of changed perceptions in the bourgeois press preceding the war, see, e.g., *Helsingin Sanomat* 9 November 1939: "It feels as if everything ancient had been vanished and reborn anew."

35 See, e.g., Kersti Bergroth in *Uusi Suomi* 6 December 1939; and Lassi Hiekkala (under pseudonym Eero) in *Helsingin Sanomat* 1 December 1939.

36 *Helsingin Sanomat* 3 December 1939; see also *Uusi Aura* 3 December 1939.

37 Cf. Jeffrey C. Alexander, Ron Eyerman, Bernhard Giesen, Neil J. Smelser, & Piotr Sztompka, *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

from internal bloodletting, which had shored up various boundaries within the society, to being attacked, raped, and forced to conform to the demands of a mighty neighboring power. In fact, victimhood emblazoned by the Winter War experience emerged then as one of the major Finnish collective identities, which has ever since, in varying degrees, been one of the cornerstones of national narrative template. This sense of victimhood is not passive, though.

The idea crystallized during World War II highlights Finns as active players who defended themselves somewhat successfully but were defeated in the end. However, the shared sense of innocent victimhood absolves Finns as perpetrators in today's popular memory and, thus, highlights the unity of the nation. Interestingly, the sense of "active victimhood" shared by everyone is directed not only to shape World War II experiences but also the memory of the Civil War; we fought together, not against each other like before. It should be kept in mind, though, that the extreme Left and their sympathizers never adopted a view other than the active rebels of a just cause and victims of retribution when the events of 1918 were concerned, as we will shortly see. Civil War memories were contested in the decades following World War II, but the shared experience of 1939–45 nevertheless offered a cushion to soften the debate.

It is a topic of another research, but suffice it to say that the perceived unity during the Winter War should be regarded as of an emotional, not political, nature. People with differing social backgrounds and political leanings were able to attach positive value to abstract and symbolic objects such as the nation or the fatherland. They did so not because of some propagated political consensus but *in spite* of the political disagreements. The attachment to something "greater than oneself" is in line with Norbert Elias's idea of the inflation of the collective layers of people's identities during collective crises. The fate of the individual was bound to the fate of the collective, and this experience briefly surpassed ordinary politics and political or social allegiances.<sup>38</sup>

The self-sacrificial ethos required a strong collective enemy. The Russian Bolsheviks – or ethnic Russians in general – were now collectively accepted as the enemy of the entire nation. Before the conclusion of the first part of this chapter, I will highlight a peculiar reburial of the Reds during the Continuation War in a small town in Kymenlaakso, southeastern Finland. In this event, the "Russians," for the first time after 1918, were established as the archenemy of also the workers Finland. In October 1943, the remains of 15 Civil War era Red

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38 Norbert Elias, *Studien über die Deutschen: Machtkämpfe und Habitusentwicklung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. 2nd edn (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 456–64; Tepora, *Sinun puolesta*, 251–71; Kivimäki & Tepora, "Meaningless Death," 242.

insurgents were reburied in the churchyard of Hamina. The town was known for its bitter class differences and divisive memories. Obtaining permission for the reburial had been difficult, and only the politically favorable wartime ethos made the move possible. Nonetheless, some people in the township bitterly opposed the reburial, which had been initiated by the local social democratic workers' association. A local workers' associations representative gave a speech beside the new graves. Much of it concerned the already established themes of the fratricidal tragedy of 1918 and the originally patriotic intention of the Reds. They, as well as the Whites, had "fallen for their conviction," as the usual saying coined during World War II went, implying that the goal of both Reds and Whites had been ethically grounded, no matter what the end result. Also familiar was the celebration of the re-found unity during World War II, and especially during the Winter War not to mention the blessings of the unifying sacrifices originating in this unanimity. But there was a new element to the commemoration of the Civil War in the speech. The female orator declared that:

[t]he man and woman of Finland fights at the moment with an unswerving determination against the very same enemy, whose bad spirit in 1918 ravaged among our people tearing it apart. In this time this same enemy has tried to sow the seeds of discord to our nation but without success.<sup>39</sup>

The representative of the workers' movement charged that the Russians had sown the seeds for the tragedy of 1918. This was a standard White explanation from the interwar period. According to the orator, the main reason for the Civil War thus did not lie in class struggle and social injustice at all. This was unique in leftist remembrance and has not probably been replicated ever since after World War II. Such was the power of an external enemy – and a scapegoat.

### The New Coming of the Left

In 1945, the men and women of Finland had lost their unswerving determination to fight the same enemy. The Finnish defeat in World War II gave the communists a long-awaited chance to regroup above ground. The war-weariness and disillusionment with the Finnish war effort raised support for the far-Left and gave its claim to power added substance. Especially returned veterans

39 KA, EK-Valpo I Files, amp: V. 1918 kapinavainajain muiston kunnioittaminen, muistojuhlia, fol. 389, Valpo Kotka department: situation review no. 11, November 1943.



voted the communist-led new party, the People's Democratic Union of Finland (*Suomen kansan demokraattinen liitto*, SKDL), in the election of 1945. This election established the People's Democrats comprising of left-socialists and communists as the second largest party in the country after the social democrats. The communists held some key posts in the government, notably Minister of the Interior Yrjö Leino, who was in charge of the State Police. In the 1950s, when support for the communists had weakened, anti-communists labeled the late 1940s until the signing of the Finnish-Soviet Treaty of 1948<sup>40</sup> and before the Allied Control Commission left the country in 1949 as the "Years of Danger." This referred to the possibility of a new revolution, now under Soviet-supported communist banners.

The social democrats emerged as some of the fiercest anti-communists in the post-war years, but initially, the emotional release after the bitter war against the ideologically alien National Socialists resulted in a massive co-celebration of the Left. Virtually for the first time since the immediate post-1918 period, the Left celebrated May Day together in 1945, for instance, filling the Olympic Stadium in Helsinki, built for the games of 1940 that the war cancelled. The May Day demonstrations gathered huge crowds all over the country. The wartime phenomena of boundary crossings between politically defined middle classes and the workers were briefly overturned in the late 1940s. An illuminating description of the changed atmosphere may well be a reminiscence of a middle-class wartime child who had during the war years been accustomed to play in the yard of a local workers' hall, something that before the war would have been rare. On a May Day after the war, the members of the workers' association evicted her and her "White" friends from the yard with the epithet "White children."<sup>41</sup>

The left-socialists and communists re-established the Finnish-Soviet Society as an overarching body that gathered workers and intelligentsia. It can be argued that after the Civil Guards had been disbanded as a "fascist organization" according to the peace treaty between the Soviet Union and Finland, the Finnish-Soviet Society tried to fill the local power vacuum, although its methods consisted of a reversal of memory politics and organizing demonstrations. It is a subject of ongoing debate how likely the renewed socialist revolution in Finland was. The revolution feared by the traditional elites did not materialize, although undoubtedly, not many of the party veterans lacked in initial revolu-

40 "The Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance" reassured Finnish-Soviet relations until the collapse of the Soviet Union.

41 Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society (SKS KRA), Reminiscence collection *Sota-aika (1939–1945) muistoissamme* ("Wartime 1939–45," collected in 2000–01), female, b. 1935, pp. 955–56.

tionary spirit after their years underground. Unlike the Eastern European states, Finland was not occupied. The communists, in fact, rather quickly started to integrate into the political system, unlike in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe, where they used governmental positions to institute one-party rule. As Risto Alapuro has pointed out as an explanation, in addition to lack of support from the Soviet Union and disputes within the Finnish Communist Party, the communists adhered to the emancipatory tradition of the Finnish workers' movement. Once the extreme Left had the opportunity to become an established part of the society, they adjusted themselves to this parliamentary opportunity and abandoned revolutionary tactics.<sup>42</sup> We should bear in mind that the overall change in the political atmosphere was extensive, and Soviet appeasement and even pro-Soviet public attitudes became more or less norms in other political parties as well, which made the communist task of political reorganization smoother. The rather vast support for the communists diminished, though, and after the election of 1948, they were unable to renew their ministerial positions until in 1966.

Under the auspices of its local branches, the Finnish–Soviet Society, the newly organized Red veterans, and local workers' associations initiated a new and comprehensive set of memorials for Reds all over the country, in cemeteries and other burial grounds. Funding for the monuments included donations and collection drives from the workers' associations, co-operatives, and trade unions as well as municipal grants, particularly from Left-dominated councils.<sup>43</sup> The reburials of the socialist victims of the Civil War increased as well, which is indicative of the shared desire of the communists and the social democrats to receive recognition from the wider society – however, it sometimes happened that the local communists, claiming the authority of the wishes of the victims' families, were opposed to the municipal reburials and expressed the opinion that the decades-old graves had already become “sacred” and that decisions on their future should be left solely to the Left.<sup>44</sup>

The majority of the Red memorials erected in the latter half of the 1940s and in the 1950s represented a strand of memory politics and tradition that can be labeled as communist. Between 1945 and 1958, altogether 117 monuments were

42 Risto Alapuro, *Suomen älymystö Venäjän varjossa* (Tammi: Helsinki, 1997), p. 42.

43 The politics of memory reminiscent of the interwar period resumed occasionally when town councilors fought each other over public funding for the Red memorials. Sometimes the rightist parties were able to reverse the previously agreed grant decisions for the memorials; see Maurice Carrez, “Sites of the Red Massacre in Finnish Civil War: The Politics of Memory and its Re-Interpretation,” trans. by Cynthia J. Johnson, in Mikko Majander & Kimmo Rentola, eds, *Ei ihan teorian mukaan* (Helsinki: THPTS & Yhteiskunnallinen arkistosäätiö, 2012), p. 102.

44 Carrez, “Sites of the Red Massacre,” p. 86.

erected to commemorate the Reds, compared with only one new White memorial. The memorial boom lasted until the early 1970s, but the ratio between erected memorials of the Reds and the Whites became almost equal in the 1960s, with fewer than 20 new memorials erected for both sides.<sup>45</sup> Some of these Red memorials manifested ideology rather than grief and recognition of dying for one's convictions. Moreover, the style of many of the post-World War II Red memorial inscriptions emphasized the experienced injustice, the initially justified agency of the socialists in 1918, and especially in the late 1940s the beginning of a new era. In 1946 in Jokioinen, a rural parish in Häme, local workers' associations inscribed the following verse to the memorial erected on the mass burial place outside cemetery.

1918 / Tell to the coming generations / although violence tore us apart / a  
new dawn shall arise / from this grave mound shall the freedom sprout!<sup>46</sup>

The "conviction approach" nevertheless remained preserved in the repertoire, and as an overall assessment it is justified to point out that the surge of Red memorials served the long-awaited recognition of the Red victims and the leftist viewpoint on a broad scale, not only those of the communists. On many occasions, the politically divided Left united to commemorate Red victims, although tensions between the supporters of the two parties always remained constant.<sup>47</sup>

The element that best served the communist remembrance dealt with celebrating rather than mourning Red sacrifices. The communists saw themselves as the uncompromising and, thus, only true carriers of the Red memory, in stark opposition to the social democratic integration. Moreover, most communist supporters had lost lives in the Finnish trenches fighting the Soviet Union but could not adhere to the new, "integrative" cult of the war dead of World War II. Instead, they glorified the killed and fallen revolutionaries of 1918 with renewed vigor when it became possible to do so openly. Communist leaders added to the public glorification the martyr-fate of executed Soviet spies and the few Finnish deceased conscientious objectors.<sup>48</sup> This perhaps filled a

45 Peltonen, *Muistin paikat*, pp. 227, 300–02.

46 Finnish Labor Museum Werstas, online database of the Red Memorials, <[http://www.tkm.fi/punamuisto2.cgi?sij\\_kunta=Jokioinen](http://www.tkm.fi/punamuisto2.cgi?sij_kunta=Jokioinen)> (accessed 30 October 2013).

47 Carrez, "Sites of the Red Massacre," pp. 98–99.

48 On wartime political sentences, see Jukka Lindstedt, *Kuolemaan tuomitut: Kuolemanrangaistukset Suomessa toisen maailmansodan aikana*, Suomalaisen lakimiesyhdistyksen julkaisu, A-sarja, 221 (Helsinki: Suomalainen lakimiesyhdistys, 1999), passim., esp. 470–78.

need to re-strengthen the ranks of communist sympathizers after years of oppression and establish a competing foundational myth to counteract the essentially anti-Soviet cult of the Finnish war dead of World War II.

As we have seen, it is elementary for the group bound together by traumatic experiences to be able to ascribe productive meaning to the past sacrifices. The political situation in the immediate post-war era enabled this for the extreme Left at the same time as the nationalistic enigma of the cult of the war dead was struggling after the defeat. Accordingly, the communists established a veterans organization to represent members of the Red Guards in association with the communist veterans of World War II. This organization welcomed also the politically motivated deserters of the Continuation War. The organization can be characterized as mirroring the now-banned far-right White Veterans' Union. Like its far-right counterpart, the Red veterans' organization was led by a clearly defined political agenda. Soon the members of the Red Guards founded an independent organization, the Central Organization of the Former Members of the Red Guards, which remained active until the 1980s. Most of its members were communists and Left socialists, although in contrast to its banned White counterpart, the leadership reflected the working-class rank and file rather than politicians. Together with a separate organization for the Red Invalids, their main objective was the commemoration of the Red effort, eliciting adequate compensation from the state (pensions granted during the war were rather modest), and bringing justice for the Red victims mainly by trying to bring White "war criminals" to justice. The veterans' activity, however, diminished after the initial period in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Finally, after decades of struggle, publicly waged mainly by communist politicians, the government agreed to nominally compensate the surviving Red POWs in 1973. Red widows and invalids had received pensions since the 1940s and their positions had been recognized as nominally – if not always in reality – equal to those of other veterans and invalids.<sup>49</sup>

The communists looked at the Finnish participation in World War II from a reversed angle. The Finnish *de facto* alliance with the Third Reich from 1941 onwards dominated the whole picture of the Finnish World War II experience and wrote the problematic Soviet aggression of the Winter War out of the extreme leftist narrative. Without too much exaggeration, it can be argued that this view became an established script of World War II for the extreme Left and, later in the 1960s and the 1970s, for a growing body of the post-war generation's young intelligentsia. Thus, we may argue that the extreme Left in fact

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49 Carrez, "Sites of the Red Massacre," pp. 99–100; Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä: Valkoisten väkivalta Suomen sisällissodassa* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2006), pp. 132–43.

formed the only definable group that was able to use World War II to strengthen their previously adopted view on the Civil War.

### Contesting Memory Cultures

Before starting with the emergence of a new wave of cultural products, reviewed remembrance practices and politics connected with the Civil War in the 1960s, suffice it to note that the communist-driven surge of Red commemoration in the late 1940s arguably set a precedent for the forthcoming changes but did not at the time form a hegemonic narrative in the society. A growing corpus of research on the post-war period until the 1960s is accumulating, but there is surprisingly little research on the Civil War memory politics in the 1950s. The War of Liberation narrative had become more tolerant towards “centrist” attitudes during World War II, but the term of choice in the middle-class media and, for instance, in school textbooks remained the “War of Liberation.” In fact, due to Finland’s rather peculiar defeat in World War II without occupation, which preserved the traditional power structures and many of the same leaders in the society, the decade of the 1950s appears to be an interestingly conservative period, at least on the surface.

The traditional patriotic currents that dominated the decade included commemorating the fallen of World War II and Mannerheim, who died in January 1951. His funeral with a spectacular procession became a massive patriotic event, with crowds on the streets of Helsinki reaching 100,000 people. He was buried in Hietaniemi, the main cemetery in the city and the country, alongside the military graves of those fallen in World War II. In a eulogy, the social democratic Speaker of Parliament Karl-August Fagerholm praised Mannerheim for his fair attitude towards the Red POWs in 1918 and for his conciliatory stand in the interwar period. The general of the White Army had been skeptical of the utility of punishing the rank-and-file of the Red Guards. Fagerholm pointed out, however, that the animosity many people had felt towards Mannerheim had been understandable in light of the violence of 1918. The speaker’s point, nevertheless, led towards the celebration of Mannerheim as a unifying character, the World War II Marshall of Finland. True to the orator’s socialist roots, and as if an excuse for the workers to celebrate the military leader, Fagerholm nevertheless remembered to explain that Mannerheim never was a militarist or a war enthusiast but was a devoted officer in service of the fatherland.<sup>50</sup> During the week leading up to the funeral, some social democrats and

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<sup>50</sup> *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 5 February 1951.

Agrarians had become uneasy about the rightist symbolism of the planned ceremony – perhaps Fagerholm aimed his remark at these people.<sup>51</sup> All the rather elevated rhetoric can, however, be seen as further evidence of the then-ongoing process that resurrected Mannerheim as national leader above ordinary party politics or class divisions – this became also explicitly stated in Fagerholm's eulogy. The extreme Left, however, criticized the grandiosity of the funeral and the presence of former members of the banned Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd among the notables. They also saw that Fagerholm's eulogy mocked the workers' revolution when he made Mannerheim look like a benevolent character, thus portraying the workers as misled in their bitterness after the aborted revolution and fierce retribution. Moreover, the People's Democrats, in spite of Fagerholm's insistence on the contrary, saw the funeral as a celebration of militarism in a time when "World War III was looming."<sup>52</sup>

The equestrian statue of Mannerheim sculpted by Aimo Tukiainen was unveiled on Mannerheim's birthday in 1960, the Flag Day of the Defense Forces, in the center of the capital. Tukiainen had earlier sculpted war memorials for the World War II fallen and some notable Red memorials. The statue committee in charge of the project consisted of notable conservative citizens, and thus it is possible to see the committee's selection of Tukiainen as indicative of decisively changed attitudes in society. Although it was generally agreed that the commemoration of Mannerheim should concentrate on his role as commander-in-chief during World War II, the extreme Left-led veteran members of the Red Guards, People's-Democratic politicians, and the press voiced critique that concentrated on the statue's harmful effect on reopening civil-war wounds, glorifying the war in general, and jeopardizing Finnish-Soviet relations. The major current of critique attracting broader support, however, saw the conservative symbolism of the statue as helplessly outdated.<sup>53</sup> It is interesting that today Mannerheim's status, in spite of strongly preserved counter-images, comes close to the ostensibly extra political character of the 1950s. Nevertheless, in the 1960s, the tide was about to change, and the post-war generations once again clashed over Mannerheim's image.

We have already discussed how the White heritage organizations were revived in the 1950s after a short break caused by the defeat in the war. However, by this time, the leftist version with differing and occasionally overlapping communist and social democratic interpretations had surfaced from under-

51 *Vapaa Sana* 4 February 1951.

52 *Vapaa Sana* 4 & 5 February 1951.

53 Riitta Kontinen, *Suomen marsalkan ratsastajapatsas* (Helsinki: Suomen marsalkka Mannerheimin perinnesäätiö, 1989), pp. 191–92, 194–95.

ground, and workers' organizations began again to systematically gather reminiscences related to 1918.<sup>54</sup> *Luokkasodan muisto* ("The Remembrance of the Class War"), published in 1947, brought the communist interpretation back into light. The book manifested as its goal an revelation of the accurate nature of the events in 1918. It emphasized the brutal White Terror, and its editors at that point gave an exaggerated estimate of the number of Red victims of terror – as high as 18,000 persons. One interesting feature of the publication is its all-encompassing emphasis on the "decisive role" of Germany in the White war effort. The Left had cherished this theme already in the interwar period, but the recently ended World War II had endowed the image of Germany with added viciousness that perhaps made the events of 1918 look as if a prelude to the Third Reich's expansionism. The book's emphasis on the close relationship between White Finns and the Germans may have also worked as a shield against accusations of pro-Soviet attitudes.<sup>55</sup>

The People's Democratic People's Archives gathered oral history of interwar political prisoners already in the late 1940s, and in 1957 it organized a collection on the "Class War" remembrances, although its work was not as extensive and systematic as the work of the other two archival organization's that shortly took on the work. Namely, in the late 1950s, the social democratic organizations led by the Labor Archives began to collect oral history connected to 1917–18 (completed in 1960), and in 1966, the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society organized a collection of reminiscences that attracted memoirs from both White and Red sympathizers.<sup>56</sup> In the 1970s, the Ministry of Education funded an academic research project on the history of "Red Finland," published in the 1980s. It can be said that in the beginning of the 1960s, the White and the Red narratives existed and were contested by each other rather openly, but at the same time they were filtered by the shared experience of World War II. The extreme ends of the memory traditions did not meet, however. The White one became increasingly marginalized in the media, whereas the interpretation of the extreme Left grew in visibility until the late 1970s.

In the mid-1960s, former members of the Red Guards along with other workers' associations started planning the major memorial for the Red victims in the country. Helsinki had been the Red capital, and it accordingly was a rather

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54 The first wave of the reminiscence collection took place in the 1920s; see Tauno Saarela's chapter in this volume.

55 Juho Mäkelä, ed., *Luokkasodan muisto* (Helsinki: Kansankulttuuri Oy, 1947).

56 White remembrances and memoirs had first been collected and archived immediately in the wake of the war by the State Archives, today's National Archives.



obvious choice of location for the memorial. The city of Helsinki signed over a piece of land for the sculpture near the original wartime gravesite of the Reds and the old workers' festival ground in Mäntymäki. The memorial, designed by Taisto Martiskainen, was unveiled in 1970. Symptomatic of the change in social atmosphere, the state and the city of Helsinki generously sponsored the memorial project. The extreme Left and former members of the Red Guards led the memorial committee, which was visible in the unveiling ceremony. In his speech, the chairman of the memorial committee, a former general staff commander of the Red Guards and a previous chairman of the People's Democrats, Kusti Kulo, delivered first a standard leftist interpretation of the events that led to the war. He emphasized middle-class efforts, helped by the Provisional Government, to demolish the socialist-led Parliament in the summer of 1917, Lenin's significance in granting the Finnish independence, and middle-class liaisons with Germany. In other words, Kulo painted a rather one-sided picture of the events, in which the role of the victim was reserved for the Reds. He ended his speech without any sign of reconciliation, outlining the initial moderateness of the socialists and the violence of the victors.

The memorial project can, in fact, be seen as an extreme-left-led counter-memorial for Mannerheim's equestrian statue, although the location of the sculpture is much less prominent. However, as if outlining the status of the new memorial in contrast to Mannerheim's equestrian statue, which ten years after its unveiling perhaps aroused even more sentiments than ever, Kulo in his speech referred to Mannerheim's interview in the Swedish newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* in the early phases of the conflict as proof of the White brutality. At that point, the White General had allegedly advocated capital punishment for all rebels before his public sentiment changed in favor of punishment for only the leaders. Kulo's comment can be also interpreted as criticism of social democratic attitudes towards Mannerheim.<sup>57</sup> Even though the People's Democrats had a strong presence in the project, the politically more moderate circles were represented in it as well and participated in the unveiling with conciliatory remarks towards former Whites. After all, as one anti-communist social democratic commentator put it, the memorial was designated for the entire Finnish workers' movement, not party members.<sup>58</sup>

57 Toivo Vuorela, "Teemme kunniaa v. 1918 punaisille sankareille," in *Ennen ja jälkeen 1918* (Helsinki: Vuoden 1918 Kansalaissodan Muistomerkkiiyhdistys, 1972); pp. 7–8; K.L. Kulo, "Punakaartilaisten valtakunnallisen muistopatsaan paljastustilaisuudessa 30.8.70," in *Ennen ja jälkeen 1918*, pp. 12–16.

58 *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti* 30 & 31 August 1970.



FIGURE 11.1 *The national Red memorial near the former gravesite of Mäntymäki (Helsinki) was erected in 1970. The delegates of the Communist Party of Finland and their foreign guests paid a tribute to the fallen Reds in 1975. PHOTO: YRJÖ LINTUNEN, PEOPLE'S ARCHIVES.*

The expressions of the position of the Left in general had become publicly acceptable, and in its moderate form, even hegemonic and rather widely shared, as we will see below. However, they were perhaps not accepted as widely as only referring to the contemporaneous cultural products would suggest.

### “Civil War” Enters the Fiction and Media

Academic historiography cannot be credited with abolishing the hegemonic White narrative from the national podium. At the dawn of the 1960s, strong currents in the civil society drove the general atmosphere away from conservative values. Public life was becoming socially more broadly based. The War of Liberation narrative had lost its sharpest edge already during World War II, or partially even in the late 1930s. Now, 15 years after World War II, the previously hidden or extreme-left-exploited counter-narratives surfaced to challenge the school textbook explanation of the events of 1918. One of these reinterpreted strands included the working-class veterans of World War II, who

positioned themselves close to the social democrats. They did not want to glorify war or resort to any form of middle-class patriotism but felt uneasy about the extreme Left as well. One such person was the author Väinö Linna (1920–1992), a factory worker from Tampere, whose breakthrough novel had been *The Unknown Soldier* (“Tuntematon sotilas”) in 1954.<sup>59</sup> This book, criticized by the old literature elite for its vernacular style and “unpatriotic,” officer-mocking attitude, but loved by the public had, paraphrasing the author himself, aimed to take the glory out of war but bestow it upon the ordinary servicemen.<sup>60</sup> The author’s zeal had from the beginning provided a voice for those people who in most history writing were left mute. His novel trilogy *Under the North Star* (“Täällä Pohjantähden alla”), published between 1959 and 1962, continued his efforts.<sup>61</sup> The vast three-volume book, criticized by the new generation of Finnish modernists as outdated naturalism, told an epic story of Finnish modernization at the turn of the century, the Civil War, the interwar period, and World War II from the viewpoint of a rural village and, especially, its crofter population. The meticulously researched novel, especially its second volume, brought the Red point of view to the fore but without openly ideological fervor. Linna’s work was not the first or the only post-World War II work of fiction written by a “worker-author” to highlight the under-class point of view of the Civil War, but its epic form made it an instant hit.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Linna in fact turned the usual constellation upside down and showed what Finnish history looked like when written from the grassroots viewpoint. Unlike in the established middle-class view, the Reds in his novel were not primarily hooligans, nor were they misled by the Bolsheviks – they were not primarily idealists, either, but were driven by social injustice. Moreover, Linna wanted to emphasize the capability of ordinary under-class people to make their own rational decisions. His novel started a huge polemic in the media that helped to transform the dominant view on the Civil War and – at least in some degree – accelerate the new wave

59 The English translation is a shortened version of the original novel published in Great Britain by Collins in 1957 and in the United States by Putnam in the same year. The identity of the translator is not certain, but it was probably done by a Finn and a friend of Linna’s, Alex Matson, and revised by a British and an American editor respectively.

60 Yrjö Varpio, *Väinö Linnan elämä* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2006), p. 340.

61 The trilogy was not translated into English until the beginning of the 2000s. *Under the North Star*, vol. I, 1959, trans. by Richard Impola (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2001); *Under the North Star*, vol. II: *The Uprising*, 1960, trans. by Richard Impola (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2002); *Under the North Star*, vol. III: *Reconciliation*, 1962, trans. by Richard Impola (Beaverton: Aspasia Books, 2003). The additional titles in the last two volumes are not included in the originals.

62 See Viljo Paula, *Liekehtivä kaupunki* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1950).

of academic research on the subject that took a more detached and varied approach than had previous scholarship. In spite of some conservative literary criticism that accused Linna, occasionally rather solidly, for twisting the historical facts, the mainstream media and the reading public adopted Linna as equal or even superior to professional historians in interpreting the tragic past. Linna himself did not hesitate to take the initiative.

One of the most interesting history wars connected to Linna's work in the media took place in the fall of 1960. The so-called "Professor debate" inspired by Linna's provocative comments on the "White lies" in the Swedish press gathered Linna and a number of prominent, rather conservative historians onto the same forum. The professors saw that Linna did not understand the nature of international relations, the "big picture," when he rewrote the "history" of Finland from below, and although some of them acknowledged that the history of 1918 still remained unexplored, expressed their rather expected opinion that the artist should concentrate on his trade and leave the history writing for the professionals. The author's answer, which especially concentrated on debunking the Jäger myth propagated by one of the historians, expressed rather incisive criticism towards deterministic historiography concerning the Finnish independence. Events of the past were justified by their outcome and solely by the victors of the Civil War. The established academic historians, trained in the interwar period, were some of the most ardent proponents of the one-sided "White truth." Therefore, the artist's well-grounded ability to imagine was perhaps needed in producing challenging narratives and forcing people to rethink the tragic events. Linna practiced politics of memory. The academic historians accused him of telling an equally one-sided story, a "Red truth," whereas Linna himself stated that he only wanted to understand the motives and experiences of the lower-class people in their daily existence.<sup>63</sup> It is possible to state that Linna wanted to give the former Reds and the under classes in general a chance to be equals with the victors and the educated classes in the rapidly developing society rather than to outright replace the White narrative and middle-class ethos with the Red narrative or vernacular ethos.

In 1968, *Under the North Star* was released as a popular motion picture that gave naturalistic faces to the Red Guards, and playwrights arranged the novel into widely staged plays. The historian Vesa Vares has written that, in effect, it was the work of Väinö Linna and the blockbuster and rather old-fashioned film by Edvin Laine that released the narrative of the defeated from its restraints to

63 Pertti Haapala, "Väinö Linnan historiasota," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 99.1 (2001): 25–34; Varpio, *Väinö Linnan elämä*, pp. 484–509.

roam in the mainstream media and debunked the White myth of the War of Liberation long before the historians' work entered the public domain.<sup>64</sup>

During the 1960s, the reading and cinema-going public adopted a moderate Red – or Reddish – view of the Civil War. Linna's popularity crossed political boundaries, but, rather illuminatingly, the fiercest politically inspired criticism came from both ends of the political spectrum. Communists did not accept his non-ideological stand towards the Civil War, and many conservatives lamented his mockery of the intelligentsia and his criticism of the War of Liberation narrative. Gradually, Linna's view on Finnish history established itself as an almost unquestioned narrative of the events around the declaration of independence and the Civil War. This is interesting, as Linna himself stated that he had wanted to write a more truthful counter-narrative to the 19th-century idealistic and romanticized national legends and popular histories of Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Zachris Topelius, of whom especially Runeberg had influenced the White ideology that heralded martial virtues, and both of them had espoused the harmonious relationship between the educated elites and the common people.<sup>65</sup> Linna's narrative replaced the previous myth with another. The great social story of modernization and class boundaries told from below also became the topic of historians in the 1960s and replaced the patriotic and individualistic histories.

Linna has sometimes been credited with sparking critical academic research on the Civil War and challenging its conservative interpretations, but, in fact, the first social-democratically inclined major research on the events of 1917–18 was published already in the late 1950s. Linna probably knew the work of the historian Juhani Paasivirta when writing his trilogy, and Paasivirta also commented on his manuscript.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the most stubborn historical myth concerning the Civil War has been the inflated significance of the crofters in the uprising. The success of this narrative leads back to Linna's work. As discussed in more detail elsewhere in this volume, the proportion of the tenant farmers in the ranks of the Reds was not that significant, although in some areas, notably in Häme, where *Under the North Star* was set, the crofters were rather active. The historian of the crofters, Viljo Rasila, had pointed out already in 1961 that the Civil War would have most probably been fought even without

64 Vesa Vares, "Cavalcadesta torppaan: Poliitikka ja poliittiset arkkityypit suomalaisessa elokuvassa," in Timo Soikkanen & Vesa Vares, eds, *Kuva ja historia*, Turun historiallinen arkisto, 50 (Turku: Turun yliopisto, 1996), pp. 207–19, 225.

65 Varpio, *Väinö Linnan elämä*, pp. 463–67, 536–38.

66 Juhani Paasivirta, *Suomi vuonna 1918* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1957); Pertti Haapala, "Väinö Linnan historiasota," p. 26; Varpio, *Väinö Linnan elämä*, pp. 428–29.

the crofter tenancy problems. Perhaps as an answer to the challenge Linna had posed, Rasila further elaborated his thesis and in 1968 showed statistically that the crofters did not play a decisive role in the Civil War.<sup>67</sup> However, in spite of evidence to the contrary, under Linna's rather deliberate influence – he grew up in the area where crofters had been active – popular opinion on the Civil War and the motives of the Reds have until today looked much more rural and connected to the problems in land distribution than the historical research indicates. The late 1960s saw the publication of a few other notable research studies that sharpened the picture of the victims of the Civil War and acknowledged the true scope of the White Terror. Also, international relations in 1917–18 received new scrutiny.<sup>68</sup>

In effect, however, Linna's popular work laid the groundwork for a major shift in the public view, and by the 1970s, the Red narrative had replaced the White one in hegemonic discourses. This process, however, involved the coming of age of the baby-boomers in the late 1960s and the related trend in mass media leaning to the Left. Also important was the consolidation of the reign of President Urho Kekkonen (as president from 1956 until 1981), the former White combatant, who participated in the commemoration of the former Reds and whose overarching presence became a denominator of the harmonious – and financially lucrative – relations with the Soviet Union. The effect of the public visibility of the new interpretation of the Civil War that, namely, retitled the war is clear, for instance, in school textbooks. The gymnasium syllabus adopted the term "Civil War" instead of "War of Liberation" in 1963. The gymnasiums had been known for being repositories of conservative ideology, which now began to melt into the developing Nordic welfare state ideology.<sup>69</sup> During the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of the Civil War in January 1968, the organ of the conservatives, *Uusi Suomi*, promptly called the war the War of Liberation because, according to the editorial, the disarmament of the Russian troops and the White effort in general guaranteed Finnish independence.<sup>70</sup> Other major middle-class papers usually took a more liberal stand and acknowledged the various names and interpretations of the war. Interestingly, the most popu-

67 Viljo Rasila, *Suomen torpparikysymys vuoteen 1909: Yhteiskuntahistoriallinen tutkimus, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia*, 59 (Helsinki: SHS, 1961); Viljo Rasila, *Kansalaissodan sosiaalinen tausta* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1968).

68 Notably Jaakko Paavolainen and Tuomo Polvinen. They are discussed in more detail in the Introduction to this volume.

69 Sirkka Ahonen, *Coming to Terms with a Dark Past: How Post-Conflict Societies Deal with History* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2012), pp. 80–82. The change was not complete; in the 1970s, one textbook still chose to use the term "War of Liberation."

70 *Uusi Suomi* 28 January 1968.



lar newspaper in the country, the liberal *Helsingin Sanomat*, did not see the occasion worthy of any editorial comment.<sup>71</sup> Ten years later, in January 1978, *Uusi Suomi* ran an illustrious article on the events of 1918. By this time, the political atmosphere had changed so much that the conservative newspaper acknowledged the civil-war nature of the conflict although it rather interestingly stated that the “War of Liberation” interpretation was just as accurate as the class-based “Rebellion.” Both sides began their war effort from their own premises without clearly understanding what was coming. The end result was a civil war.<sup>72</sup> Moreover, one should bear in mind that the “Red” interpretation never replaced the “White” one to the same degree as the White interpretation had dominated in the interwar period.

The popularity of Väinö Linna foreshadowed other literary efforts of the time to cast light on the events of 1918. Two modernists, Veijo Meri and Paavo Haavikko, published novels in 1960 that portrayed the Civil War from a subjective and coincidental point of view. Literary critics welcomed these works, which blurred the logic of history for the protagonists and readers alike. Meri’s novel depicts the chaos in a defeated Red-Guard unit, and Haavikko writes about the private ruminations of a middle-class businessman in Red Helsinki. Unlike Linna’s, these works were not intended to present a coherent view of the past and challenge the historical “truth.” Rather, they intended to express the accidental, irrational, and banal aspects of the conflict instead of the great narratives of war, revolution, and liberation.<sup>73</sup> Marko Tapio started in the late 1960s to write a four-part epic that many critics have seen as a “conservative” answer to Linna’s work. The modernist novel *Arktinen hysteria* (“Arctic hysteria”)<sup>74</sup> was never completed, but the two volumes that were published told a story that did not, in contrast to Linna, give grand answers to big social questions. Individual problems and contradictory solutions are intertwined in the process of modernization. Class differences are portrayed as rigid but not deterministic. Pessimism conquers the shared faith in human development and the class-ladder-climbing-and-falling protagonist family can be seen as cherishing rightist and conservative attitudes in response to the turmoil they

71 *Hufvudstadsbladet* 28 January 1968; *Helsingin Sanomat* 28 January 1968.

72 *Uusi Suomi* 28 January 1978. The article was written by Jyrki Vesikansa.

73 Paavo Haavikko, *Yksityisiä asioita: Romaani* (Helsinki: Otava, 1960); Veijo Meri, *Vuoden 1918 tapahtumat: Romaani* (Helsinki: Otava, 1960); Yrjö Varpio, “Vuosi 1918 kaunokirjallisuudessa,” in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), pp. 457–59.

74 Marko Tapio, *Arktinen hysteria*, vol. I: *Vuoden 1939 ensilumi* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1967); Marko Tapio, *Arktinen hysteria*, vol. II: *Sano todella rakastatko minua* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1968).



experienced.<sup>75</sup> Later in the 1970s, more pronouncedly leftist popular fiction on the events of 1918 entered the book markets.<sup>76</sup>

The 1960s also brought pacifism to the Civil War literature. Poet Viljo Kajava, who had spent the Civil War as a small boy in Tampere, published in 1966 a book of poetry on the images and experiences of his childhood in the war-torn town. The poet had a working-class background, and his father had been wounded when fighting for the Reds. His verses were essentially against the war as such and looked at it from a child's innocent point of view. Ideologies were vague, but the destruction and the emotional burden caused by the war were very real.<sup>77</sup>

When we turn our gaze to the cinema, it is worthwhile to note that the Civil War – or the War of Liberation – had featured in fiction films, the new powerful medium, already in the interwar period. The first was an ardently propagandist silent film shot in 1921.<sup>78</sup> From the post-World War II era until the 1970s a couple of notable films, in addition to the hugely popular *Under the North Star*, took their audience back to the violent years of 1917–18. Jarl Hemmer's somewhat conciliatory novel *A Fool of Faith*, published first in Swedish in 1931, told the story of a fallen clergyman who finds his inner peace in helping the Red POWs and finally offers himself to be executed in place of a Red prisoner.<sup>79</sup> In 1956, the novel was transformed into a film with the title *1918 – Man and his Conscience*,<sup>80</sup> which underlined the significance of the tragic year. The film directed by T.J. Särkkä, can perhaps be considered as one of the last efforts to forge reconciliation from a middle-class point of view and with middle-class tools. The Christian symbolism, although not vindictive, and the dark emotional forces behind the revolution are reminiscent of the interwar period, but the overall message the film conveys deals with a rather apolitical consensus that the Civil War formed an enormous tragedy in Finland's history.<sup>81</sup>

75 Matti Kuhna, *Kahden maailman välissä: Marko Tapion Arktinen hysteria Väinö Linnan haastajana*, Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities, 25 (Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopisto, 2004).

76 Erkki Lepokorpi, *Jumalauta meitä ammutaan* (Jyväskylä: Gummerus, 1972); Erkki Lepokorpi, *Käy ruusutkin kukkimaan* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1977).

77 Vijo Kajava, *Tampereen runot* (Helsinki: Otava, 1966).

78 *Sotapolulla*, dir. by Teuvo Pakkala (Finland: Finn Film, 1921); Peter von Bagh, *Suomalaisen elokuvan kultainen kirja* (Helsinki: Otava, 1992), p. 28.

79 Jarl Hemmer, *A Fool of Faith*. Original *En man och hans samvete*.

80 The literal translation of the novel would read thus, added with the year "1918." *1918 – Mies ja hänen omatuntonsa*, dir. by Toivo Särkkä (Finland: Suomen Filmitieteellisyys, 1956).

81 Kaisa Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat: Sisällissotavuoden tulkinta kotimaisen elokuvan kautta 1956–2008* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Tampereen yliopisto, 2008), pp. 70–71. In 1956, even another film was released that dealt with the events of 1918. *Silja – nuorena*



FIGURE 11.2 *Civil War in fiction. The tormented priest portrayed by Åke Lindman changes positions with a Red POW in the 1956 film by Toivo Särkkä 1918 – Man and his Conscience (1918 – mies ja hänen omatuntonsa). PHOTO: T.J. SÄRKKÄ, NATIONAL AUDIOVISUAL INSTITUTE.*

When the film *Under the North Star* was released, the tide in the media was moving more and more leftward. The extreme-left name for the war, the Class War, experienced a renaissance in the leftist press. When the film *The Mommilan Murders*<sup>82</sup> premiered in 1973, conservative critics accused it of an ideological zeal that purportedly had been added by the young director against the will of the screenwriters or even the producer. The film was based on the real-life murders of a wealthy businessman and landlord, Alfred Kordelin, and a few other persons in November 1917 by Russian sailors aroused by the Bolshevik

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*nukkunut* ("The Maid Silja – Fallen Asleep while Young," dir. by Jack Witikka and produced by Veikko Itkonen & Adams-filmi), was based on the novel by F.E. Sillanpää (1931) and conveyed a rather similar message to that of 1918, the war as a shared tragedy.

82 *Mommilan veriteot 1917*, dir. by Jootarkka Pennanen (Finland: Jörn Donner Productions, 1973).

Revolution. Especially in “White historiography,” the event had been portrayed as one of the incidents leading to the Finnish revolution. But even some of the more moderate critics seemed to be annoyed. For instance, the historian Jaakko Paavolainen, who had only recently published incisively on the terror during the Civil War, accused the film that mixed documentary and theatricality of a historical misrepresentation and even programmatic Marxism-Leninism in its portrayal of lavish mansion and capitalist lifestyle in contrast to the romanticized revolutionary crowd.<sup>83</sup> Historical fiction always expresses and comments on contemporaneous questions. The early 1970s proved to be the high point in the Left’s influence. From the late 1970s until the early 1990s, the significance of the Civil War for public commemoration and identity politics remained rather low, as the battle between politics of memory calmed down. For a while it seemed as if discussions on the nature and traumas of the Civil War had been put aside, but as we will see in the next chapter, advances in academic research and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought the Civil War back to public discussions.

### Summary: The Making of a New National Narrative

The internal bloodletting and reciprocal violence of the Civil War are major elements in today’s collective memory, but they are inferior to the celebrated unity of World War II. The shared innocent victimhood of active players is superior to reciprocal violence between the Reds and the Whites and the more or less passive victimhood and tragedy that the social democrats emphasized.<sup>84</sup> The view of World War II as an antithesis to the Civil War was established already during World War II but also has been challenged and downplayed in varying degrees ever since. The alliance with Nazi Germany during the Continuation War is downplayed in the narrative emphasizing the unity; Finland fought for its own goals and chose one evil to fight another. Moreover, World War II experience surpassed the Civil War trauma, and although the social splits had slowly started to dissipate in the late 1930s, the World War II experi-

83 Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat*, pp. 76–79.

84 Ville Kivimäki, “Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish Memory Culture of the Second World War,” *Scandinavian Journal of History* 37.4 (2012): 482–504; Markku Jokisipilä & Tiina Kinnunen, “Shifting Images of ‘Our Wars’: Finnish Memory Culture of World War II,” in Kinnunen & Kivimäki, eds, *Finland in World War II*; Kivimäki & Tepora, “Meaningless Death,” pp. 273–75.

ence was significant in allowing the Civil War gradually to become the past rather than a relived experience in everyday life.

It might be a good way to finish this chapter by turning back to anniversaries. The year 1968 has become a symbol of generational rebellion in the West, including Finland, but the first half of the year also marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil War. The rather modest commemoration of the war included a peculiar short documentary film written, directed, and produced by Reino Palmroth under one of his pseudonyms, Reino Hirviseppä. He was a well-known right-wing journalist and a propagandist of the World War II era. His film, however, which definitely represented an interpretation within the White genealogy, focused on contemporaneous questions. It commemorated the White veterans and the Jägers, but in the end, their legacy was integrated to manifest the "Spirit of 1939" or the unity created by World War II. First, the title of the film, *Sama kaiku on askelten* ("The echo of our marching"), referred to a popular military march written by F.E. Sillanpää in 1939 for the Winter War effort. Second, the final scene of the film portrayed a contemporaneous commemoration at Mannerheim's grave alongside World War II military graves, thus linking the White freedom fighters of 1918 with the fallen heroes of World War II. This interpretation was reminiscent of World War II rightist rhetoric of the "Second War of Liberation" that, in the late 1960s, had become helplessly outdated.

A peculiar sideshow in the film contrasted the marching White veterans in the small-scale commemorative event with the contemporaneous "radical" youth marching behind their slogans in an "anti-something" demonstration. The White commemoration did not draw large crowds in 1968, and Palmroth's film can be seen primarily as a self-made White-activist relic from a bygone era but also, nevertheless, as a piece of evidence of the persistence of the White view. However, the emphasis of the documentary on World War II is striking, as it seems to inform us how politically convenient it was to look at the Civil War through the lenses of World War II and its unifying symbolism. We might, however, take a less cynical approach and propose that, as this chapter put forth above, World War II marked such a significant reorganization of the commemoration of both the fallen of the Civil War and World War II that it transformed the way people saw the events of 1918. Although not clearly visible in Palmroth's film, the persistent emphasis on the unifying nature of World War II perhaps helped to transform the divisive tragedy of 1918 into a shared tragedy. This was much more clearly one of the underlying themes in Linna's *Under the North Star*. The last part of his trilogy ended with the depiction of World War II. The novel does not take any openly conciliatory stance towards the wounds of the Civil War but, instead, rather poignantly portrays the importance of the

workers and the offspring of the Reds for the nationally concerted effort in World War II. In the end, the post-war transformation of society points towards the recoding of patriotism as something more down-to-earth and inclusive than the interwar pathos of Greater Finland. Linna's work may, in fact, have been more conservative than the author acknowledged. It was one of the first major portrayals of modern Finnish history as the absolution of Civil War violence by the unifying sacrifices of World War II. In the 1960s, this new myth was still in the making and contested, but seems to have become an established popular narrative today.

## The Post-Cold War Memory Culture of the Civil War: Old-New Patterns and New Approaches

*Tiina Kinnunen*

Only the victory of the White Army enabled the birth of this independent and democratic Finland in which we have had a chance to live for 90 years. The victory of the Reds, in light of everything we have later learned, would have deemed Finland as part of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

Our goal was clear: we wanted to bring into the cultural dialogue the dark side of Mannerheim, a picture of the butcher watching the inferno of Tampere from the safe distance and to whom the means of clutching the victory was irrelevant.<sup>2</sup>

These two quotations concerning the Finnish Civil War of 1918 were both published in 2008, 90 years after the war. The first one is a reader's letter in a leading Finnish newspaper, written by a retired history professor, and the second one is a description given by a Finnish film director of her motives for making an animated short movie on the topic of C.G.E. Mannerheim, commander-in-chief of the White Army. The quotations address different aspects of the war. In the reader's letter, the war and its end result are analyzed from a general viewpoint, whereas the film director focuses on a single battle, the one fought around Tampere at the turn from March to April 1918. Most significantly, the quotations differ in their attitude towards the war, the former perceiving it from quite a positive perspective, despite warfare's destructive aspects, and the latter from an opposite perspective. The quotations summarize central – and conflicting – elements of the discourses that have prevailed – and still prevail – in the Finnish post-Cold War popular memory culture of the Civil War. This memory culture encompasses interpretations expressed in various public

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1 Seikko Eskola, "Valtiollisen tulisi juhla sisällissodan lopputulosta," *Helsingin Sanomat* 9 April 2008.

2 Katariina Lillqvist, *Uralin perhonen*, website <<http://www.katariinalillqvist.com/uralinperhonen.htm>> (accessed 21 May 2013).

forms and fields, including, for instance, newspaper debates, website controversies, novels, theater plays, and films.

Sorrow concerning the irreversible is part of human legacy the world over, and this burden can only be lightened by grieving together and sharing the pain. What is needed, are places and occasions loaded with meanings where emotions are allowed to surface and can be displayed.<sup>3</sup>

This third quotation also reflects upon the 1918 war. It is written by an author of historical fiction who in April 2013 participated in a public performance in Lahti, southern Finland, to commemorate the fate of Finns who in 1918 descended into a tragic war against each other. The place of the event was a former field where more than 20,000 thousand Reds – men, women, and children – gathered in the end phase of the – from the Red perspective – failed uprising. The 2013 event itself and the author's description both express a new way to approach the war. Both evidence a perspective that underlines the global aspects of (civil) wars and their repercussions, such as suffering and revenge, but also efforts of reconciliation. In contrast to the two first examples, this new approach strives for a shared memory of the war that acknowledges that the 1918 war was not a monolithic event in which the divide between the guilty and the right-minded was clear and unproblematic. Instead, the new approach opens up perspectives for historical polyphony.

This chapter will show that the debate on the meaning of the Finnish Civil War is still, despite the temporal distance, lively. One could also argue that, due to political transformations in Finland, it has strengthened during the last two decades. The political transition following the collapse of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe from 1989 onwards reconstructed memory production in the respective countries. Even if Finland had not been under direct Soviet rule, Finnish society was affected in many ways by the end of the Cold War. In 1990, historian Jukka-Pekka Pietiäinen wrote in the leading Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* that the turmoil in the Soviet Union had in Finland ushered in a need to rethink and rewrite national history, the year of 1918 included. He contrasted the new situation with the 1980s, when the Civil War seemed to have transformed from a national trauma that aroused strong public emotions into a historical event that could be analyzed objectively.<sup>4</sup>

3 Sirpa Kähkönen, "Surua vanhojen puiden alla," *Kirkko ja kaupunki* 6 May 2013. <<http://www.kirkkojakaupunki.fi/kannanotot/surua-vanhojen-puiden-alla>> (accessed 21 May 2013).

4 Jukka-Pekka Pietiäinen, "Vuoden 1918 sodan monet nimet," *Helsingin Sanomat* 27 December 1990.



Some years later, another historian, Jari Ehrnrooth, characterized the turn in the debate on national history as follows: “The 1918 war is being fought again.” Provocatively, he asked whether “we” could already forget this war, being at the same time very conscious about its role in the very foundations of the nation.<sup>5</sup> The new debate in Finland on the 1918 war also had other, more global, backgrounds and thus was formed by transnational influences. Especially the disintegration of Yugoslavia and the ensuing civil war with its shocking brutality invoked interest in the mechanisms of hatred and violence within nations.

### Contemporary Finnish Views on the Civil War

In her study *Suomalaiset ja historia* (“The Finns and History”), published in 2012, Pilvi Torsti examines the historical consciousness and notions of the past among the Finnish population in the 21st century. The study draws on an extensive survey and a number of personal interviews with participants of both genders, all ages, and different professional, social, and regional backgrounds. Among other subjects, the study addresses present interpretations of the Finnish Civil War. The study suggests that a significant agreement prevails on the following issues. First, both sides are regarded as equally responsible for what happened at war. This formulation points to the negative sides of the war, presumably the atrocities behind the lines and at battle. Second, both sides are seen also from a somewhat more positive viewpoint when both are believed to have fought for a political system in which they believed. Third, the POW camps where tens of thousands of Red combatants suffered after the war are to large extent regarded as a disgrace in Finland’s history. Fourth, despite the general view of the war as a national catastrophe, apologies are no longer regarded as useful. Corresponding to this view, the idea of an annual day for national reconciliation is rejected.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the shared understanding described above, there is also variation in interpretations of the Civil War, depending on the age and political orientation of the participants. The respondents who identify with the working class underline the three following statements of the survey, whereas the respondents with non-socialist commitments regard these statements with less agreement. First, to the former, the history of the POW camps is especially relevant, and the camps are regarded as a wound in the nation’s past. Second, the former group emphasizes that the Reds were silenced after the war. Third, according to the

5 Jari Ehrnrooth, “Tämän sodan haavat eivät parane,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 14 May 1995.

6 Pilvi Torsti, *Suomalaiset ja historia* (Helsinki: Gaudeamus, 2012), pp. 30, 113.

interpretation of the former group, the war was fought primarily because of economic inequality. The respondents with working-class commitments do not share to the same degree as other respondents the view that a Red Guard victory would have led to the loss of national independence.

According to Torsti, the differences between the respondents appear more distinct in the survey with strict formulated statements than in the personal interviews, which offer more possibilities for reflection. Here the contrasting views and dividing lines seem to fade. She calls this position of understanding both sides “a critical interpretation” and perceives it as a step “from the past to history.” This step could also be conceptualized as a journey from personal and social memories to shared concepts of history – in other words, cultural memory. Personal and social memories are closely intertwined with identity politics, whereas a critical interpretation opens up multiple perspectives to approach the difficult past.<sup>7</sup>

In the study conducted by Torsti, the focus is on private persons’ interpretations of the past and the meanings these persons give to various historical events. These interpretations and meanings are, however, undoubtedly socially constructed and based on various influences, adopted from different fields of popular or public historical culture. In the study, the following sources are named: films and TV-programs, historical novels, biographies and other non-fiction books, Internet sites, photographs, family narratives, visits to sites of historical interest, museums, theater plays, lectures for a general audience, collecting activities, and different types of games. This list is relevant also for the construction of the Civil War memory cultures. There is, however, one relevant source missing, namely, commemorative events and festivities, such as the annual and other commemoration days that, in the 21st century, still play a role in the memory cultures of this war. Due to the frame of her study, Torsti does not examine in detail the sources of the respondents’ historical consciousness, nor does she analyze the complex relationship between private and public memory constructions. As far as the Civil War memories are concerned, however, two sources are pointed out: first, family narratives; and, second, Väinö Linna’s in-

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7 Torsti, *Suomalaiset ja historia*, pp. 134–35. My understanding of the layers of memory is influenced by, among others, Aleida Assmann’s studies. See, e.g., Aleida Assmann, *Erinnerungsräume: Formen und Wandlungen des kulturellen Gedächtnisses* (Munich: Beck, 1999). The idea of shared concepts of history does not exclude the political but underlines a process towards a more distanced relation to the past when the past is mediated via popular historical culture or academic historiography instead of being transmitted via personal contacts within families. This growing distance enables building a bridge between the opposing parties of an internal conflict.

fluent trilogy *Under the North Star*, the second part of which, published in 1960, highlights the experiences of the Reds without labeling them as traitors.<sup>8</sup>

Also the role of time, in terms of later historical events informing memories and conceptions of a previous historical event, has to be considered when analyzing the construction of historical consciousness and related memory cultures. Further, the interpretation, emphasized in several memory-related studies, especially in the field of historical research, that memory production is inherently political and, consequently, can be approached from the perspective of a dialectical relation between conflict and consensus, has a vital impact on the analysis in this chapter.<sup>9</sup> Thus, not only do later events inform memories, personal and public, of previous events but also shifting political and social circumstances often rewrite the relationship between hegemonic and marginal or silenced narratives. The post-Cold War Finnish memory culture of World War II exemplifies this dynamic. In the Finnish case, since the early 1990s, the previously to-some-degree-marginalized images of the years 1939–45 began to dominate the public discourse.<sup>10</sup> The point of departure in this chapter is, in a similar vein, the collapse of Soviet Union, which ushered in a renegotiation about the meanings of the 1918 Civil War.

### Frames of the Contemporary Discussion

Thus, the aim of this chapter is to give a picture of the public memory cultures<sup>11</sup> of the Finnish Civil War in the post-Cold War period and, in so doing, to discuss the various meanings given to the war in the public sphere since the fall of communism and the Soviet Union. In my reading, the public memory

8 Torsti, *Suomalaiset ja historia*, pp. 45, 112. Cf. Anne Heimo's study *Kapina Sammatissa: Vuoden 1918 paikalliset tulkinnat osana historian yhteiskunnallisen rakentamisen prosessia* (Helsinki: SKS, 2010) on local interpretations of the Civil War in a small locality in southern Finland, where she shows that Linna's novel and family narratives, in addition to the work of a local non-academic historian accompanied with oral information about war-related places, are the most important sources for ordinary people's historical knowledge about the events of 1918 in their own village.

9 See, e.g., Alessandro Portelli's studies, e.g., "The Massacre at the Fosse Ardeatine: History, Myth, Ritual, and Symbol," in Katharine Hodgkin & Susannah Radstone, eds, *Contested Pasts: The Politics of Memory* (London & New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 29–41.

10 Tiina Kinnunen & Markku Jokisipilä, "Shifting Images of 'Our Wars': Finnish Memory Culture of World War II," in Tina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds, *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2012), pp. 435–82.

11 The terms "popular" and "public" are used interchangeably in the discussion.

encompasses published representations of the war – for instance, in journalistic texts, website debates, novels, popular history books, films, exhibitions, and theater plays. Also public commemorative events, organized by related memory communities, are scrutinized and analyzed through press reports and other printed sources.

In definitions of the concept memory culture or historical culture, the role of academic historiography and historians is not unambiguous; sometimes they are included as producers of public images of the past, sometimes not. This chapter pays attention to some academic works and the role of academic historians insofar as they are relevant from the viewpoint of public memory production. The discussion will show, on the one hand, that academically trained Finnish historians have been active in taking part at public debates.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, their works have been used as inspiration and a point of departure in public debates and popular history projects. Leading academic historians have also been consulted by state representatives concerning historical events with national relevance. For instance, in 1998, a group of scholars and an author of historical fiction were invited by the then-President of the Republic, Martti Ahtisaari, to reflect upon the events of 1918.<sup>13</sup>

The first part of the following discussion – including the sections entitled “The Intensification of the Liberation War Discourse in the 1990s” and “Critical Voices against the Liberation War Discourse” – will give an overview of the shifting images of the 1918 war from the early 1990s until today and, in doing so, will also introduce the opposing parts of the memory conflict, namely, the one that embraces elements from the interwar White discourse and the other one that links to the Red interpretation. In the second part of the following discussion – including the section entitled “Conflicting Arguments of the War: Protection or Violation of Democracy?” – the key arguments in these old-new discourses, which draw on the memory patterns preceding the post-Cold War period, are given a closer look and are analyzed in relation to each other.

In her study, Pilvi Torsti calls the former discourse “a sliver of White” and the latter “a sliver of Red.” Further, a third angle to approach the war, by Torsti called “a critical interpretation,” is noted in the third part of the following discussion, beginning with the section entitled “New Approaches to the War

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12 On the participation of professional, academic historians in public debates from the 19th until the late-20th century, see, e.g., Pekka Ahtiainen & Jukka Tervonen, eds, *Menneisyyden tutkijat ja menneisyyden vartijat: Matka suomalaisen historiankirjoitukseen* (Helsinki: SKS, 1996).

13 Unto Hämäläinen, “Historiantutkijat puhuivat Mäntyniemessä kansalaissodasta,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 24 March 1998.

Beyond Old Memory Patterns.” This new approach goes beyond the dichotomy White-Red. Especially the following questions will be answered: what are the emphases and how do these new interpretations negotiate with the previous ones? The discussion will also pay attention to some problems in the new discourse.

The description of the three approaches centers on four years, namely 1993, 1998, 2003, and 2008, because these anniversaries intensified the commemoration of the war and, thus, deliver fruitful source material. To focus on these years can, however, be misleading if one is not careful in drawing conclusions about the intensity of the memory of the 1918 war. The anniversaries tend to show a peak in memory production.

Throughout the discussion in this chapter, the name of the war is on the agenda. It is symptomatic that the name still arouses public interest and debate. For instance, in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the terminology has been discussed throughout the post-Cold War decades. For a non-Finnish reader, this continuous debate or, as will be shown, controversy on the name<sup>14</sup> may seem strange and non-relevant. However, both how the war is called and how the controversy on the name is carried out is of significant relevance because the terminology exposes the political meanings given to the war and the related role the memory of the war plays in identity politics of diverse social groups. In this chapter, the term “Civil War” is used as an analytical scholarly term, but when the conflicting interpretations are discussed, the corresponding terms, natural to the debaters, are used.<sup>15</sup> As Pilvi Torsti’s study shows, in today’s Finland, three variations – *sisällissota* (civil war, literally domestic war), *kansalaissota* (civil war, or war between the citizens), and *vapaussota* (war of liberation / war of independence) – dominate. Especially younger people tend to use the neutral term “Civil War,” presumably influenced by history education at school. In the age group 15–19 years old, c. 60 per cent use the term *sisällissota*, whereas in the age group 60–69 years old, only c. 17 per cent use this term for the war.

14 For instance, in 2008 the Tampere-based newspaper *Aamulehti* made an inquiry among 1005 Finns and found that 29 per cent of the interviewees preferred the term *sisällissota*, 25 per cent the term *kansalaissota* and only 11 per cent the term “War of Liberation”. In the inquiry made by the web-journal *Uusi Suomi*, among 2959 Finns 37 per cent preferred the term “War of Liberation” and 34 per cent the term *sisällissota*. This difference reflects how deeply the Red interpretation is rooted in Tampere in comparison with many other parts of the country.

15 Concerning the terminology, see the Introduction of this volume. On the history of the terminology, see also, e.g., Turo Manninen, “Miten sodasta tuli vapaussota,” in Pertti Haapala & Tuomas Hoppu, eds, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2009), p. 418.

Instead, they prefer the words *kansalaissota* or *vapaussota*, depending on their political orientation.<sup>16</sup>

In 1990, in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the paper's former editor-in-chief Simopekka Nortamo reflected upon the terminology that, due to the Soviet turmoil, had become topical anew. Among other things, Nortamo recalled the history seminar at the University of Helsinki in the 1950s, led by professor of political history, Lauri Puntila. According to Puntila, all the names used – *vapaussota*, *kansalaissota*, *luokkasota* (the class war), and *sisällissota* – were justified but, at the same time, biased. This view is echoed even in recent reflections, despite the fact that “Civil War” as a seemingly neutral term is becoming more and more common. In 2008, based on an enquiry among Finnish history professors, *Helsingin Sanomat* declared that in 1918 *a civil war* was fought in Finland.<sup>17</sup>

In terms of semantics, the terminology is problematic when one writes in English because the following two words in Finnish, *kansalaissota* and *sisällissota*, are both translated as “civil war.” In the Finnish 1918-related context, the two words, however, have different connotations. The former belongs traditionally to the vocabulary of the social democratic memory community, and is today shared by the Left in general, whereas the latter is used as a neutral description. I myself would prefer the “War of 1918” as a neutral term, including the many wars that were fought in 1918 Finland. However, in the following, the term “Civil War” is mostly used, due to its established usage in the scholarly texts.

### The Intensification of the War of Liberation Discourse in the 1990s

In retrospect, the changes in the Finnish memory culture at the turn of the 1980s into the 1990s, as far as Finnish-Russian relations are concerned, can be characterized as a neo-patriotic turn. Patriotism, which after independence 1917, had perceived Russia or the Soviet Union as the main threat to the national sovereignty, had been bubbling under the surface in post-World War II Finland, but due to the outcome of the war, previous confrontations with the mighty neighbor were excluded from official state memory and were muted also in non-official public memory production, although not totally silenced.

16 Torsti, *Suomalaiset ja historia*, pp. 126–27.

17 Simopekka Nortamo, “Vapaussota 1918,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 12 June 1990; Esa Mäkinen, “1918 käytiin sisällissota,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 19 October 2008. Out of the 28 interviewees, 20 professors accept the term “Civil War.”

Influenced by the turn, Finnish-Soviet relations were reinterpreted, particularly the era of World War II, but also the year 1918 was revisited. As far as the Winter War (1939–40) and the Continuation War (1941–44) were concerned, wartime was, to some degree, idealized and romanticized as the embodiment of the best qualities of Finnishness, such as the will to sacrifice oneself for the common good. Further, the (allegedly) unified character of the nation was celebrated, and war veterans, women included, were regarded as honorary citizens.<sup>18</sup>

As part of the neo-patriotic turn, alongside the years of 1939–44, also the Civil War gained new visibility in public commemorations, and, further, these commemorations were noticed by the media. Instead of the unified character of the nation, which could not be celebrated in the case of a mainly internal war, the commemorations of the early 1990s emphasized the patriotism of the White Army and their supporters and their will to defend democracy against the totalitarian threat from revolutionary Russia.<sup>19</sup> This *War of Liberation discourse* centers on the independence struggle of Finland and downplays the class-related internal conflict between Finns. A nation's need for unity is addressed as a lesson to be drawn from the national tragedy.

On 28 January 1918, the Civil Guards started to disarm Russian troops, on the one hand, and subdue the Red rebels, on the other hand. In the following decades, the memory of the disarmament measures never fell into oblivion and was maintained especially in Ostrobothnia. However, this memory was marginalized in the post-World War II national memory culture, which, as described above, adjusted to the new course of Finnish-Soviet relations. As highlighted previously in this volume in detail, the post-World War II memory production concerning the year 1918 downplayed the Finnish–Russian/Soviet tension and, instead, centered on the reinterpretation of the class conflict within Finnish society and the fate of the Reds in the POW camps.<sup>20</sup>

Mirroring the neo-patriotic turn, an old-new War of Liberation discourse intensified in the early 1990s, and, accordingly, in January 1993, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the outbreak of the war was commemorated with new vigor, the emphasis being on the Russian-Finnish controversy and the patriotic

18 Kinnunen & Jokisipilä, "Shifting Images of Our Wars," pp. 450–53. This characterization can be said to apply still today; however, limitations of the neo-patriotic turn are evident, and more nuanced interpretations have entered into the memory production, for instance in the field of fiction, in addition to academic historiography.

19 E.g., "Vapaussodan 75-vuotismuiston juhlinta Seinäjoella 28.1.1993," *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, pp. 37–38.

20 See the chapter "Changing Perceptions of 1918", by Tuomas Tepora in this volume.



urge of Finns to defend the independence declared in December 1917. The then-Prime Minister Esko Aho, from the Center Party<sup>21</sup>, sent his acknowledgement to the main event, organized by the War of Liberation memory activists and held in Seinäjoki, the center of the White Army in 1918. Aho expressed “the nation’s gratitude to the liberators of the country (*vapaussoturit*) for their work.” They had been encouraged “by their faith in the right of the nation to live in freedom and independence.”<sup>22</sup>

Festivities to commemorate the outbreak of the War of Liberation were held also in other places around the country. The commemoration in Tampere was of special significance because of the role that city played as one of the centers in the warfare of the Red Guards and the ensuing Red memory cultures of the war. Another leading politician, then-Speaker of Parliament Ilkka Suominen from the conservative Coalition Party, dealt in his speech in Tampere with the tragic divide of the nation in 1918 and C.G.E. Mannerheim’s role in post-1918 society in bridging the gap between the conflicting groups.<sup>23</sup>

In the War of Liberation discourse and memory production, also the end of the war, with the surrender of the Red Guards and the ensuing parade of the glorious White Army on May 16 in Helsinki, plays a significant role. After World War II, the date fell into oblivion, but in the 1990s, the memory of the day was revitalized – however, in a modified form to better suit the new circumstances. In 1993, on 16 May, the end of the war, as a guarantee of national independence, was commemorated with a flourish in Helsinki’s Finlandia Hall. The venue of the festivities is symbolically significant, giving the war the meaning of independence struggle. *Helsingin Sanomat* took notice of the festivities and interviewed some of the attending veterans. “We liberated Finland from the Russkies (*ryssistä*). We went to war to liberate Finland, not to kill our fellow countrymen,” these old men declared.<sup>24</sup>

A detail to be paid attention to in these old men’s statement is their use of terminology in regard to the Russians. The word *ryssä* (“Russkie”) they used has a pejorative undertone, and, accordingly, during the Cold War period it had a label of political incorrectness. As part of the neo-patriotic turn, it was rehabilitated in the popular discourse on Russian/Soviet- Finnish relations, albeit not in the more official statements.

21 The Agrarian League was renamed as the Center Party in 1965.

22 *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 38.

23 “Tammisunnuntaijuhlat Tampereella 30.–31.1.1993,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 42.

24 Riitta Vainio, “Vanhat soturit juhlivat vapaussodan päättymistä. ‘Käsi ei ole enää nyrkissä,’” *Helsingin Sanomat* 16 May 1993.

The Finlandia Hall festivities in 1993 were attended by the then-President of the Republic Mauno Koivisto. His presence was a significant gesture from the class perspective, because he came from the Social Democratic Party. At the same time, his presence, in tandem with the authoritative involvement of above-mentioned Esko Aho and Ilkka Suominen in January 1918 commemorations, was also a sign of the cautious reorientation in Finland's relations towards Russia on the official state level.

In particular, President Koivisto contributed remarkably to the public esteem of the World War II veterans, being a veteran himself. From the viewpoint of national unity, these veterans did not pose a challenge, because in 1939–44, in particular in 1939–40, the class conflict was laid aside and the enemy from outside was fought with unanimity. In contrast, the history of the Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd was more conflicted, because these organizations were closely interwoven not only with World War II but also with the Civil War, as discussed in previous chapters in this volume. Mirroring the neo-patriotic turn that embraced both the Civil War and World War II, the Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd, which had been dissolved and banned in 1944, were officially rehabilitated in the early 1990s. As a result of this new esteem, both academic and particularly non-academic history writing on these organizations began to flourish, the latter producing detailed descriptions of the 1918 conflict, local activities during the 1920s and the 1930s, and the World War II effort from the viewpoint of these organizations and their individual members.

Different memory communities and single memory activists played a central role in revitalizing positive representations of White Finland and the White Army. The memory culture of the Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd, promoted particularly by respective memory organizations and museums, covers a longer period of national history than only the year of violent conflict in 1918. The intensification of the War of Liberation discourse was based on the activities of these organizations and institutions, but particularly on the work of the Association for the War of Liberation Tradition (*Vapaussodan Perinneliitto*) with its dozens of local branches all over the country. It was established in 1993 to maintain the memory of the victors of the 1918 war. According to its self-definition, the Association works to unite those citizens and organizations which cherish the memory of "our independence struggles." In practical terms, the Association commemorates, among other things, the beginning of the War of Liberation at the end of January, the end of the war on 16 May, and the concluding of the peace treaty between Finland and the Soviet Russia on 14 October 1920.<sup>25</sup>

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25 The official website of the Association for the War of Liberation Tradition, <<http://www.perinneliitto.fi>> (accessed 5 May 2013). Before the establishment of the Association, the

As part of the neo-patriotic turn, the memory communities of the years 1939–44 also flourished. However, there is one significant difference between the memory communities of the War of Liberation, on the one hand, and World War II, on the other hand. Namely, the former ones cannot build upon the war veterans themselves to the same degree as the latter ones, due to the deaths of most Civil War veterans. In the public sphere, the testimonies of the veterans of World War II have had an authoritative role in telling “how it really was,” whereas the memory of the Civil War has been created by succeeding generations.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to the Civil Guards and the Lotta Svärd, also the Jägers gained new and exclusively positive visibility in the 1990s media, and the memory production of the Jäger movement expanded. Among other things, a museum was established in Korttesjärvi, a small locality in Ostrobothnia that is proud of having had the highest percentage of participation in the movement. In 2008, one of the War of Liberation memory producers, the journal *Vapaussoturi* (literally, “The Freedom Fighter”) declared the Jägers to be pioneers of national independence and the Jäger history to represent a captivating hero narrative.<sup>27</sup> The 1990s also ushered in an intensification of the cult-like admiration of C.G.E. Mannerheim, who commanded the White Army in 1918 and the Armed Forces during World War II. In the neo-patriotic memory production, Mannerheim has a unique standing as the icon of Finnish nationalism.

The neo-patriotic turn also affected academic historiography, although not all historians welcomed it. Some did, however, and the role of academic historians was not invisible in the upsurge of the War of Liberation discourse. Especially the older generation of established scholars contributed to the intensification of this interpretation. Among other things, a series of history lectures for public audiences was held in 1993 in four Finnish cities. Among the

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memory activities had been carried out by another organization, although with much less public visibility. Thus, the establishment of the Association can be seen as a sign of intensification of the will among the memory activists to influence the public discourse more strongly than in earlier decades.

26 Class aspect must also be considered in any analysis of the war-related memory communities. World War II veteran organizations and other WWII-related memory communities are joined also by people who politically identify with leftist movements.

27 E.g., Tuula Valtanen, “Jääkäreiden kotiinpaluuta juhliittiin Vaasassa: Väinö Valve, 97, oli muistelemassa 75 vuoden takaisia tapahtumia,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 26 February 1993; Matti Kinnunen, “Elämä isänmaalle,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 12 March 1995; the official website of the Jäger Museum, <[http://www.kauhava.fi/palvelut/kulttuuri/museot/suomen\\_jaakarimuseo](http://www.kauhava.fi/palvelut/kulttuuri/museot/suomen_jaakarimuseo)> (accessed 14 June 2013); “Jääkärit olivat esitaistelijoita,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/2008, p. 3.

prominent lecturers figured Eino Jutikkala, at that time the most renowned academic historian in Finland. The lectures addressed topics such as Finnish nationalism in the early 20th century, thus emphasizing the role of the War of Liberation – as it was called in this context instead of the more neutral Civil War – in the chain of independence struggles of the Finnish nation. The Jäger movement in particular, among other topics received intense attention. The war was also dealt with in relation to the Estonian path to independence from 1918 to 1920 and the Finnish irredentist wars in East Karelia.<sup>28</sup> The political consensus influenced by the Cold War had muted these topics in the public memory production.

The War of Liberation discourse has prevailed until the 21st century. The state does not organize commemorations, but high representatives of the state and the military have participated enthusiastically in anniversary commemorations of the beginning and the end of the war organized by private associations.<sup>29</sup> In 2008, in the festivities held in Finlandia Hall to commemorate the end of the war, the then-Speaker of Parliament from the conservatives, Sauli Niinistö, spoke of the war in relation to the emergence and development of Finnish parliamentary democracy. In 2006, the nation had commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the equal vote. In his speech, Niinistö emphasized, although it was a tragedy, the war resulted in a guarantee of the continuation of democratic development in the country.<sup>30</sup> The memory communities promoting the War of Liberation interpretation already anticipate the hundredth anniversary of the war in 2018. Again, the festivities will take place in the symbolically important Finlandia Hall.

### **Critical Voices Against the War of Liberation Discourse – Remembering the Class Antagonism and Suffering of the Reds**

The organizers of the 2018 War of Liberation festivities are looking forward to having the President of the Republic as their honorary guest. A close look at

28 The lecture series was entitled “The History Seminars of the Commemoration”; see *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 15. On the Finnish irredentist wars in East Karelia, see, e.g., *Vapaussoturi* 5/2008, according to which these wars “can fairly be seen as part of Finland’s struggle for independence.”

29 See, e.g., Tuula Valtanen, “Kenraali Jaakko Valtanen tammisunnuntain pääjuhlassa: Suomi pystyy vaikuttamaan EU:ssa,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 26 January 1998; “Muistovuosi,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 3.

30 Niinistö’s speech: <[http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Niinisto\\_16052008.htm](http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Niinisto_16052008.htm)> (accessed 5 May 2013).

this seemingly modest hope, considering previous participation of state representatives at commemorations of the Liberation War, reveals tensions in interpretations of the war. In May 2008, organizers of the commemoration of the end of the war were deeply disappointed because the then-President of the Republic, Tarja Halonen from the social democrats, rejected an invitation to this event with exalted participants. As mentioned above, Sauli Niinistö was present in his role as the Speaker of Parliament. The main speech was given by Päiviö Tommila, at that time, after Eino Jutikkala's death, one of the most renowned academic historians in Finland.<sup>31</sup> Halonen, however, participated in the commemoration of the victims of the war, organized by diverse leftist memory activists and held in the former POW camp in Tammisaari. As part of the ritual, the memorial of the Red prisoners was adorned with flowers. In her speech, Halonen underlined the importance of commemorating *all* victims of the Civil War.<sup>32</sup>

The absence of President Halonen from Finlandia Hall was critically commented upon, for instance, on the Internet. Some rudely formulated comments, representing the War of Liberation-related perceptions, noted her social democratic background and identified it as a reason for her "hatred of national independence." For her critics, she symbolized the left-wing political discourse on national history that, according to them, in the post-World War II decades had marginalized patriotic interpretations and, in doing so, had obscured the truth of what happened in 1918 and, further, how it should be interpreted. Among other things, Halonen's critics argued, the war was not allowed to be called with its true name, namely the War of Liberation.<sup>33</sup>

However, Halonen was criticized also in more constructive ways. Some critics reminded that the majority of the Social Democratic Party did not accept the uprising.<sup>34</sup> For some debaters, Halonen's clear sympathy with the Reds and their families would have been acceptable if she had also attended the commemorations of the White side of the conflict. In this respect, President

31 *Uusi Suomi* 16 May 2008, <<http://www.uusisuomi.fi/kotimaa/23855-taalta-puuttuu-tarja-halonen>> (accessed 28 May 2013).

32 Jani Komulainen, "Vasemmistonuoret muistivat punavankeja Tie Tammisaareen 90 vuotta -tapahtumassa," published on the website of the Left Youth of Finland, a youth organization of the Left Alliance Party, the successor of the People's Democrats (SKDL). <[http://www.vasemmistonuoret.fi/?/site/vasemmistonuoret\\_muistivat\\_punavankeja\\_tie\\_tammisaareen\\_90\\_vuotta\\_tapahtuma/](http://www.vasemmistonuoret.fi/?/site/vasemmistonuoret_muistivat_punavankeja_tie_tammisaareen_90_vuotta_tapahtuma/)> (accessed 29 May 2013).

33 See, e.g., Immo Nokkala, "Vapausota ja viime sotiemme henki," *Vapausoturi* 1/1993, p. 22.

34 E.g., "Aseisiin tarttui SDP:n vähemmistö," *Iltalehti* 17 May 2008. On the present-day social democratic criticism of the Red politics in 1917–18, see, e.g., Unto Hämäläinen, "Demarin tunnustus," *Helsingin Sanomat* 5 December 2010.

Koivisto's double role in 1993 was acknowledged. Not only did he attend the commemoration in Finlandia Hall, as mentioned above, but also he honored the memory of the fallen Red soldiers.<sup>35</sup> Some of the Internet debaters who sympathized with the Red side or had a neutral standpoint thought that President Halonen should also have attended the War of Liberation festivities, because in doing so, she could have reminded the audience of "fate of the defeated."<sup>36</sup> This view mirrors the criticism, expressed since the 1990s now and again, for instance in *Helsingin Sanomat*, of the intensification of the War of Liberation narrative and memory activism and the related concern that the history of the "Others" might pass into oblivion.

Historically, the memory cultures of the opposing sides were formed in very different, asymmetrical circumstances, as discussed in the previous chapters of this volume. In the 1920s and 1930s, the official commemoration applied only to the White side. The families of the Reds were not allowed to mourn or honor the memory of their dead in the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> In the post-World War II society, and especially since the 1960s, there was a shift in the attitudes and, as a result, the memories of the Reds were gradually acknowledged and integrated into the national history narrative. The second part of Väinö Linna's trilogy *Under the North Star*, published in 1960, played a key role in initiating the shift. Linna's interpretation of the 1918 conflict still resonates among the post-Cold War audience, due to its new theater and film adaptations, even if his political message is somewhat faded.<sup>38</sup> As will be discussed later, 21st-

35 *Uusi Suomi* 16 May 2008. See also "Vapaussota pelasti kansanvallan," *Vapaussoturi* 3/2008, p. 3.

36 *Uusi Suomi* 16 May 2008.

37 The memory culture of the defeated side of the 1918 war is very complex. In the 1920s, on the political level, the memory was divided into the cultures of the moderate social democrats, who saw the uprising as a mistake, and the radical communists, who regretted the failure of the uprising. Alongside this political level was the everyday life of the members of the leftist parties who had lost their loved ones. These bereaved were allowed to commemorate their dead at the graves, but more visible public manifestations were not allowed. See, e.g., Tauno Saarela, "Työväenliikkeen tulkinnat sisällissodasta," in *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 419–20, and the chapter written by Saarela in this volume. See also Anne Heimo and Ulla-Maija Peltonen, "Memories and Histories, Public and Private," in Hodgkin & Radstone, *Contested Pasts*, pp. 42–56.

38 See, e.g., Jyrki Alkio, "Vuoden kahdeksantoista ääni hiljenee ja häipyy, mutta Pohjantähti jaksaa olla loistava," *Helsingin Sanomat* 20 June 1995. On the importance of Linna's novel, see, in addition to Tuomas Tepora's chapter in this volume, Yrjö Varpio, "Vuosi 1918 kaunokirjallisuudessa," in Haapala & Hoppu, *Sisällissodan pikkujättiläinen*, pp. 453–56. Concerning the 1968 film by Edwin Laine, based on Linna's novel, see Kaisa Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat: Sisällissotavuoden tulkinta kotimaisen elokuvan kautta 1956–2008*

century novels and films have a different – less political and more individual as well as psychological – approach to the Civil War.

During the Cold War, President Urho Kekkonen, a White veteran who had participated in the executions of Reds in the southeastern town of Hamina, promoted Red commemoration. The Red emphasis on the class-related aspect of the war also suited into the official Finnish post-World War II Soviet-friendly discourse, because focusing on the internal aspect of the conflict marginalized the Finnish-Russian/Soviet tension. Instead, the role of Lenin was presented in a positive light in the process of Finland becoming independent.<sup>39</sup>

The erection of memorials for the Reds became important after World War II and their role is still important in the 21st century as sites of memory in dealing with the traumatic past. New memorials are continuously created. For instance, a memorial was unveiled in 2004 on the fortress island Suomenlinna, outside Helsinki, to commemorate the fate of the more than 10,000 Red prisoners of war who languished in the POW camp, located on the island. Every tenth internee died of hunger or disease. The memorial was initiated by grandchildren and grand-grandchildren of the prisoners.<sup>40</sup>

Commemorative rituals and seminars at former POW camps have been one of the tools, in addition to projects to collect information about the Red memory sites in maintaining the *kansalaissota* memory. For instance, the Finnish Labor Museum *Werstas*, located in Tampere, has initiated a project that maps the Red memorials, as well as the burial sites of Reds outside cemeteries and the places where they were executed. All these sites of memory are made available through a website.<sup>41</sup> Post-Cold War rituals and seminars concentrate on the image of victimhood, which mirrors the development within the Finnish Left. In the 1960s and 1970s, communists played a significant role in Finnish politics. Throughout the post-1918 decades, communists in their memory

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(unpublished pro gradu thesis, Tampereen yliopisto, 2009). The novel was filmed anew, very faithfully to Laine's film, by the director Timo Koivusalo. The premiere of the first part was in 2009.

39 E.g., Esko Salminen, *Päättymätön sota: Sisällissota julkisessa sanassa 1917–2007* (Helsinki: Edita, 2007), pp. 184–85. The Cold War era discourse of the Finnish radical Communist youth idealized and identified with the Bolshevik revolution rather than the failed Finnish uprising of 1918. See, e.g., Kustaa H.J. Vilkkuna, *Kapina kampanjoilla*, Nykykulttuurin tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja, 103 (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2013).

40 Marja-Terttu Kivirinta, "Muistomerkki punavankien jälkeläisille," *Helsingin Sanomat* 29 September, 2004. On Red memorials more generally, see, e.g., Liisa Lindgren, *Monumentum: Muistomerkkien aatteita ja aikaa* (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), pp. 197–201; and the chapter by Tauno Saarela and Tuomas Tepora, "Changing Perceptions of 1918," in this volume.

41 The Finnish Labor Museum database: <[http://www.tkm.fi/pm\\_etusivu.htm](http://www.tkm.fi/pm_etusivu.htm)> (accessed 16 May 2013).



culture underlined the revolutionary class aspect more strongly than did the social democrats. The communists preferred the image of the Reds as revolutionary fighters for the working class, whereas the memory community of the social democrats focused more strongly on the suffering of the Reds in POW camps. In post-Cold War Finland, the popularity of the communist Left has been dramatically reduced, and, accordingly, the rhetoric of the Class War (*luokkasota*) has been almost totally marginalized. Today, political circles to the left of the social democrats have generally adopted the term *kansalais-sota*.<sup>42</sup>

It is true that in today's Finland, the Left has a less militant approach to the tragedy of 1918 – as indicated, for instance, by Maurice Carrez – but it does not mean that the opposing memory cultures have merged. In my reading, one still can see a division in the national memory of the 1918 war. On the one hand, there is the image of White independent fighters, and, on the other hand, there is the image of their Red victims, and it is not self-evident that these memory patterns and their exponents enter into a dialogue. In April 2008, leftist cultural organizations arranged a seminar on the history of the POW camps in the garrison of Santahamina, Helsinki. One of the three Helsinki area camps was based in this location, and, further, all of the prisoners who died or were executed in the Helsinki area camps were buried in a mass grave in Santahamina. In her opening speech, the chairwoman of the Helsinki City Council, Rakel Hiltunen from the Social Democratic Party, urged the city of Helsinki to promote research on the history of the *kansalais-sota* and care for the Red grave memorials.<sup>43</sup> From the viewpoint of a clash between the War of Liberation memory and the *kansalais-sota* memory, it is worth noting that in the following month, Suvi Rihtniemi from the conservative Coalition Party, the chairwoman of the Helsinki City Board – and a granddaughter of a celebrated hero of the White Army – underlined the positive role of the war and its end result for the development of Finnish democracy and welfare. She gave her speech at the

42 See, e.g., Maurice Carrez, "Sites of the Red Massacres in Finnish Civil War: The Politics of Memory and its Re-Interpretation," trans. by Cynthia J. Johnson, in Mikko Majander & Kimmo Rentola, eds, *Ei ihan teorian mukaan* (Helsinki: THPT & Yhteiskunnallinen arkitosäätö, 2012), pp. 103–04.

43 *Tiedonantaja* 18 April 2008, <<http://www.tiedonantaja.fi/vanha-arkisto/2008-18-4/uutinen-03>> (accessed 15 May 2013). Rakel Hiltunen's plea was successful; the city of Helsinki participates in a project that aims to identify all the fallen Reds who were from Helsinki and the places where they were buried. In 2013, a seminar was held at the former prisoners' camp in Tammissaari: <[http://www.vasemmistonuoret.fi/?/site/vasemmistonuoret\\_muistivat\\_punavankeja\\_tie\\_tammissaareen\\_90\\_vuotta\\_tapahtuma/](http://www.vasemmistonuoret.fi/?/site/vasemmistonuoret_muistivat_punavankeja_tie_tammissaareen_90_vuotta_tapahtuma/)> (accessed 29 May 2013).

Finlandia Hall festivities to commemorate the end of the War of Liberation. The reaction of the Left against her was sharp. She was accused of a one-sided, White-related interpretation, which was not appropriate for a representative of the city of Helsinki. Among other things, her critics remarked, she should have paid attention to the Red prisoners of war and their inhuman treatment.<sup>44</sup>

As part of the memory conflict, criticism against the upsurge of the War of Liberation interpretation was expressed already in the 1990s after the neo-patriotic turn. In January 1998, when the 1918 veterans of the Left commemorated the beginning of the war, they emphasized tragedy and suffering. From their experience, the War of Liberation memory activists celebrated the killing among fellow Finns. "The myth of the War of Liberation is outdated," declared one of the participants.<sup>45</sup> Similar condemnation has continued into the 21st century, as indicated above. From the viewpoint of suffering, the celebration of independence appears grotesque. How can the deaths of tens of thousands of people be commemorated as liberation, asked one critical Internet debater.<sup>46</sup> Representatives of the present Finnish state also have been criticized for not paying enough attention to the negative sides of the warfare and the role their predecessors played in the national tragedy. In 2008, journalist and historian Veli-Pekka Leppänen wondered in *Helsingin Sanomat* why state representatives were silent about the conflict between fellow Finns 90 years after the war. Leppänen reminded of Agrarian President Kekkonen's symbolic gestures of reconciliation and the attempt to include the Red memory into the official national history. Leppänen directed his criticism towards the then-Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen, from the former Agrarian League, who, according to Leppänen, should have reflected upon, among other things, the responsibility of the Finnish state for the war crimes and violations of human rights conducted by its own institutions as part of the warfare. One of the few things Vanhanen's right-center government had done in terms of the 1918 commemoration was honor the Jägers who in February 1918 returned to Finland, Leppänen critically remarked.<sup>47</sup>

As mentioned in the above introduction to the War of Liberation discourse, in neo-patriotic memory production, C.G.E. Mannerheim has a unique

44 Riku Jokinen, "Helsingin vasemmisto ihmettelee Rihtniemen vapaussotapuhetta," *Helsingin Sanomat* 17 May 2008.

45 Vellamo Vehkakoski, "Vapaussotamytti ei sovi tähän aikaan," *Helsingin Sanomat* 28 January 1998.

46 *Uusi Suomi* 16 May 2008.

47 Veli-Pekka Leppänen, "Valtiovalta vaikenee kansalaissodasta," *Helsingin Sanomat* 30 March 2008.

standing as the icon of Finnish nationalism. As far as the Red memory culture of 1918, which focuses on the class-related internal conflict between Finnish citizens, is concerned, however, he is far from being celebrated. This divide in perceptions became visible in 2008, when the animated short movie *Uralin perhonen* (“The Butterfly from the Urals”), directed by Katariina Lillqvist, was shown on Finnish television. Her idea to critically portray Mannerheim was sparked when, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Finnish director Renny Harlin began planning a Hollywood film about Mannerheim, celebrating him as a national hero. Together with the author Hannu Salama, with whom Lillqvist wrote the manuscript, she wanted to remind, drawing on Tampere-based folklore told among the working-class people, how controversial a figure Mannerheim actually has been among those Finns who did not subscribe to the values and memories of White Finland.<sup>48</sup>

The film focused on Mannerheim as the commander-in-chief of the White troops. He was portrayed as a brutal suppressor of the working class, as the quotation in the very beginning of this chapter underlines. The interpretation is in sharp contrast to the portrait of him as a conciliator between antagonistic groups, presented, for instance, by Ilkka Suominen in 1993 as part of the War of Liberation festivities and a plethora of other cultural products. Lillqvist’s film is one of the fiercest expressions in the 21st century against the cultivation of the War of Liberation memory, including the Mannerheim cult. Alone, the date of the premiere – in January, concurrent with the beginning of the Civil War 90 years earlier – was laden with symbolic meaning and could be seen as an assault on patriotic values. The film aroused a fierce discussion pro and con. Critics accused the director of, among other things, projecting her 1918-related traumas on Mannerheim. The following internet comment blatantly summarizes the central elements of the assault on the director and more generally on the *kansalaissota* memory: “The traumas of the *kansalaissota* seem to be the main driving force, even though the history of our fatherland for over ninety years now has shown to all clear-minded people who got it right in 1918.” Further, the commentator lamented that Väinö Linna’s *Under the North Star* had

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48 Katariina Lillqvist, *Uralin perhonen* website, <<http://www.katariinalillqvist.com/uralin-perhonen.htm>> (accessed 21 May 2013). Hannu Salama (born in 1936) is one of the best known Finnish working-class authors. He is, however, said to have maintained a critical autonomy from the Left. The first version of the Mannerheim narrative was a radio play, which did not arouse a cultural debate. See also Kinnunen & Jokisipilä, “Shifting Images,” pp. 469–70. On the shifting images of Mannerheim in Finnish memory cultures, see Ulla-Maija Peltonen, “Yhdistävä ja erottava sankaruus: C.G.E. Mannerheim,” in Ulla-Maija Peltonen & Ilona Kempainen, eds, *Kirjoituksia sankaruudesta* (Helsinki: SKS, 2010).

confused and misled historical understanding of the meaning of the events of 1918 among the general public.<sup>49</sup>

### Conflicting Arguments of the War: Protection or Violation of Democracy?

Memory production is based on selection and silencing elements of the past that, from the interpreters' perspective, do not fit into — in political, social and cultural terms — meaningful and useful narratives. In so doing, it may distort the past reality, which is the object of critical historiography and, accordingly, is more linked to myths. Research into memory cultures, including their mythical elements, is not, however, primarily interested in how truthful the images and representations are but, instead, asks the following type of questions: What kind of narratives and memory patterns are created and for which purposes? How are these narratives maintained and passed down from generation to generation, on the one hand, and how do they shift, on the other hand, in response to political and cultural changes in their environments? What kinds of conflicts arise between various narratives? This part of the chapter takes a closer look at key arguments in the War of Liberation memory production versus the *kansalaissota* memory production. The arguments are analyzed in relation to each and are perceived as responses to the interpretations of the other side.

In the analysis of the War of Liberation memory, a sample of writings published in the journal *Vapaussoturi* is used as a primary source. The journal is published by the Association for the War of Liberation Tradition, whose aim is to cherish the memory of “our independence struggles.” Many of the interpretations in the pages of *Vapaussoturi* are extreme, being created by devoted memory activists. On the other hand, two of the editors-in-chief during the period under examination are academic historians with doctoral degrees. For the purpose of an analysis of argumentation, the writings are illuminating. Alongside the texts in *Vapaussoturi*, other related material is used, for instance, speeches at commemorative events and reader's letters and other texts published in *Helsingin Sanomat*. These texts are milder in tone but in content are mainly in line with the writings of *Vapaussoturi*. It includes extreme arguments and formulations, whereas the leading Finnish newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, is an established liberal paper. The fact that arguments of the War of

49 Ilkkahimberg 10.3.2008, <<http://www.uusisuomi.fi/kulttuuri/16202-elokuva-arvio-uralin-perhonen>> (accessed 21 May 2013).

Liberation discourse appear in the paper's pages speaks to the intensification of the discourse and the fact that it is becoming politically correct in post-Cold War circumstances. At the same time, however, *Helsingin Sanomat* also includes critical views of one-sided White arguments. For an analysis of the *kansalaissota* memory, there is no equivalent publication to *Vapaussoturi*, produced by a clearly definable memory community. Instead, various published material is consulted, including various newspaper writings. The discussion in this part of the chapter partly overlaps with the introduction of the counterparts in the memory conflict provided in the previous part. The difference, however, is that the focus is now on the arguments and discursive strategies, which are used to legitimize each side's own standpoint and, at the same time, to discredit or challenge the other's viewpoints.

The comment on Katariina Lillqvist's film cited above is very representative of the War of Liberation discourse in one important respect, namely, in that it looks at the past from the later perspective, in this case from a post-Cold War viewpoint. Taking this point of time as a reference makes the tone extra triumphant. This kind of boastful argumentation is based on the logic that the collapse of the Soviet Union and communism proves – what actually has been known since 1918 – that the White Army and its supporters were right when they fought against the revolutionary Finnish and Russian forces and for Finland's independence. In the similar vein, in the neo-patriotic narrative, the Winter War and the Continuation War are, despite the factual defeats, celebrated as victories, signed and sealed through the collapse of the Soviet Union. This interpretation of victory had not vanished during the Cold War period, but it could not be expressed as openly until the external pressure vanished.<sup>50</sup>

Related to this argument of having been right throughout, the fall of communism is important also in another respect. Namely, as the War of Liberation activists argue, the fall made it possible to speak the truth about the conflict of 1918. This truth had to be suppressed during the Cold War period and was actually distorted by the Left with its emphasis on the social inequality as the main reason of the conflict. This interpretation of “finally speaking the truth” has been used also in relation to World War II. Not entirely corresponding to historical reality, it was declared that World War II had not been allowed to be dealt with as “it really was” before the fall of communism.

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50 See, e.g., “Vapaussota arvoonsa,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 3; “Muistovuosi,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 3; Immo Nokkala, “Vapaussota ja viime sotiemme henki,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 22. Concerning the neo-patriotic discourse on the years 1939–44, see, e.g., Kinnunen & Jokispilä, “Shifting Images,” pp. 450–53.

Further, the 1918 war and the wars of 1939–44 are perceived as a continuum, as heroic – however also tragic – events “in our independence struggles.” In his 2008 speech at the commemorative festivities for the end of the Liberation War, Professor Päiviö Tommila declared, with his academic authority, that Finland had three wars of independence. In 1808, Finland became an autonomous part of the Russian Empire after having been part of Sweden for centuries. The next was fought in 1918 after Finland had declared her independence. The last one was fought during World War II.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, the historically true, basic context in which the 1918 war should be perceived is not the internal social conflict but, instead, the Finnish-Russian/Soviet conflict and the patriotic urge among the Finns to create and protect an independent state of their own. From the viewpoint of the War of Liberation narrative, the social conflict was linked to the Finnish-Russian conflict, because the Finnish rebels were inspired and supported by the Russian revolutionaries.<sup>52</sup>

The method of interpreting the past from a later perspective is applied also in another respect in the War of Liberation discourse. Namely, the experience of social inequality among the lower classes as an explanation for the war – which is part and parcel of the *kansalaissota* memory – is downplayed as an acceptable reason for the conflict. This refusal is justified by the historical fact that a significant number of reforms were made in the post-1918 parliaments. According to this logic, lower-class people should have waited patiently instead of revolting, because in the future – which, however, strictly speaking they could not foresee – their problems got solved.<sup>53</sup>

The War of Liberation narrative is also critical towards the accusation that Red soldiers and their sympathizers as well as families were treated in brutal ways during the war and immediately afterwards, namely, as victims of the White Terror behind the lines, as victims at courts-martial, and as POWs under inhuman circumstances. This memory of injustice and humiliation is, in addition to the argument of social inequality as a reason for the war, at the core of the *kansalaissota* memory, which also the investigation conducted by Pilvi

51 Tommila's speech: <[http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Tommila\\_16052008.htm](http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Tommila_16052008.htm)> (accessed 28 May 2013). See also “Vapaussodan ja Suinulan uhrien 80-vuotismuistotilaisuus,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 25.

52 See, e.g., “Vapaussota arvoonsa,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 3. A distinction is made between rebels (the Red Finns) and revolutionaries (the Russian Bolsheviks), because the former did not succeed. See, e.g., “Toinen vapaussodassa, toinen kapinassa,” *Vapaussoturi* 2/1998, p. 3.

53 See, e.g., “Vapautemme trauma,” *Vapaussoturi* 2/2003, p. 3. In reality, many reforms demanded by the working population, e.g., the eight-hour working day, were already introduced before the Red uprising.

Torsti confirms. Among the War of Liberation narrators, the White Terror and the severe treatment of the Red prisoners are not denied or silenced as such. For instance, in his opening speech in the 2008 festivities commemorating the end of the war, historian Martti Häikiö made the following remark: “Just as we are proud of our freedom and democracy, we also need to, quietly and humbly, remember the terrible price of quelling the rebellion.”<sup>54</sup>

However, the White Terror and the inhuman treatment of Reds after the war are diluted in the narrative of 1918 in two interrelated ways. First, terror is generally seen as an unfortunate but, nevertheless, unavoidable side effect of armed conflicts, particularly internal conflicts. Systematic use of terror by the White Army is also denied. Further, according to this discourse, the severity of any terror must be judged against the end result of the war, namely, Finland’s independence. In other words, the negative sides of warfare – and in the Reds’ experience, traumatic aspects – are given a positive meaning. Second, the White Terror is declared to have been a response to the Red one. It is reminded that the revolt of the Red Guards initiated the internal conflict and *forced* the White Guards to protect the legal order and democratic institutions. Accordingly, the White victims, for instance the 17 Civil Guards executed in Suinula, near Tampere, in the beginning of the conflict in January 1918, are commemorated.<sup>55</sup>

Furthermore, the Liberation War narrative in the later 20th and early 21st centuries shows little understanding that Reds and their families in post-Civil War Finland felt that they were treated as inferior citizens compared to their fellow countrymen on the victorious side. First, repression is relativized, with the – as such historically true – argument that the Social Democratic Party was allowed to attend the parliamentary elections already in 1919, and the publication of the party organ was allowed already in 1918. Further, the *kansalaissota* memory activists are accused of cultivating a memory of resentment, despite the mild treatment of the rebels.<sup>56</sup>

Thus, the Red experience of injustice is judged against the end result of the war. This was the victory of democracy, and this end result could not have been reached without the disarmament of the Russian revolutionary troops and the

54 Häikiö’s speech: <[http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Haikio\\_16052008.htm](http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Haikio_16052008.htm)> (accessed 28 May 2013).

55 See, e.g., “Kunnianosoitus Suinulassa,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1993, p. 48; “Vapaussodan ja Suinulan uhrien 80-vuotismuistotilaisuus,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 24.

56 Heikki Eskelinen, “Vapaussodan ja vallankumousyrityksen muisto,” *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 11. On the treatment of Red families, see, e.g., Mervi Kaarninen, *Punaorvot 1918* (Helsinki: Minerva, 2008). See also the previous chapters in this volume.



suppression of the Red uprising. If the end result would have been the reverse, it is argued, Finland would have ended up under Soviet rule and lost its democratic order. For instance, in his 2008 speech at the festivities to commemorate the end of the War of Liberation, the then-Speaker of Parliament, Sauli Niinistö, reflected upon the course of national history from this perspective. In the same vein, Professor Seikko Eskola argued that democratic development in independent, socialist Finland would have been unfeasible: "In light of what we now know, the victory of the Red side would have led to Finland being part of the Soviet Union."<sup>57</sup> This interpretation is repeated, for instance, in popular Internet discourse.

The War of Liberation narrative often uses the term "Red uprising" instead of the term *kansalaissota*. The latter is interpreted to distort the past reality, whereas the term "uprising" corresponds to "what really happened": "The Red rebellion targeted the recently elected Parliament and the government it had chosen. This being the case, it was also directed against democracy."<sup>58</sup> Further, the term *kansalaissota* is seen to have been used in therapeutic means to sidestep the bitter fact that the rebels failed.<sup>59</sup>

The following formulation, published in *Vapaussoturi*, which presents the War of Liberation War narrative in its purest and most extreme form, poses almost a provocation for those Finns who identify with the *kansalaissota* memory:

Everyone in Finland should finally recognize that the War of Liberation could not be avoided as well as the tragic form it took. The Finns should also unite to thank the freedom fighters of 1918 – Jägers, activists, members of the Civil Guards and conscripts – for the outcome of the war.<sup>60</sup>

57 Niinistö's speech: <[http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Niinisto\\_16052008.htm](http://www.vapaussota.fi/ajankohtaista/Niinisto_16052008.htm)> (accessed 5 May 2013); Seikko Eskola, "Valtiovan tulisi juhla sisällissodan lopputulosta," *Helsingin Sanomat* 9.4.2008. See also "Vapaussota pelasti kansanvallan," *Vapaussoturi* 3/2008, p. 3.

58 Eino Jutikkala, "Maaliskuun vallankumouksesta toukokuun paraatiin 1918," <<http://www.vapaussota.com/jutikkala.html>> (accessed 29 May 2013). The article written by Jutikkala was first published in Juhana Aunesluoma & Martti Häikiö, eds, *Suomen vapaussota: Kartasto ja tutkimusopas* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1995). Jutikkala reminds that after the war of 1918, both sides used the term "rebellion." After World War II, influenced by the Red memory pattern, it was replaced with the term "revolution." See also "Toinen vapaussodassa, toinen kapinassa," *Vapaussoturi* 2/1998, p. 3.

59 See, e.g., "Toinen vapaussodassa, toinen kapinassa," *Vapaussoturi* 2/1998.

60 Heikki Eskelinen, "Vapaussodan ja vallankumouksirytyksen muisto," *Vapaussoturi* 1/1998, p. 11.

The only thing the proponents of *kansalaissota* memory whole-heartedly can subscribe to is the view that the war was tragic. However, they perceive the tragedy differently than the author of the statement. They cannot celebrate the victory of democracy when the side defeated in the war was treated as second-class citizens. For them, this treatment implied a violation of democracy.

The discussion in this chapter shows that the War of Liberation memory sympathizers and activists have a positive attitude towards the 1918 war because, from their point of interpretation, the end result of the war secured the national independence of Finland and the constitutional democracy. The sacrifices are seen as meaningful. From the Red point of view, the war ended not only in failure but also with humiliation and inhuman treatment of the Red guardsmen and women and their families in post-1918 Finland. This experience has until today been at the core of the *kansalaissota* memory. For instance, commemorations at former POW camps reproduce this martyr narrative.<sup>61</sup> However, there have to be elements in the war memory that compensate for the failure. Despite the bitter result of the war, the sacrifices of the fallen soldiers have been declared to be meaningful. As indicated, for instance, by the memorials, they fought for justice.

Critics of the *kansalaissota* memory have repeatedly stressed that as far as the internal conflict is concerned, not only the ending and the post-war circumstances should be remembered but also the reason that led to the national tragedy. Namely, the Red rebels – incited by the Bolsheviks – attacked the legal government and order. In the *kansalaissota* memory, the focus in explaining the violence, however, is on poverty and the social injustice between the social classes. Scholars, critical of the bias of the War of Liberation narrative, also underline this view of internal factors. Historian Sami Suodenjoki, for instance, explains the violent uprising as the result of political frustration and hard living conditions. The role of Bolshevik agitation was not crucial, at least not among the working-class population in Tampere, he concluded at a seminar, arranged in 2008 by leftist cultural organizations.<sup>62</sup>

One of the 1918-related controversies carried out in the post-Cold War publicity centers on the issue of whether the socialist government would have surrendered to Lenin's Bolsheviks. The War of Liberation memory circles have powerfully presented this argument, whereas many debaters have challenged it. The critics also remind that the War of Liberation memory activists exclude the role of the Germans in order to create a dichotomy between pure White

61 See, e.g., Komulainen, "Vasemmistonuoret."

62 *Tiedonantaja* 25 January 2008, <<http://www.tiedonantaja.fi/vanha-arkisto/2008-25-1/muu-artikkeli-08>> (accessed 29 May 2013).

patriots and Russia-oriented Red non-patriots.<sup>63</sup> From a scholarly point of view, arguments that fly in the face of facts are always problematic. Politically, the argument is loaded, because it implies that socialism and patriotism would be incompatible, which contradicts historical reality. This view of incompatibility was powerful in the interwar-period White discourse. Due to the patriotic attitude of the Finnish Left during World War II and the ensuing participation in the war effort, the judgment had to be reassessed.

As the above analysis reveals, one of the focal elements in the War of Liberation discourse prevailing in the post-Cold War era is the emphasis laid on the role of the war in saving Finnish democracy. This interpretation can be seen as functional against the background of the political transformation, caused by the fall of communism. More generally, it mirrors the value system of post-World War II Europe that Finnish society shares. Instead, in the 1920s and 1930s, the emphasis was on the role of the war in saving “home, religion and fatherland.” Another remarkable difference relates to the way Reds are perceived. In the interwar discourse, they were condemned as traitors of the nation. The participation of the former Reds in the war effort against the Soviet Union in 1939–44, combined with the urgent need for national coherence in times of war, changed the tone. In the post-Cold War discourse, the Reds are depicted as violent rebels, misled by Russian Bolsheviks, but on the whole, given the victory of Finnish democracy and the fall of communism, they gradually become shadow figures in the narrative.

### New Approaches to the War Beyond Old Memory Patterns

Pilvi Torsti concludes in her study, the results of which are summarized in the introduction of this chapter, that there is a growing understanding among the Finnish population of both sides of the 1918 conflict, which she calls a critical interpretation. The analysis of the popular memory production over two decades since the early 1990s presented in this chapter partly confirms Torsti's result. There definitely are signs of reconciliation and the formation of a shared memory, which recognizes the various voices and many aspects of the conflict. However, as described above, the intensification of the War of Liberation discourse and the positive public attention paid to White Finland, made politically possible by the end of the Cold War, partly froze the dichotomy between the conflicting old-new memory patterns. One could suggest that without the

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63 E.g., Pertti Hemánus, “Taas kopioita voittajien historioista,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 26 April 1998.

neo-patriotic turn, the adoption of new patterns would have been smoother, which applies also to the memory culture of 1939–44.

Both narratives are politically informed and, thus, biased and ideologically fixed, but the War of Liberation discourse particularly is based on elements that are alien to Western post-World War II memory cultures of war. According to Jay Winter, “to acknowledge the victims of war and the ravages it causes is at the heart of the memory boom in contemporary cultural life.”<sup>64</sup> The War of Liberation narrative is not adequately influenced by this element of suffering, given the fact that the war and its aftermath were extremely brutal, with an extremely high number of casualties. Instead, the narrative looks at the past from a present perspective and from this horizon cherishes one-sided, exclusive patriotism. In 1994, historian and jurist Jukka Kemppinen commented in *Helsingin Sanomat* on the neo-patriotic turn and its role for the national memory politics. According to him, as a result of the turn, the 1918 war, the Winter War, and the Continuation War were all emphatically perceived as struggles for light. “The Russians, socialists, Soviets wanted to deprive ‘us’ even of the moon and the sun.” Prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finns had interpreted their national history from the viewpoint of errors they themselves had made. Now, Kemppinen concluded, the wars were idealized despite the fact that they were tragic disasters.<sup>65</sup>

Twenty years have passed since Kemppinen's perception, but still today a shared memory of the war, which goes beyond the old-new memory patterns, is not a self-evident frame for the year 1918. In 2008, historian Pertti Haapala sharply criticized the political uses of the war and argued that in 1993, when a scholarly seminar on the war had been organized, it had been easier to see the past from multiple perspectives than was the case in 2008. In 1993, according to Haapala, it had been acknowledged that creating one truth of the war that in reality embraced many wars is contrary to the results of critical research and, further, this kind of interest poses a threat to the openness in Finnish society.<sup>66</sup> Haapala's criticism is not only directed toward the War of Liberation discourse but also embraces all narratives that deny the multiplicity of the past. The *kansalaissota* narrative, for its part, too narrowly underlines the victimiza-

64 Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 1.

65 Jukka Kemppinen, “Sota kesästä I,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 11 July 1994. See also Kyösti Reunanen, “Historiatuotteista tullut kauppatavaraa,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 22 June 1998.

66 Jaakko Lyytinen, “Viimeinen uhri,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 27 January 2008. On the 1993 history conference, see *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 91.2 (1993).

tion of the Reds, which does not allow, for instance, a critical treatment of their agency.

Despite Haapala's skepticism, there are different fields of memory production, which approach the Civil War from new perspectives. The following section examines the role of fiction, in addition to non-fiction, in creating new images. In this respect, special attention is paid to images of women at war, because they have now entered the stage of historical narration. In addition to authors, contributions by some other artists and the Lutheran Church are introduced. Professional historians have a role to play in these different contexts, as they have taken their societal role seriously and have created dialogues with amateur historians of various kinds and with public audiences.

### The Multiplicity of Representations Challenges the Old-New Memory Patterns

As the discussion in this chapter has shown, professional historians have been and are active in debating the history of the Civil War. In contrast to many elderly scholars, younger scholars have distanced themselves from the Red-White dichotomies and, accordingly, are able to deal with the problematic past more openly and from more nuanced perspectives.<sup>67</sup> For the War of Liberation memory activists and related professional historians, this new historiography is suspicious, however, because it deals at length with the violence that characterized Finnish society in 1918 and was a central element of the Civil War.<sup>68</sup> This new research is influenced by transnational post-World War II discourse on war, including the discourse on trauma, but it also draws on national models, especially Heikki Ylikangas's *Tie Tampereelle* ("The Road to Tampere"), published in 1993. Further, public interest in the history of 1918 and the ensuing interest of publishers in new research and popular history have encouraged a new generation of scholars to deal with the topic. Ylikangas's *Tie Tampereelle* can fairly be said to have ushered in a new wave of research and other historical writings about 1918. The number of studies, both strictly academic and

67 Cf. with Saska Snellman, "Tavalliset kunnon teloittajat," *Helsingin Sanomat* 17 October 2004. The article is based on an interview with the historian Marko Tikka, who has published extensively on the Civil War from the viewpoint of terror and judicial practices. See also his contribution in this volume.

68 See, e.g., Martti Häikiö, "Miksi Suomessa käytiin sisällissota vuonna 1918?" *Työväentutkimus* 2008, p. 47.

more popularly aimed, rose significantly in the 1990s. Typically, these publications deal with local experiences.<sup>69</sup>

Ylikangas's detailed, grass-roots-based description of Ostrobothnian White troops' method of conquering the Red troops, which culminated in the battle of Tampere, the stronghold of the Red Guards, became a bestseller, with 17,000 sold copies, an exceptional figure for a non-fiction book in Finland. Already in the 1960s, Jaakko Paavolainen had carefully analyzed the Red and White Terror behind the lines, but Ylikangas revealed and described in detail the extreme brutality of the warfare itself. Civilians, soldiers, and also animals were victims of this brutality. The book is controversial and, accordingly, aroused a debate on various aspects, both scholarly and political. Ylikangas wanted to heal the national trauma with his book.<sup>70</sup> Some critics argued that, instead, he opened old, already healed wounds. The book resonated with different groups of people for different reasons. In some families, the war had been a taboo subject, and people with this kind of background were encouraged by the book and the ensuing general interest in 1918 to trace their own history. Ylikangas's work appeared at a moment when, due to the fall of the Soviet Union, there was a general interest in Finnish-Russian/Soviet relations and other topics of national history, which certainly contributed to the book's popularity. Further, violence had also become a topical issue, due to the ethnic massacres of the Balkan war. This opened up a new perspective on the Finnish conflict almost 80 years ago.

Violence and suffering have, since the 1990s, been one of the focal topics in representations of the 1918 war. This perspective on cruelty is in sharp contrast with the fundamental tenets of the War of Liberation narrative, which sees the violence more or less as a side effect, but the perspective challenges also the *kansalaissota* narrative, with its focus on the pure victimhood of the Reds. Ylikangas, for instance, demanded that the cruelty committed by the both

69 E.g., Jukka Rislakki, *Kauhun aika: Neljä väkivallan kuukautta Jämsässä 1918* (Helsinki: Ajatus Kirjat, 2007); Mirja Turunen, *Veripellot: Sisällissodan surmatyöt Pohjois-Kymenlaaksoissa 1918* (Jyväskylä: Atena, 2005); Tuomas Hoppu, *Vallatkaa Helsinki: Saksan hyökkäys punaiseen pääkaupunkiin 1918* (Helsinki: Gummerus, 2013). Further, exhibitions on the history of the war from local perspectives have been hosted in, e.g., Lappeenranta, Lahti, Tampere, and Vaasa. See Nils Erik Villstrand's insightful analysis of the public remembrance of the Civil War in 1918–98 in the publication linked to the exhibition in Vaasa: Villstrand, "Tie Tampereelta 1918–1998," in Marianne Koskimies-Envall, ed., *Verta hangella: Pohjalainen näkökulma vuosien 1917–1918 tapahtumiin*, Pohjanmaan museon julkisuja nro, 20 (Vaasa: Pohjanmaan museo, 1999), pp. 9–23. See also the Introduction of this present volume.

70 Heikki Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle* (Helsinki: WSOY, 1993), p. 13.

sides be dealt with so that the nation could live down its traumatic past.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, his book can be seen as a critique of the intensification of the War of Liberation narrative, although without adopting the opposite one.

One of distinguishing features of Ylikangas's work is its high stylistic quality. Even if the book does not blur the border between scholarship and fiction, it manifests the importance of good narratives. Literary scholar Yrjö Varpio, among others, reminds of the important role literature has in the construction of people's historical consciousness. In this respect, the Civil War is no exception. As a matter of fact, Väinö Linna's *Under the North Star* has played an authoritative role in creating a picture of the conflict, although his literary merits were contested at the time of the trilogy's publication, and the modernist writers have published works that stress randomness and incoherence instead of naturalist narrative.<sup>72</sup>

In the field of historical analysis, this same idea is reflected in the microhistorically influenced criticism of traditional social history with its focus on structures. Instead, it is argued, the past should be approached from a perspective of individual, partly fragmented agency and the history of experiences. This emphasis on individuals instead of collectives is one of the distinguishing features also of the fiction published during the last two decades. Reflecting the upsurge of interest in the Civil War, the amount of fiction published in the late 20th and early 21st centuries is greater than ever before.<sup>73</sup> In terms of literature standards, this fiction is often of high quality; many of the books have been nominated for literature awards, and some have received multiple awards.

The new fiction concerning 1918 often describes individuals, ordinary people, without clear political consciousness who are driven by the historical developments and forced to participate in the tragedy. For them, there is not necessarily any meaning in the conflict, and they may even end up in the enemy troops.<sup>74</sup> Among reviewers, this way of dealing with the war has resonated well, which confirms Pilvi Torsti's remark that the approach that goes beyond fixed Red-White opposition is becoming more functional and, thus, popular. It is seen as fruitful because strict either/or interpretations are replaced by descriptions that allow both/and perspectives on, for instance, the relationship between good and evil. Also, filmmakers have rediscovered the topic of the

71 Ylikangas, *Tie Tampereelle*, pp. 521–26.

72 Varpio, "Vuosi 1918 kirjallisuudessa," pp. 453–59. See also the chapter "Changing Perceptions of 1918," by Tuomas Tepora in this volume.

73 Varpio, "Vuosi 1918 kirjallisuudessa," p. 462.

74 See, e.g., Jyrki Auer & Mika Vuolle, *Sisällissota* (Helsinki: Tammi, 1994).



Civil War and approach it from a similar perspective, focusing on individuals and their emotions.<sup>75</sup>

In the debate aroused by his book *Tie Tampereelle*, Heikki Ylikangas underlined that when the past, in this case the 1918 war, is carefully examined, the national trauma can be lived down. In the 1990s, there still was – and even today is – a need among people to know, for instance, about the fate of their own relatives who perished in 1918. One could, however, also argue that an explanation, however academic, of all the details is not adequate when people want to come to terms with a difficult past, which requires reflection on emotions.<sup>76</sup> Further, one could argue that historical scholarship is not the only vehicle to answer questions on past psychological phenomena.<sup>77</sup> In this respect, fiction can contribute to the understanding of how, for instance, emotions of hatred and bitterness work in the past and present and lead to the outburst of violence. These emotions, among others, definitely played a role in the history of the Civil War and are correspondingly one of the topics that fascinate emotion-conscious people of today, in addition to their more specific interest in

75 The Civil War has been dealt with in the following post-Cold War films: *Aapo* (1994, dir. by Tero Jartti, based on the 1919 short story by Runar Schildt), *Lunastus* (“The Redemption” 1997, dir. by Olli Saarela), *Raja 1918* (“The Border” 2007, dir. by Lauri Törhönen), *Käsäky* (“Tears of April” – based on the novel “The Command”, by Leena Lander – 2008, dir. by Aku Louhimies), *Där vi en gång gått* (“Where We Once Walked” – based on the novel of the same title by Kjell Westö – 2011, dir. by Peter Lindholm), and *Taistelu Näsilinnasta* (“The Battle of Näsilinna” 2012, dir. by Claes Olsson). See Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat*. In contrast, the new two-part version of Linna’s *Under the North Star* (2009–10), dir. by Timo Koivusalo, follows the realistic and collectivistic style of the 1960s film.

76 For instance, a project, initiated and led by Heikki Ylikangas and financed by the Finnish State, entitled “Suomen sotasurmat 1914–22” (War Victims of Finland 1914–22), has carefully documented the casualties of the war-related circumstances in 1914–22. The information is accessible on the Internet. On the urge of ordinary people to get information about the difficult past and to understand it, see, e.g., Riku Jokinen, “Suomen sisällissodan tutkijat hukkuvat palautevöyryyn,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 17 July 2005. For his article, Jokinen interviewed the historian Mirja Turunen, who underlined the importance of integrating emotions into historical studies on the Civil War.

77 Historical research on emotions is gradually developing in Finland. In the field of war and emotions, especially Ville Kivimäki and Tuomas Tepora have distinguished themselves. See, e.g., Kivimäki & Tepora, “Meaningless Death or Regenerating Sacrifice? Violence and Social Cohesion in Wartime Finland,” in Kinnunen & Kivimäki, *Finland in World War II*. In the field of psychohistorical research on the Civil War, Jari Ehrnrooth and Juha Siltala have played a pioneering role. The provocative result of Ehrnrooth’s analysis (1992) of the mentality of the socialist movement on the grassroots level is that ordinary people subscribed to archaic hatred towards the ruling class. See also Juha Siltala’s chapter in this volume.

own family history or the history of their localities in 1918. To meet this interest, co-operation between different genres of historical narration is necessary. As part of this unfolding dialogue, many authors of fiction deal with real events and real people, and they also turn to scholarly works in creating their narratives.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, there are also examples of popular presentations, for instance on stage, being adapted from scholarly works.<sup>79</sup>

One of the finest examples – in terms of plot, composition, and, more deeply, understanding of human life – of this new fiction on the 1918 conflict is Antti Tuuri's *Kylmien kyytimies* ("The Dead Ride") published in 2007.<sup>80</sup> Tuuri is a distinguished writer of historical fiction who, in addition to *Kylmien kyytimies*, has written other works on 1918. Reflecting previous trends, Tuuri's novel describes the war from the perspective of individual experience amidst violence and suffering. However, it also includes the possibility of humanity. The protagonist Jussi Ketola, who has moved back from America where he had adopted ideas of Christian socialism, is forced<sup>81</sup> to join the White Army. Because he refuses to take up arms, he, with his horse, is ordered to take care of the White wounded and fallen when the White Army captures Tampere. Consequently, he becomes a witness of the fiercest battle of the Civil War. In addition to fulfilling his duty as part of the victorious White side, he also helps the enemy – not his personal one, but that of the White Army's. Ketola's – religiously

78 E.g., *Kylmien kyytimies* by Antti Tuuri (Helsinki: Otava, 2007) and *Käsäky* by Leena Lander (Helsinki: WSOY, 2003) have a real historical background. Anneli Kanto's *Veriurusut* (Helsinki: Gummerus, 2008) includes a bibliography of consulted historical research on women's guards. Several other novels also have a real historical background, e.g., Antti Tuuri, *Suuri asejuna Pietarista* (Loimaa: Kustannus HD, 2006, "The Great Ammunition Train from St Petersburg"); and Juhani Syrjä, *Juho 18* (Jyväskylä & Helsinki: Gummerus, 1998). According to Elisa Järveläinen, there is a dialogue between research and fiction dealing with the Civil War; new research topics influence fiction. Elisa Järveläinen, "*Sis ei muuta, kuin seiso paikalla, ole kuin mies!*" *Kaunokirjallisuus ja tutkimuskirjallisuus naispunakaartilaiden kuvaajina 1990–2000-luvulla* (unpublished pro gradu thesis, Itä-Suomen yliopisto, 2011).

79 E.g., the theater plays *Hennalan torvisoittokunta* (performed in 1998 in Turku, "The Brass Band of Hennala") and *Koston kevät* (performed in 2000 in Lappeenranta, "The Spring of Revenge") are based on local-historical studies. Some novels dealing with the experiences in 1918 have been staged, e.g., Kjell Westö's *Där vi en gang gått* and Anneli Kanto's *Veriurusut*.

80 This personal interpretation of mine is supported by several critiques. For instance, in the leading literature journal *Parnasso*, the novel is simply described as a masterpiece: Arto Virtanen, "Requiem tuntemattomille sotilaille," *Parnasso* 6 (2007).

81 The Finnish non-socialist government declared conscription to strengthen the White Army. This could be realized in the area controlled by the government.

influenced – humanity is contradicted by a White sergeant major’s brutality, which culminates in his killing of Ketola’s horse, which has been a true companion of his for many years.

In Antti Tuuri’s description, Jussi Ketola is a figure who stays loyal to his pacifistic principles, and, accordingly, there is an aspect of firmness and hope in human goodness, despite the chaotic circumstances and brutality of war. However, the boundary between good and the evil is not clear-cut. In another praised novel, Asko Sahlberg’s *Tammilehto* (2004, “Oak Grove”), all the boundaries are blurred. In the psychologically deep description, the violence of the war is, on the one hand, traced back to pre-war traumatizing circumstances where poverty and related humiliating conditions left their imprint on people’s mind, but, on the other hand, the issues of hatred, revenge, and atonement are treated as universally human.<sup>82</sup> The novel focuses on the relationship between Martin, a decadent landowner without any political commitments, Emma, a louche daughter of a farm laborer, and Aarne, her brother, a commander of the Red Guards. Like Jussi Ketola in Tuuri’s novel, Aarne is driven to the war against his own will, incited by his politically conscious wife. Among other topics, the reviewers paid attention to the figure of Aarne because it contradicts the description of Akseli Koskela, the Red protagonist and commander in Väinö Linna’s *Under the North Star*. Aarne is remote from Koskela’s sturdy, class-conscious presence. Thus, Sahlberg’s novel destroys the myth of a Red commander, as one reviewer remarked.<sup>83</sup>

Sexuality deeply affects human behavior, and the descriptions of sexual acts are intense in Sahlberg’s novel. Sexual descriptions, especially as an exercise of violence, also characterize other late 20th and early 21st-century novels and films that depict the 1918 war. Homosexuality also appears in the fiction, interestingly, exclusively as a feature of White characters.<sup>84</sup> Sexuality as a topic in war fiction is common because sexuality and death, as well sexuality and power, can be seen as closely connected. In today’s wars, acts of sexual violence are regularly reported, which leaves an imprint on fictional writing. As far as research on the Civil War is concerned, scholars are much more careful about, for instance, Red women being raped, because the sources do not have clear hints about this kind of violence.

82 See, e.g., Antti Majander, “Tyydy olemaan itsesi,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 24 October 2004.

83 Matti Mäkelä, “Sahlbergin Tammilehto murskaa punapäällikön sankarimyytin,” *Aamulehti* 22 October 2004. See also Kati Toivanen, “Sattuma heittää ihmisen sotaan,” *Hämeen Sanomat* 24 November 2004.

84 Homosexual men appear in Lander’s novel *Käsky*, Sahlberg’s novel *Tammilehto*, and Saarela’s film *Lunastus*.

Red women are raped, for instance, in Leena Lander's influential and praised novel *Käskey* (2003, "The Command"). As a whole, however, Lander's description of Red women, especially the female protagonist Miina Malin, challenges the image of weakness and victimhood. The emphasis of agency characterizes also other descriptions of women who in the 21st century finally have entered into the fiction of the Civil War. This fiction focuses on Red women and their experiences as part of the revolutionary movement and its miserable end, whereas White women mainly remain shadow figures.<sup>85</sup> Women actively take their lives in their hands, inspired and incited by the revolutionary circumstances. The theme of women's strength appears also in fiction that focuses on men. In Tuuri's *Kylmien kyytimies*, Jussi Ketola is about to be executed – which underlines the idea of blurring boundaries – and is rescued by his wife. In Sahlberg's *Tammilehto*, the weak men, Martin and Aarne, are contradicted by the strong female figures, Aarne's wife and Emma. Even if Emma is a kind of an outcast in the local community, she acts determinedly and, for instance, rescues her brother from the POW camp.

The new emphasis in fiction on women reflects one of the significant changes shaping the Finnish war-related memory production since the 1990s, namely, the gradual integration of women's experiences into historical narratives, both popular and scholarly. In tandem, women have entered the stage as interpreters, both as popular and academic ones.<sup>86</sup> As far as World War II is concerned, the most attention has been paid to the Lotta Svärd, the auxiliary of the Civil Guards.<sup>87</sup> This one-sided attention given to the Lottas and via them to the White women annoyed Leena Lander, and she consequently decided to write a novel of the "other" women. Lander perceives the Red women soldiers as promoters of gender equality and, thus, in a need of rehabilitation in the

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85 One exception is Kjell Westö's praised novel *Där vi en gång gått* (2006), which depicts also middle- and upper-class women during the war and in the 1920s.

86 Cf. with Winter, *Remembering War*, pp. 6–7. The entrance of women into academic discussion on the Civil War has, however, been relatively slow. For instance, the debate on Ylikangas's *Tie Tampereelle* was almost exclusively carried out by male historians, both amateur and professional.

87 The Lotta Svärd and the Civil Guards were disbanded in 1944 under Soviet pressure. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Lotta Svärd was rehabilitated, and partly due to this, there was an upsurge in the history-writing concerning it. See, e.g., Tiina Kinnunen, "Gender and Politics: Patriotic Women in Finnish Public Memory after 1944," in Sylvia Paletschek & Sylvia Schraut, eds, *The Gender of Memory: Cultures of Remembrance in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe* (Frankfurt & New York: Campus Verlag, 2008), pp. 181–203.

eyes of 21st-century public audiences.<sup>88</sup> Lander's novel is a psychological thriller between three figures. At the end of the war, Miina Malin, the captive member of Red Women's Guards, is being taken to an examination by the Jäger Aaro Harjula. Similar to Tuuri's Jussi Ketola and Sahlberg's Aarne, he is a reluctant participant at the war. This image is remarkable against the background of the 1990s Jäger cult with emphasis on their patriotism. Finally, Miina survives, whereas Harjula and the military judge, decadent Emil Hallenberg, both perish.

Despite the postmodern tone of the most distinguished recent novels about 1918, more traditional ones also have been published. In terms of Red women, one of the most praised ones is Anneli Kanto's *Veriruuusut* (2003, "Blood Roses"). This documentary novel, which draws on several recent studies on Red women and Women's Guards, has been seen as a supplement to Väinö Linna's description.<sup>89</sup> In the limelight are young women – in present understanding still girls – who joined the Women's Guards in two industrial towns, Valkeakoski and Tampere, dressed themselves revolutionarily in trousers, let their hair be cut, and took up arms. Some of them survive, whereas some are executed. They were inspired by the revolutionary spirit with its promises of gender equality. The novel is characterized by Kanto's sympathies and admiration for her figures, whom she sees as pioneers of women's emancipation,<sup>90</sup> but she also follows Heikki Ylikangas's example in describing both the White and Red Terror.

In addition to fiction, different kinds of performances have become common and successful with popular audiences in dealing with historical events, including the Civil War. In the quotation in the beginning of this chapter, Sirpa Kähkönen underlines the role of emotions in dealing with difficult pasts. In the event in Lahti in 2013, which she herself visited, the participants symbolically

88 "Vuoden 1918 naissotilaan kohtalo," *Kansan Uutiset* 29 October 2003. Especially the organ of the Left Alliance paid attention to Lander's interest in the rehabilitation of Red women activists. Concerning Red women who took up arms and formed Women's Guards, see the chapter written by Tiina Lintunen in this volume. Lander is correct in her analysis that, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, especially the Lotta Svärd has received much attention in popular historical culture and also in the official commemoration. However, the Lottas have mostly received tribute because of their work during World War II.

89 See, e.g., Juhani Lahtinen, "Innostuksesta kaaokseen," *Kirjatyö* 13 2008.

90 See, e.g., Sirpa Koskinen, "Naiskaarti oli varhaisfeminismiiä," *Kansan Uutiset* 5 December 2008, <<http://www.kansanuutiset.fi/kotimaa/1719842>> (accessed 4 April 2013). Kanto does not refer to the 19th- and early 20th-century work of both middle-class and social democratic feminist activists to achieve gender equality through non-violent means. Among other things, women's right to vote was introduced already in 1906. Many leading social democratic feminists rejected the uprising in 1918.



FIGURE 12.1 *Day of Reconciliation. The 90th anniversary of the battle of Tampere was commemorated with a re-enactment. The popularity of the occasion exemplified the central position of the Civil War in contemporary popular history culture.*  
PHOTO: THE FINNISH LABOR MUSEUM WERSTAS.

re-formed a POW camp. By means of the event, the organizer, performance artist Kaisa Salmi, wanted to commemorate the tragedy and contribute to the identity work by individuals and among families across political boundaries. At the center of her work is the idea of reconciliation.<sup>91</sup>

### If All Those Who Were Responsible Were Also Victims?

Yrjö Varpio concludes his analysis of the new post-Cold War fiction about 1918 with the remark that the war is often seen from the perspective of the Reds. A similar approach can be found in some films, including *Aapo*, *Lunastus*, and *Käsäsky*. I argue, however, that the empathy shown for the Reds has no political connotation in traditional meaning and, thus, cannot be seen as a continuation of the *kansalassota* memory pattern.<sup>92</sup> Instead, this humanity-based ap-

91 See, e.g., *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 30 April 2013, <<http://www.ess.fi/?article=412851>> (accessed 15 May 2013).

92 Varpio, "Vuosi 1918 kaunokirjallisuudessa," p. 462; Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat*, pp. 81–82.



proach sees the war as a shared tragedy of the nation and identifies with the suffering of the losing side, although without any special political commitment to leftist ideas. Kaisa Salmi, for instance, has underlined that her 2013 performance project in Lahti was not political by nature, and she emphatically denied that it was connected with a political meeting of the Left Youth that took place at the same time in Lahti.<sup>93</sup>

Because memory production reflects surrounding but also global ideas and mentalities, the tendency to perceive the past from individual and psychological perspectives, instead of collective ones, is strong in the Finnish 21st-century memory culture of 1918. This is confirmed, for instance, by literary criticism that welcomes fiction that goes beyond the fixed distinctions between Red and White and presents multifaceted individual experiences. As a historian with some affinity to postmodern ideas within historical research, I definitely welcome the individual turn, as well as the transnational concept of suffering. However, there are, in my view, some interrelated problems with these new emphases. First, in the new discourse, the related concepts of “reconciliation” and forgiveness are popular. But they are rather vague concepts and not necessarily useful when those involved in the event have passed away. Second, the emphatic, humanity-based, and apolitical approach should not forget to discuss issues of agency, including decision-making and political responsibility. If there are victims, there are also those responsible – however unstable the dividing line might be.

In his book, Heikki Ylikangas underlined the fact that after the war, the Reds were brought to account for the uprising whereas the representatives of White Finland were never forced to take responsibility for the violence, which exceeded the boundary of normal warfare.<sup>94</sup> Related to this view, the film director Aku Louhimies, who filmed Leena Lander’s novel *Käskey*, stated that the present Finnish society is a successor of White Finland, and, thus, a discussion of the victors’ morals is relevant for us still today.<sup>95</sup> This discussion among the elites has not occurred, however. Instead, many leading politicians have willingly participated in the War of Liberation commemorations, as discussed previously in this chapter. Of course, the discussion should not one-sidedly demonize the White side and leave the Reds and the Red memory production untouched, based on the argument of victimhood.<sup>96</sup>

93 *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* 30 April 2013.

94 See also, e.g., Aapo Roselius, *Teloittajien jäljillä: Valkoisten väkivalta Suomen sisällissodassa* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2006).

95 Eerola, *Vuoden 1918 dramaturgiat*, p. 84.

96 Cf. with Unto Hämäläinen, “Demarin tunnustus,” *Helsingin Sanomat* 5 December 2010.



One institution, however, has risen to challenge the silence of the elites, namely, the Lutheran Church. In 2008, initiated by Archbishop Jukka Paarma, it organized a seminar with eminent contributors on the Church and the 1918 conflict. As an institution, the Church supported White Finland, and some clergymen were killed as a consequence, with some Church property being destroyed. In his opening speech at the episcopal conference in 2008, the archbishop critically reflected upon the failure of the Church to deal seriously with the social problems that, according to his interpretation, were the main reason for the uprising. Further, the Church was silent about the White Terror during the war and afterwards. Paarma underlined the importance of openly acknowledging the errors, but he also reminded that the White Army represented the legitimate order.<sup>97</sup>

### Concluding Remarks

The upsurge of public interest in the Civil War in post-Cold War Finland is well captured in the title of a literature review published in 2004: "The Civil War Still Troubles Finland."<sup>98</sup> The tragic divide of fellow Finns has been dealt with in academic and popular history books, documentary films, and museum exhibitions; and it has been fought in fiction, on stage, and in films. These interpretations have been eagerly consumed by people who want to understand what happened in Finnish society and, more specifically, in their own localities and to their own families. Further, the war has been commemorated at various public events. In this respect, there is no shared frame. On the one hand, the war is seen from the perspective of and independence struggle, and the White Army is commemorated as heroic fighting force. On the other hand, the war is commemorated as a struggle for a more equal society, and the fallen and imprisoned Red soldiers are seen as victims. These old-new memory patterns exist apart from each other and are cultivated by respective memory communities. However, a new memory culture is unfolding that transcends the fixed Red-White dichotomy. This new discourse focuses on human suffering and the

97 Jukka Paarma, "Kirkko ja vuosi 1918," opening address of the Episcopal Conference on 12 February 2008, *Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko online*. The scholarly contributions of the seminar are included in Ilkka Huhta, ed., *Sisällissota 1918 ja kirkko*, Suomen kirkkohistoriallisen seuran toimituksia, 212 (Helsinki: SKHS, 2008).

98 Jarmo Papinniemi, "Sahlberg kuvaa mestarin ottein," *Etelä-Saimaa* 21 November 2004. Papinniemi describes the 1918-related interest as follows: "Kansalaissota ei jätä Suomea rauhaan."

multiplicity of historical voices, which do not necessarily create a coherent narrative.

Maurice Carrez has critically reflected upon the change of 1918 memory culture as follows: "Now, it (the tragedy) has been integrated as an unfortunate episode in national history that must be overcome together in order to exorcise it."<sup>99</sup> In his view, the memory of class struggle with clear opposing sides is still useful as a resource for future ideological conflicts within Finnish society. One can, however, argue that because memory production is functional, adapting to shifting circumstances, it is clear that memory patterns that continue the fixed Red-White confrontation do not smoothly correspond to the post-Cold War world in which the importance of old ideological divides is reduced. Further, one can argue that fixed dichotomies limit the multiplicity of historical voices and, thus, reduce our possibility to understand human experience.

In his call for agency instead of suffering and victimhood as main patterns of memory, Carrez seems to miss one significant aspect of the present Finnish culture. Namely, at least in fiction, active women whose strength and vitality go beyond victimhood counterbalance the weakness of men. Popular and academic history writing also is increasingly paying attention to women and their experiences at war and in war-related circumstances. This gender aspect, as well as the topic of suffering, connects Finnish memory culture to transnational memory patterns and, as a result, the memory of the Civil War entails the capacity to go beyond national frames.

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99 Carrez, "Sites of the Red Massacres," pp. 103–04.



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