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Meaningless Death or Regenerating Sacrifice?

Violence and Social Cohesion in Wartime Finland

Ville Kivimäki & Tuomas Tepora

An exceptional practice of the Finnish military during World War II was, whenever possible, to bring home all the fallen soldiers. They were consequently buried in the so-called "Hero's Cemeteries" in the churchyards of their own localities. The practice had its roots in the Civil War of 1918, when the fallen combatants of the "White" side were usually brought back to their home parishes in a similar fashion. In 1939–45, this evacuation and burial of the fallen developed into a culturally and emotionally focal ritual, which built a strong bridge between the front and the home front and which placed the sacrificial death of a soldier at the heart of each locality, both materially and symbolically.[1] A crucial challenge for the wartime society was to be able to give these violent deaths an acceptable and, even more, a regenerative meaning. The social cohesion of the national community was largely determined by this question, and it occupied a central place in individual minds and in the collective imagination alike. In the following chapter, we will

[1] Ilona Kemppainen, *Isänmaan uhrit: Sankarikuolema Suomessa toisen maailmansodan aikana* (Helsinki, 2006), pp. 65–77, 166–71. – There are over 600 "Hero's Cemeteries" in Finland, at least one in every town and parish.

discuss the meanings and controversies of wartime violence in Finland. We hope that such a study of death and sacrifice will also open a wider perspective to the Finnish cultural history of World War II.

The importance of violent sacrifices, national martyrs and the cult of fallen soldiers for the nation-states has been thoroughly observed and analyzed.[2] Yet each culture and nation has its own historical experiences, connotations and emphasis in using the idea of a sacrificial death, and these differences may be revealing for understanding the historical specifications of each case. In general, the nationalist cult of death can be conceptualized as "regenerative violence," which vitalizes the nation, combines patriotism to religious cosmology and forms a binding legacy for future generations.

Thus, the (sacrificial) violence is at the root of nationalist thinking, constructing a prerequisite for the feelings of unity and oneness among the members of the national collective. With the concept of social cohesion we point to the weft of social relations of a given modern community, made possible by both symbolic representations and concrete practices of solidarity, reciprocity and identity. Consensus, or at least an acceptable compromise, of the meaning of common sacrifices and of the legitimacy of violence exercised in the name of the community is essential for this cohesion to survive. Using the famous notion by Max Weber, the state seeks to authorize itself a monopoly on violence; a legitimate, exclusive right to use violence on behalf of its members to control and to protect. Indeed, it must succeed in this task in order to be a sovereign community.

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[2] For influential examples, see e.g. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. (London, 1991); Reinhart Koselleck & Michael Jeismann, eds., *Der politische Totenkult: Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne* (Munich, 1994); George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (Oxford, 1990); Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford, 2003).

Regarding the totalitarian or autocratic regimes, Weber's idea can be taken even further: the authority of the monopoly on violence is not only a premise for social stability – the potential to exercise ultimate, deadly force has actually been the final evidence of the state's or monarch's supremacy, demonstrated in acts of violence towards the subjects.[3] Thus, the violence may become the very legitimatization of itself.

But in a democratic society such as Finland in 1939–45, the monopoly on violence requires a more nuanced balancing participated in by other citizen-actors than a single autocrat or a small hegemonic elite.[4] If the legitimacy of power comes from the people, at least symbolically, then the state's violence, too, must have the acceptance of the people. This includes the violence in the form of requiring sacrifices on the nation's behalf and, more problematically, the coercive violence of the state to control its own citizens.[5] Should the justified nature and the shared meaning of such violence become challenged, the authority of the state and the community's social cohesion are consequently threatened.[6] From the basis of this short theoretical introduction, it is our task in the following to discuss the phenomena of wartime violence in empirical detail.

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[3] Heinrich Popitz, *Phänomene der Macht*, rev. ed. (Tübingen, 1992), pp. 52–7.

[4] For the complexity of controlling violence and for the historical differences between various state formations, see Douglass C. North, John Joseph Wallis & Barry R. Weingast, *Violence and Social Orders: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting Recorded Human History* (Cambridge, 2009).

[5] Cf. Carolyn Marvin & David W. Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice and the Nation: Totem Rituals and the American Flag* (Cambridge, 1999) drawing from René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, transl. by Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD, 1977).

[6] Cf. Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 3–9.

I. The Prolonged "War of Independence," 1918–41

Polarizing Violence: The Trauma of 1918 in Pre-World War II Finland

When one looks at the Finnish war experience in World War II, it is impossible not to confront the memory of the Civil War of 1918. Many of the reactions and decisions in 1939–45 become understandable against this background: the Finnish interwar society was both a product of and an answer to the divisions of 1918. Thus, in order to understand the circumstances from which the Finns related and oriented themselves to the social and cultural phenomena of World War II, it is essential to start with the experience of the Civil War.

Following the Russian October Revolution, Finland declared independence from the former Czarist Empire on 6 December 1917. However, the hot-tempered political and social situation soon escalated into a socialist revolution and a civil war in late January 1918. The war between the "White" troops of the bourgeois government and the insurgent "Reds" lasted for three and a half months. The initial goal of the Finnish revolution was to establish an independent socialist state, not to incorporate Finland into the newly formed Soviet Russia, whereas the Whites aimed at suppressing the revolution and disarming the Russian troops still in Finland. Violent purges and lawless executions belonged to the means of warfare on both sides. The real catastrophe, however, unfolded after the Whites had won the war in May 1918. Thousands of defeated Reds were imprisoned in camps, in

which hunger and the pandemic Spanish flu raged on.[7] The total death toll of the war was about 36,000 out of the population of 3.2 million people. Around 27,000 of the deceased were Reds.[8]

Regarding the subject matter of our chapter, the cultural history of violence, the situation in Finnish society prior to the Civil War developed quickly towards a power vacuum. The state authority and the control of violence dissolved along with the revolutionary developments in Russia. The Weberian question about the monopoly on violence seems to be decisive in understanding the fratricidal and introspective violence of the Civil War. The war indicated the loss of boundaries between those who traditionally controlled violence and those who were controlled. The locus of power became contested and blurred.[9] As so often in civil wars, the scale of rapidly escalating, uncontrolled violence was horrific – especially when one considers the relatively short duration of the conflict and the small size of the Finnish population.

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[7] For a general depiction of political and military aspects of the Civil War, see Anthony F. Upton, *The Finnish Revolution 1917–1918* (Minneapolis, MN, 1980); on the terror in the Civil War, see Marko Tikka, *Kenttäoikeudet: Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Helsinki, 2004); on the psychology of the prewar enemy images and the wartime violence, see Juha Siltala, *Sisällissodan psykohistoria* (Helsinki, 2009). For an excellent overview on the legacy of the Civil War, see 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, 2002), pp. 170–81.

[8] Finnish National Archives, *War Victims in Finland: The Registry of the Names of the War Dead Between 1914–1922*, http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmaetusivu/main?lang=en, accessed 1 March 2010.

[9] Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley, CA, 1988), pp. 191–6; Pertti Haapala, *Kun yhteiskunta hajosi: Suomi 1914–1920* (Helsinki, 1995), pp. 218–43.

The White victors forcibly re-established their power in the wake of the Civil War. Despite the fact that the country had already declared independence in December 1917, the war became known as the War of Independence (*vapaussota*, literally the Freedom War). The official view of the conflict saw it as a fight against the Bolshevik Russians and their domestic allies, the Finnish Reds. This way of interpreting the war undermined the internal nature of the conflict and the bloody violence within Finnish society. It became essential for the idea of a sovereign nation to be able to see the cause of blood spilling in an external enemy in the east. The War of Independence with its sacrifices was, in a manner of speaking, "needed" in order to become a real nation. Nevertheless, the victors' interpretation of the war was not just a political maneuver. A major part of the White population denied the essentially internal nature of the conflict in good faith. The reality of internal violence could not be accepted.

Viewed against the background of terror in 1918, it seems astonishing that during the 1920s and 1930s the society experienced only a few high-profile political killings, although violent crime involving the adversaries of the Civil War was common till the early 1920s.[10] The nature of the interwar Finnish society cannot be discussed here at length. Suffice it to say, though, that the parliamentary system was preserved largely due to the fact that the Civil War divided the left into communists and social democrats. The former were pushed and persecuted to the margins of society and the latter reinvented themselves as a political party committed to the parliamentary system. Moreover, the political system protected itself against the strong extreme right-wing tendencies in the early 1930s. Yet it is

[10] Marko Tikka, *Valkoisen hämärän maa? Suojeluskuntalaiset, virkavalta ja kansa 1918–1921* (Helsinki, 2006).

depictive of the Finnish interwar democracy that the Civil Guards Defense Corps, based on the White troops of 1918, had a position as a semi-political militia besides the Finnish Army. It acted as the last guarantor of the political and social order, should a socialist revolutionary threat emerge again. For the left, it symbolized their own defeat in 1918 and the consequent White hegemony. In this way, the monopoly on violence in interwar Finland was balanced to the right. Having the untested potential to mobilize the Civil Guards, the Finnish right wing possessed a greater threat to the regime than the strictly controlled and illegal extreme left.[11]

If actual political blood-spilling was rare, other forms of violence with a highly symbolic charge continued. In the so-called Lapua Movement in 1930–31, one of the major means of right-wing political terror involved an outsourcing of the perceived internal threat from within society. The Lapua extremists forcibly kidnapped and hauled communists and liberals out of the nation across the Soviet border, to their "true home country," as it was explained. In this way, a genuinely internal political conflict was again transformed into a conflict between the "patriotic citizens" and the "foreign elements."[12] More popularly, the war and violence of 1918 continued in the collective memories. The locus of the societal conflict and its consequences resettled into collective symbols, burial sites and rituals.[13] The Civil War was relived annually in commemorative festivities locally and nationally. The local "liberation festivals" by the White citizenry, as well as the socialist workers' First

[11] Alapuro, "Coping with the Civil War," pp. 173–5; Martti Ahti, "Suojeluskuntalain kolmas pykälä," in Risto Alapuro, ed., *Raja railona: Näkökulmia suojeluskuntiin* (Porvoo, 1998).

[12] Juha Siltala, *Lapuan liike ja kyyditykset 1930* (Helsinki, 1985).

[13] Cf. Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge, 1995).

of May celebrations, particularly aroused strong emotions and symbolic violence. Both parties, but especially the hegemonic middle class with right-wing inclinations, directly attacked each other's symbols: flags, burial sites, buildings and memorials. These emblems and sites carried a memory of each party's own sacrifices and the other's violence in 1918.[14]

The crucial question remained: How could a nation with divided experiences, memories and rituals make any regenerative use of the sacrifices of the Civil War? The Whites treated their fallen as national heroes, whereas the Reds faced a difficult situation. Their fallen and otherwise deceased combatants were silently commemorated as the heroes of the working class, but the commemoration lacked a proper regenerative meaning to the sacrifices. Defeated nations and groups usually face this dilemma.[15] How to transform lost causes into fruitful meanings? How to transform (useless) violence into (useful) sacrifice? Did thousands of people die for nothing?

Well into the 1930s, the expressions of aggression remained introspective and threatened the social cohesion of the young independent state. This phenomenon created the need for an external threat, or the constitutive Other, to use a term of nationalism studies. Soviet Russia, inevitably, represented a realistic threat, but in addition to that the

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[14] Tuomas Tepora, "Redirecting Violence: The Finnish Flag as a Sacrificial Symbol, 1917–1945," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 7 (2007): 3, pp. 159–60; Ulla-Maija Peltonen, "Civil War Victims and Mourning in Finland in 1918," in Christie & Cribb, *Historical Injustice*.

[15] Cf. Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Culture of Defeat: On National Trauma, Mourning, and Recovery*, transl. Jefferson Chase (London, 2003); Frank Biess, "Men of Reconstruction, the Reconstruction of Men: Returning POWs in East and West Germany, 1945–1955," in Karen Hagemann & Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Oxford, 2002).

eastern power became a very charged and useful counter-image. Although the fallen White heroes of the War of Independence were vigorously celebrated, the all-permeable memory of the divisive violence gave it a bitter sense. Almost half of the population could not adhere to their sacrifices. These splits had to be overcome somehow – this thought became a predominant trend in ideas in interwar Finland. The rationale was simple: If a small nation remained divided, it could not survive in the militarist atmosphere of Central and Eastern Europe of the 1930s.

General Mannerheim, the commander of the White troops during the Civil War, was a symbolically important and both celebrated and scorned figure in interwar society. In a speech given at the 15th anniversary of the White victory in 1933, he announced a politically conciliatory and binding message:

> [O]*ur time is tumultuous and full of threats, which is why we should be prepared – and everyone should participate in building our nation into a powerful and great one. Let us therefore willingly extend a brotherly hand to all who want to work and are prepared to fulfill their duty to their country. All we ask is patriotic spirit and willingness to carry out the duties of rank-and-file soldiers when the nation needs to be defended – and we have no reason to inquire where they were 15 years ago* [in 1918].[16]

[16] Kari Selén, ed., *Mannerheim: Puheet 1918–1947* (Helsinki, 2008), p. 140. All the block quotations are translated from Finnish by Hannu Tervaharju.

The moderate workers and small farmers served as a battleground in this fight for the souls of the people, especially in the 1930s. If the splits of 1918 were ever going to be reconciled, it was thought, these people had to be properly integrated into the nation. The major problem in this approach, however, proved to be the memory of violence. Regardless of maintaining a parliamentary system, which must be considered as a politically most crucial element in creating favorable circumstances for the perceived unity during World War II, and some rhetorical give-and-takes, it was difficult to transform violent experiences and memories into regenerating sacrifices. A national group, in order to be a cohesive collective, must in one way or another have a consensus about its past sacrifices. It would be too probable to assume that the Winter War and the concrete external enemy of 1939–40 solely and instantly unified the nation: this phenomenon had to have its roots deeper in the pre-World War II history.

Some major steps in the reinterpretation of the Red sacrifices of 1918 were taken before the Winter War and these may prove to be crucial in understanding the Finnish war experience of 1939–40. Political circumstances in the late 1930s were favorable for the reinterpretation of the violent memories of the Civil War. The social democrats formed a so-called “Red Earth” coalition government with the centrist Agrarian League in 1937. This empowerment did not, however, lead to a class-conscious, revolutionary emphasis in reassuring the value of the Red sacrifices. Instead, the socialists wanted to integrate their fallen comrades into the nation proper. The mental atmosphere of the post-recession 1930s had created high expectations of social reforms and this, in turn, created an emotional need for many members of the lower strata of society to identify with the nation in a novel way. For much of the working class and small farmers, the Finland of 1939 had come to give a

promise of a better future, which was leaving behind the divisive legacy of 1918.[17] At the same time, the gloomy news of the Stalinist rule across the border made it all the more implausible to see the Soviet Union as "the workers' paradise."

To indicate the reinterpretation described above we would like to point at a pair of revealing commemorative speeches in the spring of 1939, half a year before the Winter War broke out. Hyvinkää in Southern Finland had experienced some heavy reprisal violence after the parish had been conquered by the Whites at the end of the Civil War. Twenty-one years later, the remains of the 200 executed Reds were exhumed from their mass graves and reburied in the churchyard. The local social democratic workers' association organized a commemoration. As may have been expected, this action aroused some bad blood among the proponents of the White interpretation of the year 1918. No matter what, the message of the speech given besides the new graves was surprising. The orator announced that these heroes were not just surrogate victims of the working class and its goals, but also the surrogate victims of the society's forthcoming reconciliation. This, according to the speaker, gave the memory of Red victims a new raison d'être: their violent death could be given a fruitful meaning.[18] In other words, their death could be seen as meaningful to the whole nation. In neighboring Riihimäki, a social democratic MP declared at a similar reburial commemoration that the Reds' intentions were good just like their opponents' and both should be treated as equal. The Reds' sacrifices were necessary "birth

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[17] On the Finnish "national integration" in the 1930s, see Timo Soikkanen, *Kansallinen eheytyminen – Myytti vai todellisuus? Ulko- ja sisäpolitiikan linjat ja vuorovaikutus Suomessa vuosina 1933–1939* (Porvoo, 1984), pp. 524–31.

[18] *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, "V. 1918 surmansa saaneita työläisiä siirretty yhteishautaan Hyvinkäällä," 22 May 1939.

pains of the nation" just as with the Whites: "If our comrades resting in this common grave could come back to life and could speak, they would urge us survivors on both sides to reconcile our differences."[19]

However, who was to be held responsible for the heavy casualties the nation had experienced after its formal independence, if no recognized group within the nation wanted to take the blame for them (or avoided blaming each other)? The social democrats had traditionally chosen the class struggle by parliamentary means. Towards the end of the 1930s, it can be said, the social democrats began to see the class struggle as a part of the development of the nation-state, not challenging it. This implies that many of them identified with – or felt a need to identify with – the state institutions, not just the possible ethnic concept of Finnishness. Thus, the social democrats chose the nation over the class struggle and tried to represent the fallen Reds as necessary national sacrifices in the dawn of the independent nation.

This seems to be crucial. "The birth of the nation" – the declaration of independence on 6 December 1917 – had been followed by a fratricidal war, which poisoned the atmosphere of the following decades. In no way could the nation ground its birth myth in a fratricide (despite its mythical aspects per se). When Finland went to war with the Soviet Union on the last day of November 1939, the violence of the Civil War was given a whole new meaning.

[19] Väinö Kivisalo, *Niiden muistoksi, joita ei enää ole: Puhe kansalaissodan johdosta kaatuneiden muistoksi Riihimäen hautausmaalla huhtikuun 16 p:nä 1939* (Hämeenlinna, 1939).

Purifying Violence of 1939–40: "The Miracle of the Winter War"

Finland was inevitably defeated in the "Russo-Finnish War" of 1939–40, as the Winter War was usually called in the Western press during the conflict. In Finland, the name Winter War (*talvisota*) became established during the Interim Peace of 1940–41. Despite the defeat and all the human loss, the Winter War can be considered as a symbolically "perfect" war. Its composition made it a just war par excellence: A small nation defended itself against the aggressive demands of a super power, the politics of which were considered as the epitome of the communist universalism, the tradition of Russian imperialism and the novel trend of totalitarianism. The war represented an uneven configuration, morally favorable for Finland. Moreover, the war lasted only three and a half months. Due to its shortness, many of the brutalizing features inherent to war's liminal circumstances did not have time to emerge. The Finnish home front did not have time to experience the spoils of the black market, "moral decadence" and disaffection with political leaders, to name a few traditional features of war weariness.

The outbreak of the Winter War after the long and nerve-racking negotiations in Moscow in the autumn of 1939 was both a shock and a peculiar kind of relief from the tense atmosphere. Along with the initial pessimism and occasional panic in the first days of December, the expressions of unity and fatalism stepped in immediately at the beginning of the war. The phenomenon bears resemblance to the festive elevation at the outbreak of World War I all over Europe,[20] but the Finnish 1939-variant of the "Spirit of August 1914"

[20] See e.g. Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979), pp. 39–72.

was more characterized by the sentiments of national determination and religious devotion than by the demonstrations of masculine virility and collective flow in the parades of 1914.

The eruption of the war was experienced as similar to a natural disaster – as something the Finnish people had not brought upon itself, but that it was forced to face through no fault of its own. The Soviet invasion was so blatant and aggressive that any moral considerations of the war's justness could be easily pushed aside. Notwithstanding the similarly real expressions of desperation, fear and grief, a strong emergence of spontaneous community, cooperation and self-organization can be easily found in the social behavior and discourses in Finland during the Winter War.[21] It is symptomatic that in many reminiscences the beginning of war is often compared to a rising storm on the horizon, against which people seek shelter and comfort from each other. A woman who was ten years old in the summer of 1939 reminisced about the children's games in the vicinity of the Soviet border:

> *Before the beginning of the war, we children came up with a new game to predict the future. We noticed that in that summer the clouds drifting across the sky were different; ominous, scary-looking, like mountains with snowy caps. If they came from the direction of the border, there was going to be war; the Russkies would attack Finland.*[22]

[21] For similar phenomena in the wake of natural and man-made catastrophes, see Rebecca Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster* (New York, 2009).

[22] SKS KRA, Sota-aika Collection 2001, p. 637.

The morale of the troops at the front remained relatively high. A few major incidents reflecting dissatisfaction with the military can be traced to the inexperience and fatigue of the conscripts and reservists.[23] Desertion was rare, mostly due to the war's shortness and its clearly justified nature. About 1,000 military evasions were reported out of the armed forces of 350,000 men. Political desertion was nearly non-existent, which indicates that the majority of the left experienced the war as a justified defensive campaign. It should be kept in mind, though, that the major players of the communist movement were imprisoned during the conflict. The difference between the desertion rates of the Winter War and the Continuation War is huge, although the differing nature of the conflicts makes the comparison difficult. During 1941–44, over 32,000 deserters of various degrees out of the armed forces of ca. 650,000 men were reported – ideological reasons were influential in many desertions.[24]

In other words, the Winter War possessed an aura of justness and a certain kind of sacredness in itself. The usual way of interpreting the conflict by mainstream media in wartime Finland saw it as an antithesis to the Civil War. The attack of the Soviet Union was even explicitly considered a blessing. The war unified the nation – in reality and in fantasy. On Independence Day in 1939, a week after the war began, a conservative Helsinki-based newspaper *Uusi Suomi* heralded the eruption of the war as an unparalleled "coming-of-age ceremony." A youngster had matured and grown up to take the

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[23] Sampo Ahto, *Talvisodan henki: Mielialoja Suomessa talvella 1939–1940* (Porvoo, 1989), pp. 132–3, 140–2.

[24] Jukka Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin? 1941–1944: Sotilaskarkuruus Suomen armeijassa jatkosodan aikana* (Helsinki, 1995), pp. 32, 37, 40–1, 501. – These numbers include all the cases that led to court proceedings. Altogether the number of various military evasions is almost 40,000 in 1941–44.

responsibilities of an adult, the newspaper manifested.[25] In accordance with the European trend in ideas, the nation was treated as a living organism. It had now been able to organize all of its subjects to work for the nation, to enhance its vitality. A year later, on Independence Day in 1940, an organ of the Social Democratic Party tried to coin the atmosphere of social unanimity the war had created. "It feels strange that we needed a war in order to reach such a simple solution," the newspaper declared.[26]

What was the solution the social democratic newspaper thus endorsed? When one looks at the rhetoric and symbolism of the Winter War, it is difficult to avoid the overwhelming stress of the notion of unifying sacrifice. The former internal enemies of 1918 spilled their blood together; the sons of former adversaries were buried side by side in military cemeteries in local churchyards; "the brotherhood of the dirty snow camouflage" revitalized the soul of the nation; the smallest of deeds for the benefit of the war effort was as important as the biggest.[27] These were the slogans of the Winter War, to name a few. In almost any other situation this sort of phraseology would ring hollow and propagandist, but in the case of the Winter War these slogans truly echoed the collective sentiments of a remarkable proportion of the people. They flourished in newspapers of all political alliances, but they were also constantly and spontaneously expressed in public and private instances. Hereby, the nation and "us" became momentarily equated.

The notion of the "Spirit of the Winter War," a term which was first coined during the Interim Peace, tells a great deal about the fears and expectations of Finnish elites on the

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[25] *Uusi Suomi*, "Suomen täysi-ikäiseksi tuleminen," 6 December 1939.

[26] *Suomen Sosialidemokraatti*, "Juttelimme eilen," 6 December 1940.

[27] Tuomas Tepora, "'Elävät vainajat': Kaatuneet kansakuntaa velvoittavana uhrina," in Sari Näre & Jenni Kirves, eds., *Ruma sota: Talvi- ja jatkosodan vaiettu historia* (Helsinki, 2008).

eve of World War II. The “Spirit” and the “Miracle” of the Winter War do not so much refer to a successful defense against the Soviet Union, but to the fact that the nation unified under an external threat. This may be treated as logical, but the divisions of the Civil War caused much political anxiety among the proponents of White Finland, who held many of the key positions in the political elites. How would the workers and the agrarian poor react in the scenario of a Soviet attack? One should keep in mind that the underground communism had enjoyed a steady support within the working class, thus accentuating the fear of a “fifth column.”

As it turned out, these fears about the loyalty of the Finnish working class reflected the worldview of the proponents of White Finland rather than reality. It has already been discussed how the unification of the nation had its roots in the centrist and social democratic policies of the 1930s and in the changed perception of the significance of the sacrifices of 1918. The Winter War can, in this regard, be treated almost as a symbolic gift to the nation. It was a “miracle” foremost in a mythological way, but not that much in reality, as the Finnish prewar society had already started to build up mutually binding ties and cohesion. These ties, nevertheless, were magnified and illuminated during the short war. The conflict served as a new birth myth of the nation, infused with spirituality and marvel. The war in itself did not eradicate political discord. Instead, its effect made political partisanship more tolerated within society. In the 1920s and 1930s, “divisive party politics” and trade union activism had been synonymous with an “unpatriotic attitude” for much of the Finnish middle class and especially the right wing. After the Winter War, many people experienced that the perceived unity of the nation was not threatened by politics any longer. The special “Spirit of the Winter War” should not thus be treated as a politically instrumental phenomenon, but rather an emotional one.

As we have noticed, the contemporaries perceived the mythological aspects of the war very well. For a moment, the collective bonds of attachment experienced across the social and political boundaries simulated an elevated idea of a perfect nation. Attention was paid to symbolic coincidences. The new war began about 21 years after 1918 as the nation's "coming-of-age" ritual and, as many soon noticed, it lasted about the same time as the Civil War, thus acting as its antithesis. At first, the Winter War was often referred to as the Second War of Independence. This is revealing: the myth of the White experience of the Civil War saw the internal conflict of 1918 as a fight against the eastern archenemy. The composition of the Winter War was perfect in this regard. It could essentially reflect the Independence War the nation needed in order to become a real nation. It was a fight against an external enemy, Soviet Russia, from which independence had been gained. The polarizing fratricide and the dividing memory of 1918 were undone by a unifying sacrifice.

The Finnish state inaugurated the Memorial Day for the Fallen after the Winter War. Interestingly, the Reds of 1918 were also commemorated for the first time under official state symbols. The Red victims of 1918 were entitled as the "fallen for their conviction."[28] Rhetorically this redefinition sometimes applied to both sides of the Civil War, but in practice it was the Reds who were thus incorporated into the nation by consigning their death with collective meaning. It is illuminating that the death of the Reds was thus transformed into a form of sacrifice, which at least potentially enriched the whole nation and its unity.

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[28] Ulla-Maija Peltonen, *Muistin paikat: Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta* (Helsinki, 2003), pp. 226–7; 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 (2009): 2, p. 294.

During the 1930s, the workers' symbols, mainly the red flags, had been banned. After the Winter War, these emblems were gradually allowed to be publicly displayed again. This gesture, obviously, did not include communist symbols – their time came after World War II. Nevertheless, these symbolic changes had profound implications. After 1939–40, formerly hostile national and working-class banners and emblems were not experienced as mutually exclusive any more. This phenomenon substantiates the conclusion that the Winter War indeed made room for ordinary politics despite the all-permeating insistence on political unity.

When one looks at the years of 1939–40, public ceremonies and media are filled with romantic notions of sacrifice. The memory of divisive violence seems to have vanished altogether. It does not represent anything exceptional that a state at war endorses its sacrifices, but in the Finnish case the sacrifice did not only represent a means to achieve unity and maintain its independence. The notion of ultimate sacrifice approached an end in itself. Binding sacrifices proved that the nation was viable, worthy of its existence. Blood sacrifice was needed in order not just to survive, but also to prove itself capable of living as a national collective. The memory of the sacrifice in the winter of 1939–40 projected to the future, as a speech given on the Memorial Day for the Fallen in 1942 demonstrates:

> *The dead live! Across all Finnish towns and villages, across the wide fields, lakes and forests, shines a sacred light from the graves of the warriors, speaking to us its wordless language about the greatness of human heroism, complete selflessness and limitless faith in the future. Finland cannot die. In Her collective mother's heart She*

preserves the living memory of Her sons and daughters who, like their innumerable forebears, died for their fatherland.[29]

These notions resembled those utilized by the National Socialists in the Third Reich. The difference lies in the fact that wartime Finland remained a parliamentary democracy and these highly charged metaphors were often created by the public more or less spontaneously. The rhetoric and propaganda in Finland in 1939–40 also lacked a sense of aggressiveness inherent to the Nazi propaganda. The Finnish blood sacrifice phraseology remained defensive in nature, the exception being the crusader propaganda during the first phase of the Continuation War. The rhetoric of 1939–40 demonstrated willingness to sacrifice, not willingness to annihilate.

The source of violence had been externalized. Violence and its memory were now controlled in the "centuries-old archenemy" in the east. Sacrifice became so vigorously celebrated because it relocated the violence from one's own group onto the enemy. Bolshevik Russians had been the scapegoats of the Civil War, but now they had demonstrated their imperialist and violent nature in reality. The blatant violence of the enemy purified the fouled nest of the Finnish nation; or, alternatively, the nation's own sacrifices atoned for the sins of fratricide in 1918. Dying for one's nation was much more important than killing for it.[30]

Many of the war-related negative aspects emerged as foci of popular attention only after the war during the Interim Peace from March 1940 to June 1941. The wartime in itself

[29] Arvi Kivimaa, "Elävät vainajat," in *Sankarivainajien muistopäivänä 17.5.1942* (Helsinki, 1942), p. 4.

[30] Cf. Marvin & Ingle, *Blood Sacrifice*; Richard A. Koenigsberg, *Nations Have the Right to Kill: Hitler, the Holocaust and War* (New York, 2009).

became rapidly viewed nostalgically. The loss of Finnish Karelia and other areas were vigorously mourned. During the war, the reality of uneven strength between the warring parties had been blurred in the public consciousness due to the Finns' successful defense and the public's inexperience of wartime propaganda. There were even rumors of the collapse of the Soviet Union in the near future, should the Finns fight on, before the reality of the Soviet military power forced the Finnish Army to a ceasefire. In the end, many in the society experienced the peace terms of 1940 as a great humiliation. Shame is a powerful social emotion, which can assume collective forms and thus generate conflicts.[31] The armistice led to a major reorganization of the Finnish population. Over 400,000 Karelian evacuees resettled around Finland, abandoning their homes to Soviet occupiers. The losses created an atmosphere of bitterness and a kind of helplessness, which in turn helped to create a thirst for revanche and contributed to the Finnish government's quest for a strong ally.

As we approach the changed political and emotional situation during the Continuation War, one crucial question concerning the place of violence in Finnish society arises. The Winter War illuminated a concrete change in the understanding of societal bonds. The distinction between the former adversaries of 1918 was greatly dissolved; the extreme left was paralyzed during the war and the extreme right was pushed to the margins as well. On a collective level, this changed perception of the Finnish nation concerned the use of violence to control the society: the license to kill and the authority to demand sacrifices from the citizens. The White government had emerged as a victor of the battle between the adversaries of the Civil War. This should, following Weber, be understood so

[31] Thomas J. Scheff, *Bloody Revenge: Emotions, Nationalism and War* (Boulder, CO, 1994).

that the bourgeois state and its institutions had won itself the monopoly on violence. During the Winter War, the nation demonstrated this monopoly in practice by funneling violence to an external enemy, by successfully controlling any (even if minor) internal resistance and by requiring *willing* sacrifice from its members. In other words, people across social boundaries accepted the right of the state to sacrifice citizens on its behalf when necessary. This leads us to ponder on the basic problem of nation-state violence and warfare in forthcoming chapters. The prolonged conflict of 1941–44 again challenged the monopoly on violence and brought to the fore the Janus face of regenerating sacrifice and meaningless death. How to tack in the wave of pure violence on one hand and altruistic sacrifice on the other? Who killed, who was sacrificed and who sacrificed oneself? In the chaotic circumstances of war, especially in the summer of 1944, the answers to these questions were often bound to various situational and personal factors. The collective, binding ethos of the Winter War, born in the special liminal circumstances of the winter of 1939–40, was a powerful idea in upholding the fighting morale of the people, but it was also vulnerable to the corrosive ramifications of a long violent conflict in 1941–45.

Violence to End All Violence: The Aggression of 1941

The outbreak of the Continuation War in June 1941 was not an unexpected event for most Finns. Besides the political and military preparations for a renewed conflict with the Soviet Union, there was a popular sense of revanche to take back the territories lost in the Winter War, whenever the opportunity would emerge. It is telling that already at the time, the period after the Moscow Peace Treaty from March 1940 to June 1941 could be referred to

as an *interim* peace (*välirauha*),[32] and the legal state of war was kept in force. The arrival of the first friendly German troops on Finnish soil in the autumn of 1940 did not, of course, go unnoticed by the public. At the same time, the memory of the Soviet aggression in November 1939 and the harassing Soviet foreign policy towards Finland in 1940–41 created an atmosphere of imminent threat, which made the probability of a new war, sooner or later, seem very high.[33] It is safe to say that a large segment, if not the majority of the Finnish population considered, firstly, the outbreak of the Continuation War in June 1941 an unavoidable necessity and, secondly, the aim of recapturing the lost territories a just cause.

Nevertheless, the "brotherhood-in-arms" with Nazi Germany presented a prospect of a future, which went way beyond the moderate aim of restoring the pre-Winter War borders. After its campaigns in Poland, Scandinavia, Benelux, France and the Balkans, the German Army of 1941 had gained a mythic aura of superiority, and the Finnish experience of the Red Army's battle performance in the Winter War did not make it easy to bet on the Soviet success against the Germans. After the misery of the Moscow Peace Treaty and the traumatic experience of being left alone at the mercy of Stalin, this new situation seemed to turn the tide completely. The old dream of Finnish nationalism was revived: the creation of Greater Finland (*Suur-Suomi*), the boundaries of which would include, at a minimum, the Soviet Eastern Karelia, but possibly also the Ingria region around Leningrad and other large

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[32] Heikki Ylikangas, "Välirauha 1940 – minkä sodan odotuksessa?" *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 101 (2003): 4, pp. 569–76.

[33] Mauno Jokipii, *Jatkosodan synty: Tutkimuksia Saksan ja Suomen sotilaallisesta yhteistyöstä 1940–41* (Helsinki, 1987), passim.

areas of Northwest Russia.[34] It is difficult to estimate the true support for such aims among the Finns of 1941. Even though the popular enthusiasm for Greater Finland should not be overestimated, it was certainly an influential ideology among much of the Finnish establishment: academia, Lutheran clergy, officer corps, teachers and civil servants. At the height of the German advance to the east in the summer and autumn of 1941, and still in 1942, the Finnish conservative press was keen to imagine the soon anticipated collapse of the whole Soviet Union, or Russia for that matter, as a state.[35] It seems that in the atmosphere of successful offensives, and with the background of the blatant Soviet aggression in 1939–40, even many among the Finnish social democrats and the working class were willing to accept the new expansive aims, at least as far as they were justified by national security.[36]

The famous example of the aggressive ethos of 1941 is the so-called "Scabbard Order" by Marshal Mannerheim in July 1941. In this Order of the Day No. 3 on the eve of the Finnish offensive, Mannerheim recalled his oath in 1918 "not to put his sword back to the scabbard before Finland and Eastern Karelia would be free."[37] But already in his first order of the day in June 1941, Mannerheim had set the tone for the coming war:

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[34] On these contemplations and various new border options at the table in 1941, see Ohto Manninen, *Suur-Suomen ääriviivat: Kysymys tulevaisuudesta ja turvallisuudesta Suomen Saksan-politiikassa 1941* (Helsinki, 1980); on the idea and ideology of Greater Finland in prewar times, see Toivo Nygård, *Suur-Suomi vai lähiheimolaisten auttaminen: Aatteellinen heimotyö itsenäisessä Suomessa* (Helsinki, 1978).

[35] Heikki Luostarinen, *Perivihollinen: Suomen oikeistolehdistön Neuvostoliittoa koskeva vihollliskuva sodassa 1941–44; tausta ja sisältö* (Tampere, 1986), pp. 207–17.

[36] Manninen, *Suur-Suomen ääriviivat*, pp. 222–7.

[37] For the "Scabbard Order," see also the chapters by Henrik Meinander and Outi Fingerroos in this book.

I call upon you to join me in a sacred war against the enemy of our nation. The heroic dead will rise again from under their flower-decorated mounds and join us as we resolutely depart on a crusade against our enemy alongside the mighty military force of Germany in order to secure Finland's future.
Brothers-in-arms! Follow me for this last time – now that the people of Karelia rise again and Finland's new tomorrow is dawning.[38]

The spirit of Mannerheim's wordings was reproduced in orders of the day issued by Finnish army corps, divisional and regimental commanders in 1941.[39] Many of the orders used the rhetoric of "final confrontation," "holy war" and even "crusade" against the age-old enemy. The Finnish aggression was justified by the "hideous violence" of the Russians/Soviets in 1939–40 – and again in the bombing raids of June 1941 – but also in the long tradition of Finnish history from ancient times, thus reinforcing an image of "the eternal archenemy" in the east. Now, it seemed, had come the day to finish off the Russian threat once and for all, and, as a continuation of the Winter War, the internal violence of 1918 would be undone by uniting against the external enemy. One important theme in defining the collective meaning of forthcoming sacrifices was again to depict the new generation of Finns as washing away the sins of their fathers, i.e. the fratricide of 1918 and

[38] KA/SArk, Supreme Commander's (Mannerheim) Order of the Day No. 1, June 1941.

[39] Orders of the day from June 1941 to November 1944 from nine Finnish infantry regiments were systematically studied for this chapter, the numbers of the regiments being 1, 7, 8, 12, 33, 44, 48, 49 and 61; the regimental orders also included excerpts from the orders of the day issued by the higher level commanders.

the political divisions of the 1920s and 1930s, by spilling their own blood for the common cause.

After the lonely victimhood of the Winter War and with the warning example of the recently sovietized Baltic States in mind, the key Finnish ethos in the summer of 1941 was to take an active role in shaping one's own history. The required sacrifices were seen as a regenerative gift for the future. Besides the liberation of the whole of Karelia from Soviet oppression, the new victorious war would establish a lasting, eternal peace for the coming generations – it was the final scene of the Finnish struggle for freedom and a war to end all wars. One example from Infantry Regiment 8 in July 1941, just when the regiment was about to enter Soviet Eastern Karelia:

> *Soon we will cross the old border* [of 1939] *to step onto Karelian soil as liberators of the suffering Karelian people, and at the same time we will guarantee freedom and peace to future generations of Finland's people. Let us be proud because God has given this historic, sacred task to our generation. Let us be worthy of that task in every way. Let us fight and sacrifice ourselves, let us destroy our ancient enemy forever. I have faith in you! You will do it!* [40]

Infantry Regiment 8 was the same regiment where author Väinö Linna fought his war. Linna's novel *The Unknown Soldier* (*Tuntematon sotilas*, 1954) has become the canonic interpretation of the common Finnish soldiers' war experience in 1941–44, and one of its main themes is the front soldiers' fundamental innocence and purity from the fanciful

[40] KA/SArk, Order of the Day No. 4 of Infantry Regiment 8, Colonel P.A. Autti, 24 July 1941.

Greater Finland idealism of the officer corps.[41] Although perhaps accurate as a generalization, Linna's opinion is contrasted by the large quantity of elevated verses on Greater Finland in the poems collected from ordinary Finnish soldiers in 1941–43.[42] These poems written for the Army's official publication should not, of course, be used to make too wide conclusions; nevertheless, they demonstrate that the idea of creating a "Great Future" and new borders for the Finnish people could be highly inspiring also for the rank-and-file of the Army. Another important theme in the poems was the binding sacrifice of the Winter War, which obliged further sacrifices. In the following verse, written on the second anniversary of the end of the Winter War in March 1942, a dying soldier of 1939–40 is pledging his comrades to take revenge in blood:

> *– This, my brothers, seek vengeance on the Russkies.*
> *Blood guilt requires blood.*
> *Long live this tormented, most beloved land!*
> *A time will come when she is whole.*[43]

It was not only the sacrifices of the Winter War, which challenged Finns to carry on the struggle. The Finnish offensive had started in July 1941. The lost territories of the Winter

[41] Jyrki Nummi, *Jalon kansan parhaat voimat: Kansalliset kuvat ja Väinö Linnan romaanit Tuntematon sotilas ja Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (Porvoo, 1993), pp. 50–65, 75–93.

[42] KA/SArk, T 10602/24–25, Information Department of the High Command (Ttus.1/PM), poems collected for the anthology *Täältä jostakin*. There are hundreds of poems in the collection, only a small number of them published in 1943.

[43] KA/SArk, T 10602/24, Second Lieutenant H.O. Lehtoranta, "Verivelka" ("Debt in Blood").

War were soon recaptured and, in December 1941, the Finnish Army stood at the gates of Leningrad on the Karelian Isthmus and at River Svir, Petrozavodsk and north of Lake Onega in Eastern Karelia. A Greater Finland was no more a mere fantasy, but it had become a political and military reality. The human cost of this had been very high: with over 8,800 fatal casualties, August 1941 was the second bloodiest month of all World War II in Finland, and altogether the offensive of 1941 was deadlier than the Winter War or the summer battles in 1944.[44]

As Ilona Kemppainen has analyzed in her dissertation on the cultural history of wartime death in Finland, the obituaries for the fallen in 1941 were mostly written in the same elevated, patriotic language as the obituaries of the Winter War. Soldiers' violent death could still be made meaningful by embedding it to the national narrative of collective struggle and sacrifice. Yet the summer and autumn of 1941 was also the climax of sacrificial death. The rhetorical power of "the freedom war" or "holy crusade" in its relation to soldiers' suffering and the climbing death toll was extinguishable, especially after the winter of 1941–42, as the anticipated final victory seemed to escape out of reach to an uncertain future. In the obituaries, a more laconic style emerged.[45] More seriously for the Army, in the late autumn of 1941, the fighting morale of the infantry regiments was also showing ominous signs of resentment and exhaustion. Some protest had already appeared at the crossing of the 1939 border, but the signs grew more alarming as the advance to

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[44] The deadliest month was February 1940 and the third deadliest June 1944 with ca. 9,300 and 8,600 fatal casualties, respectively; Finnish National Archives, *Suomen sodissa 1939–1945 menehtyneiden tiedosto* [Database on Finnish War Deaths in 1939–45], http://kronos.narc.fi/menehtyneet/, the calculation made in 4 November 2009.

[45] Kemppainen, *Isänmaan uhrit*, pp. 117–22.

Eastern Karelia was continued after the occupation of Petrozavodsk in early October. Some mass-scale objections took place, and even if the Army was able to limit the open resistance and to conclude the offensive operations by the beginning of December 1941, a high-water mark in the aggressive spirit of the troops had clearly been reached.[46] As the leading Finnish military psychiatrist Sven E. Donner later recognized, the growing number of psychiatric casualties in the autumn of 1941 also resulted from the soldiers' experience of meaningless advance further to the east.[47]

Our two chapters on the Winter War and on the aggression of 1941 have mainly concentrated on the collective level of consigning martial violence with cultural meaning and on the influence of these collective sentiments on the individual people. In the following chapters, the focus shifts towards private experiences of violence during the Continuation War and how these experiences acted back to the collective. This shift is not only an analytical change of perspective, but it reflects the way many Finnish soldiers and civilians experienced the war. When consulting various reminiscence collections, memoirs and popular histories, a general impression is that the Winter War especially was experienced as a collective phenomenon, in which personal experiences, intentions and emotions easily dissolved into the Great Story of the nation and in which collective meanings and symbols transcended one's individual perspective.[48] This changed during the protracted Continuation War. Although the national level of identification and consigning

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[46] Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, pp. 139–50.

[47] KA, Sven E. Donner's Collection, File 3, appendix to a conference paper "Erfarenheter av den krigspsykiatriska organisationen inom Finlands försvarsmakt under kriget 1941–44," August 1953.

[48] The same can be said when comparing war novels published after the Winter War and after the Continuation War.

collective meanings never became irrelevant, of course, its ability to merge a single metanarrative out of the multitude of private experiences diminished. The violence of war, which in 1939–40 had reinforced social cohesion over former internal boundaries, started to create new divisions and tensions in society and to corrode the collective experience of war.

II. Challenged Meanings of Violence, 1942–45

Direct Confrontation with Violence

Despite the setbacks in the winter of 1941–42, the aggressive rhetoric did not disappear completely. In some orders of the day the tone got even sharper, reviving the horrors of “the Bolshevist plague” and “being enslaved by the lower Asian race,” as the prospect of final victory was again substituted by the deadly threat of national annihilation.[49] As Heikki Luostarinen has shown, by the autumn of 1943 the enemy image of Russians in Finnish conservative and right-wing newspapers could surpass the German foreign war propaganda in nastiness – the feelings of disappointment and fear gave the enemy depictions a bitter edge.[50] Yet the faith in final victory was also alive, at least before the news of Stalingrad. In September 1942, the acting commander of Infantry Regiment 7 facing the besieged Leningrad could still issue the following order:

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[49] See eg. KA/SArk, Order of the Day No. 43a of Infantry Regiment 12, Colonel Albert Puroma, 23 December 1942; Supreme Commander’s (Mannerheim) Order of the Day No. 86, 28 January 1943.

[50] Luostarinen, *Perivihollinen*, pp. 357–9.

> *Let us also in the coming year be prepared to drive the Russkies from our barricades, night and day, but let us also prepare ourselves for victory: crushing the fortifications in front of us and completely destroying the enemy surrounded in Ingria* [i.e. in besieged Leningrad].[51]

Nevertheless, as a general trend the orders of the day of 1942–43 had a different tone from the uncompromising rhetoric of 1941. The collective meanings consigned to soldiers' continued fighting and sacrifice started to retreat back to the private sphere of motivations. Instead of creating Greater Finland, Finnish soldiers were depicted as protecting their homes and families, and instead of destroying Bolshevism, the Army was defending the "Finnish values" and "way of life." The aggression towards the enemy was replaced by the positive emotions of love, trust and comradeship for one's own kinsfolk.[52] The nature of Finland's war, which in 1941 had been covered with the phrases of "eternal peace" and "the great future," was now denominated as the duty of safeguarding "the home stove" and "the women and children." The orders of the day issued at Christmas became important manifestations of the Finnish nation described as one large family nestled in itself; the pious celebration of the Holy Night and the Christmas Peace were seen as uniting the front and the home and revealing something essential in "the soul of the Finnish people."

It is remarkable how neatly the concrete violence is absent in the orders of the day and other official documents of war. Reading these papers creates a view of a gigantic struggle, in which the true actors are such huge entities as armies, regiments, nations, isms

[51] KA/SArk, Order of the Day No. 34/42 of Infantry Regiment 7, Lieutenant Colonel Adolf Ehrnrooth, 4 September 1942.

[52] See Kivimäki & Tepora, "War of Hearts."

and the people as a singular collective.[53] The flesh and blood of war is missing, or they, too, are used as referring to the collective nation: "the blood of our people." But especially for the front soldiers the violence of war was a real, brutal, bodily and often traumatic experience, which, in the long run, had an effect on popular mentalities.

At the front, the most relevant element of war's violence was that directed against oneself and one's fellow soldiers. Just as on the collective level the Soviet aggression in 1939–40 had helped to establish feelings of unity and determination, the violence experienced at the micro level of a small unit of soldiers tended to strengthen mutual bonds of comradeship. As Knut Pipping has shown in his classic sociological study on Finnish soldiers' primary group, soldiers took disinterested personal risks in trying to save the wounded and the bodies of their dead comrades from the hands of the enemy. Such altruistic courage was highly esteemed, whereas the aggressive courage shown against the enemy was considered rather irrelevant.[54] Ideally, a small unit of soldiers was experienced as a family of brothers, which was elevated by the martyrdom of sacrifice. Losses and suffering constituted a brotherhood-in-arms among those, who had been "baptized in fire." This was a deeply felt attachment relationship, which some war veterans later recognized as the most satisfying emotional bond of their lives.[55] It made the war a matter with personal meaning and helped to overcome the experiences of fear and isolation in the dugouts.

Yet the brotherhood-in-arms cannot simply be reduced to a concrete relationship between the members of small units. "The horizontal community of citizens," and

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[53] Cf. Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 69–72.

[54] Knut Pipping, *Infantry Company as a Society*, 1947, ed. and transl. Petri Kekäle (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 163–5, 204; Pipping's study was based on his own experiences at the front.

[55] Kivimäki & Tepora, "War of Hearts," p. 286.

especially the brotherly comradeship between men, was also an ideological concept of modern nationalist states, according to which young boys had been educated in schools, youth organizations and later in the conscript army. The ideal of brotherhood can be described as a default setting for manly attachment relations as much in Finland as in other modern nation-states.[56] Thus, in risking their lives to save a wounded comrade, soldiers were not only concerned with the physical survival of a fellow soldier. They were actualizing the ideal of comradeship and preserving "something greater" than one's own life, or the life of one's comrade. In chaotic and hopeless circumstances, "the front" was upheld by this abstract, yet intensely felt attachment to the ideal of brotherhood-in-arms,[57] which was crystallized by loss and violence. As Thomas Kühne has pointed out in his study of martial *Kameradschaft* in Germany, comradeship was both a safe haven in the midst of overwhelming horrors and at the same time the very motor for the continuing suffering and violence.[58]

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[56] See e.g. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 7, 141–5; George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (New York, 1985), pp. 80–8; on the Finnish case, see Seija-Leena Nevala-Nurmi, "Girls and Boys in the Finnish Voluntary Defence Movement," *Ennen & nyt* 3–4/2006, www.ennenjanyt.net/2006_3/nevala.html, accessed 15 April 2010; Anders Ahlbäck & Ville Kivimäki, "Masculinities at War: Finland 1918–1950," *Norma – Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies* 3 (2008): 2, pp. 114–31.

[57] E.g. in the final stages of the Winter War in February and March 1940, cf. Lasse Laaksonen*, Todellisuus ja harhat: Kannaksen taistelut ja suomalaisten joukkojen tila talvisodan lopussa 1940* (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 330–7, 343.

[58] Thomas Kühne, *Kameradschaft: Die Soldaten des nationalsozialistischen Krieges und das 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2006), pp. 147–9, 157–71, 198.

Despite the analogy in the overall trend in nationalist thinking, there were cultural differences in respect to the nature of comradeship. In Germany, for instance, the totalitarianism in martial comradeship, which finally endorsed the whole (manly) *Volksgemeinschaft*, reached such aggressive dimensions during the war in the east that the violence towards the outsiders and "weaklings" became a purpose in itself.[59] A distinctive feature of the Finnish Army was that during the 1930s it had been slowly developing towards a model of a people's army of a democratic state, which brought it closer to the centrist and social democratic citizen ideals. To a certain extent, soldiers could take this propagation seriously and emphasize their double role both as soldiers and free citizens.[60] It would be naïve to depict the wartime Army as a democratic institution based on citizens' free will, but as Mirkka Danielsbacka has demonstrated in her study on soldiers' unofficial practices in testing the limits of the Army's norms and coercion, there was considerable space to "negotiate" inside the military. Some soldiers explicitly appealed to their rights as citizens of a democratic state when protesting against unreasonable or excessive orders.[61] More strongly and openly than in the totalitarian armies of World War II, Finnish soldiers were active in evaluating the necessity of their sacrifices and sometimes setting limits to the extent of violence. The death penalty, for instance, was passed only rarely on serious

[59] Ibidem, pp. 140–53, 184–8.

[60] Jarl Kronlund et al., *Suomen puolustuslaitos 1918–1939: Puolustusvoimien rauhan ajan historia* (Porvoo, 1988), pp. 367–8, 409–13, 533; Juha Mälkki, *Herrat, jätkät ja sotataito: Kansalaissotilas- ja ammattisotilasarmeijan rakentuminen 1920- ja 1930-luvulla "talvisodan ihmeeksi"* (Helsinki, 2008), pp. 341–8.

[61] Mirkka Danielsbacka, "Sotilaskurin rajoilla: Miehistön vastarinnan muodot ja merkitykset jatkosodan alkuvaiheessa," *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 106 (2008): 3, pp. 269–84.

disciplinary crimes before the summer of 1944; it was considered too harmful for the image of the Army and for the morale of the troops.[62] Speaking purely from the military perspective, this "civilianism" was both the strength and the weakness of the Army: it somewhat limited officers' freedom of action and led to a rather loose military discipline, but it also emphasized soldiers' personal motivation and initiative over formal orders and coercion.

What about the active violence of the Finnish soldiers themselves? As in any other army, there were those soldiers in the Finnish Army who became the masters of the martial profession and who could even find fulfillment and satisfaction in the acts of war.[63] But the share of such super-soldiers in a conscript army should not be overestimated. It is worth mentioning that even at the frontlines the direct experience of face-to-face killing was not an everyday phenomenon, especially during the period of stationary warfare. Furthermore, the most lethal infantry weapons (machine guns and submachine guns) were quite scarce and they were used by a small number of soldiers, who consequently carried the toughest burden of the "killing-job."[64] In the light of the Soviet casualty figures, the size of the Finnish Army and the nature of modern warfare dominated by heavy indirect fire, it seems

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[62] Before the summer of 1944, there were only two death penalties carried out for disciplinary crimes on Finnish soldiers; Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, p. 189. As will be discussed later, the situation changed in the chaotic circumstances of June–August 1944, when the death penalty became possible also for desertion and "cowardice."

[63] Cf. Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing: Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth-Century Warfare* (London, 2000).

[64] Cf. S.L.A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*, 1947 (Norman, OK, 2000), pp. 50–63.

likely that a vast number of Finnish soldiers, probably the majority, never directly killed a single Soviet soldier during the whole Continuation War.[65] And even for those who did, the experience of killing in war does not seem to have been an explicit moral problem, as long as the act followed the conventional logic of battle. The Soviet soldier was "the enemy," and thus not exactly a fellow human being in the normal peacetime meaning. Finnish soldiers used collective names of their adversary to distance themselves from the concrete act of killing; the Soviet soldier was "a Russki" (*ryssä*), "Ivan" (*iivana, vanja*), "the pointed cap" (*piippalakki*) and so on. The snipers could simply talk of "the prey."[66] The following postwar reminiscence of a front soldier is illustrative:

> *A certain phenomenon is characteristic for writers and filmmakers who have not themselves been at the front. Sooner or later a fictional soldier will take his head in his hands, like Rodin's "The Thinker," and ask himself: – Have I turned into a killer? Perhaps I have purposefully forgotten this issue, or perhaps in reality it simply did not arise. Either way, I cannot remember this concern causing any kind of a problem at any point. In our understanding, only ending the life of a helpless*

[65] Precise calculations are quite impossible to make: the total amount of Finnish soldiers in 1941–44 was over 600,000; the approximate death toll for the Red Army facing the Finns was about 250,000 – in modern warfare, the largest share of casualties has been caused by the artillery. Then, regarding the experience of killing, one should also consider the wounded, as the soldier using his rifle could not know whether he had killed or wounded his target.

[66] Ville Kivimäki, "Sotilaan työ, siviilin taakka: 'Vihollisen tuhoamisen' dynamiikasta, kokemuksesta ja muistosta," in Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki, eds., *Ihminen sodassa: Suomalaisten kokemuksia talvi- ja jatkosodasta* (Helsinki, 2006), pp. 195–8; cf. Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York, 1996), pp. 156–70.

> *individual like a prisoner or a wounded soldier meant killing. I never witnessed such an incident.*[67]

Yet it was unavoidable that the violence of war spilled over its conventional boundaries of a symmetric enemy-versus-enemy conflict. Some of this violence was bound to the general, maybe even universal dynamics of war. Violence nourished more violence: had the Soviets treated wounded Finnish soldiers badly, revenge was taken at the next opportunity. This led to atrocities on both sides.[68] Shooting the prisoners-of-war occurred, some of it in the heated atmosphere of the immediate aftermath of battle, but sometimes carried out more consciously from plain cruelty or indifference.[69] The Red Army had a considerable number of women enlisted in various duties, serving also at the frontlines and in the partisan units.[70] Mostly this caused puzzlement and curiosity among the Finnish soldiers who happened to encounter a living or dead Soviet woman soldier, but there were also cases of sexual violence and mutilation of female corpses.[71] It is difficult to say what was the extent of these kind of brutalities – for obvious reasons, they have not been discussed openly after the war. In a large reminiscence collection of Finnish soldiers' wartime experiences,

[67] SKS KRA, Korsuperinne Collection (Korsu) 1973, Vol. IV, E.K., p. 6.

[68] Ville Kivimäki, "Rintamaväkivalta ja makaaberi ruumis – Nuorten miesten matka puhtaudesta traumaan," in Näre & Kirves, *Ruma sota*, pp. 144–5.

[69] Antti Kujala, *Vankisurmat: Neuvostosotavankien laittomat ampumiset jatkosodassa* (Helsinki, 2008).

[70] Reina Pennington, "Offensive Women: Women in Combat in the Red Army," in Paul Addison & Angus Calder, eds., *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of the War in the West, 1939 – 1945* (London, 1997).

[71] Ville Kivimäki, "Ryvetetty enkeli: Suomalaissotilaiden neuvostoliittolaisiin naissotilaisiin kohdistama seksuaalinen väkivalta ja sodan sukupuolittunut mielenmaisema," *Naistutkimus – Kvinnoforskning* 20 (2007): 3, pp. 19–33.

collected in 1973, quite a lot of war veterans recalled different occasions of "bad things that happened," which had clearly caused them uneasiness and moral contemplations. This was the dark, dirty zone of war; it was also the source of traumatic memories.[72] For those who had witnessed the brutal and macabre face of war, the violence behind the elevated phrases of patriotic heroism and sacrifice was revealed.

The above-mentioned acts of violence were hardly a result of any official encouragement by the Finnish military, vice-versa. At best, the brutalities were made easier by the anti-Soviet war propaganda and by the long tradition of Finnish Russophobia. For the most part, they belong to the dynamics of violence inherent to any war. Nevertheless, there was yet a sphere of violence, which was indeed born out of a conscious Finnish policy, namely the fate of the civilian population in the occupied Eastern Karelia. The Finnish civilian casualties caused by the Soviet bombing raids had boosted the determination of Finnish soldiers to fight on. In reverse, soldiers' observation of the harsh treatment of the non-Finnic civilians, especially in 1941–42, could be a morally damaging experience. This was a crucial difference to the Winter War, which had purely been a defensive war against an aggressive invader. Such a moral advantage was lost during the Finnish occupation of Eastern Karelia. Although the idea of Greater Finland was inspiring for many, as we have seen earlier, its true ramifications and racist practices could be demoralizing. The following reminiscence is from a Finnish soldier, who saw Russian children held captive in a Petrozavodsk concentration camp and tried to throw them some bread and sugar. Children started to fight for the food:

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[72] SKS KRA, Korsu 1973; for the trauma of active violence in general, see e.g. Larry Dewey, *War and Redemption: Treatment and Recovery in Combat-related Posttraumatic Stress Disorder* (Hants, 2004), pp. 73–95; Grossman, *On Killing*, pp. 87–93.

> *I can see no more, my eyes fill with tears, and I cry. Must children suffer because of our hardness? Something breaks inside me. I remember my own little sons. They are now in Sweden in the care of good, wealthy and civilized people. These children of Äänislinna* [Petrozavodsk]*, instead, have a concentration camp, barbed wire, armed guards.* [Wartime minister] *Tanner writes: "when war is being waged, it must be waged with full force." But are these concentration camps necessary, and must new ones be built?*[73]

Banality of War and Escapism

The violence at the front raised a barrier between the "true front soldiers"[74] and those at the rear echelon, in staffs and at the home front.[75] It is telling that the soldiers under fire often called their colleagues behind the front "male *lottas*" – *lottas* being the members of women's Lotta Svärd Organization – thus emphasizing their own and the front's masculinity and the effeminacy of the others behind the lines. There is nothing unique in this phenomenon; such antagonism is probably unavoidable in any army and nation at war, as the risks and hardships are always distributed more or less unevenly. It is just as well that it would be wrong to idealize the national unity of the Winter War too far in

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[73] SKS KRA, Korsu 1973, Vol. IV, R.L., p. 63.

[74] Coined with the name *jermu*, which is close to the French term *poilus* in its connotations and similar also to the English Tommy, American G.I. Joe and German *Landser*.

[75] Pipping, *Infantry Company*, p. 209.

comparison to the years 1941–44: there were problems and conflicts in upholding the experience of oneness and common sacrifices also in 1939–40, even some serious ones.[76] But during the Continuation War, the prolonged experience of deadly violence at the front and the return to a relatively normal everyday life on the home front widened the gap to such an extent that it had an alienating and demoralizing effect on the front soldiers' experience. At the same time, a new political polarization started to take shape under the surface. As no polling took place during the whole war, there are no records of wartime political changes. But in the elections of March 1945, the coalition of re-legitimized communists and leftist socialists gained a landslide victory of 23.5 percent of the votes, surpassed only by the 25.1 percent share for the social democrats.

The static and mostly quiet trench warfare lasted until June 1944.[77] In addition to the growing experiential gap between the front and the home front, soldiers' activities in the immediate vicinity of the frontline became reminiscent of a peculiar kind of peacetime: building and decorating recreational facilities, sports competitions, farming and gardening, going to the movies, organizing choirs and theatre plays, publishing regimental newspapers and so on. For the infantry in the trenches, the violence of war was ever-present in the form

[76] One of the most sensitive issues was the occasionally rude or even malevolent treatment of the Finnish Karelian civilian evacuees by the Finnish officials or by the local population at their evacuation sites, the news of which very naturally caused anger among the Karelian soldiers at the front; Ahto, *Talvisodan henki*, pp. 203–9.

[77] After the repulsion of the Soviet spring offensive in 1942, the monthly average of fatal Finnish casualties from June 1942 to May 1944 was "only" 557.5 per month; *Suomen sodissa 1939–1945 menehtyneiden tiedosto*, http://kronos.narc.fi/menehtyneet/, the calculation made in 4 November 2009. The average size of the Finnish Army for the same period was about 426,000 soldiers; *Jatkosodan historia*, Vol. 4 (Porvoo, 1993), p. 141 (table).

of patrolling, nightly skirmishes and sporadic artillery fire, but it seems to have lost much of its collective meaning as a national struggle and to have turned into banal routines with only local, practical, temporary significance. Had the Winter War and still the beginning of the Continuation War been widely experienced as a collective feat of strength with imminent national cruciality, the sharpest edge of such ethos had been taken off by the spring of 1944.[78] Instead of sustained determination and preparedness, escapism stepped in. Just one example to point the contrast: Shortly before the Soviet summer offensive of 1944 was about to break out, the Finnish Army's Education and Entertainment Office had issued instructions on organizing "easy pastimes" for the trenches. The long list of recommended activities included, for example, various card and board games, quizzes, tricks, walking on stilts and tug-of-war. Even a "magician's box" and a manual for the "dugout magician" (*korsutaikuri*) had been especially designed for frontline use.[79] Needless to say, the return from such carelessness to the extreme violence of war in June 1944 was a shocking experience.

During the period of stationary war, the elevation and romanticism, with which the collective hardships had been addressed in the early stages of Finnish participation in World War II, began to ring hollow also on the home front. It became all the more difficult

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[78] On the corrosive effect of the static period of war in 1942–44, see the eyewitness accounts of e.g. Colonel Wolf H. Halsti, *Ratkaisu 1944: Suomen sota 1939–1945*, Vol. 3 (Helsinki, 1957), pp. 80–8; Captain Erkki Mielonen, *Pelko ja pakokauhu: Henkinen paine sodassa* (Helsinki, 1968), pp. 26–40; on the general atmosphere in Finland in the spring of 1944, see Henrik Meinander, *Suomi 1944: Sota, yhteiskunta, tunnemaisema* (Helsinki, 2009).

[79] KA/SArk, T 10601/22, Information Department of the High Command (Ttus.2/PM), "Kevyttä ajanvietettä," 1944.

to maintain good morale among the population, which was struggling to make ends meet. Although open expressions of disaffection were mostly suppressed and the perceived unity maintained on the surface, the social solidarity was seriously tested by various disintegrating phenomena, such as the spread of black market profiteering, alcoholism, crime and venereal diseases. Elevated rhetoric was more and more often understood as pure propaganda. Wartime experience transformed into everyday experience, where there was little space for elevation. A special cultural feature in wartime Finland was the dance prohibition issued by the state at the outbreak of the Winter War in 1939. The prohibition was originally meant to honor the fallen and to emphasize the collective sorrow and piety over individual, bodily desires and joy. But during the long stationary war period, its meaningfulness became contested and it lead to a culture of secret "corner dances," in which the people tried to escape the hardships and boredom of war, at least for a moment.[80]

Also the sacredness of soldiers' sacrificial death was in danger of turning into a banal experience void of cohesive meanings. A routine-like confrontation with violent death could be counter-productive. On his way from home to conscription into the Army in the winter of 1941–42, a young man encountered a depressing sight of newly arrived coffins laying on the frozen ground:

> *Only then did I notice the thick cardboard coffins that had again been brought from the front during the night and unloaded from the truck. They always left them there at the crossroads, next to the cemetery cross. After two or three hours, the handful*

[80] Maarit Niiniluoto, *On elon retki näin, eli: Miten viihteestä tuli sodan voittaja; Viihdytyskiertueita, kotirintaman kulttuuria ja Saksan suhteita vuosina 1939–45* (Helsinki, 1994), pp. 40–2.

> *of village men that were left would come and drag the coffins on makeshift sleds made of skis to a plank shed in the back of the cemetery where the undertaker kept his picks and shovels as well as the flag of Finland, made of crepe paper.* […] *So, is this how it will be?*[81]

In this emotional atmosphere created by the protracted warfare, material shortages and dance bans, the rhetoric of war produced by the state, the military and the mainstream press gained a more demanding tone. The binding example set by the military fallen became a crucial motivator in the home front's propaganda.[82] The following extract is from a commemoration speech for the fallen in May 1943 given by a military chaplain:

> *Could we have avoided sacrifices? Could our people have chosen some other easier and less bloody path?* […] *In the midst of war and in the midst of changing moods on the home front, we have the courage to ask these questions. So obvious is our people's path of sacrifice that we have the chance to answer these questions without having to guess. The consequences of choosing a different path everywhere surround us. Everyone knows what would have happened had our nation, in the hour of its destiny, not detached itself from the gigantic carcass of its eastern neighbor and pushed the strangers to the other side of the border in the winter of 1918. We would have become one with the Soviet people, part of the rotting corpse of the Soviet Union. The fate of Soviet Eastern Karelia provides the answer to the*

[81] SKS KRA, Mieselämäkerrat Collection 1993, p. 3027.

[82] Luostarinen, *Perivihollinen*, p. 356; Tepora, "Elävät vainajat," p. 119.

question of whether our people then would have suffered fewer casualties. Her deserted villages and destroyed homes, her separated families and Siberia's immeasurable expanses of land illustrate the casualties caused by Bolshevism. Those sacrifices are manifold to our sacrifices.[83]

In stressing the sustained meaning of sacrifices one can read the fear of disintegration and loosening morale. But such reassurances were also one reason for the spreading escapism – together with the experiences of violence, the continuous talk of sacrifices, disinterested struggle and "national existence" had a numbing effect and created a need to imagine a different world altogether. Two of the most classic Finnish fairy-tales have their roots in this period of the Continuation War, Tove Jansson's *Moomins* (the first book published in 1945) and Yrjö Kokko's *Pessi ja Illusia* (1944). They both use the language of fantasy to depict the vulnerable goodness and child-like innocence surrounded by a dark, threatening and violent outside world. Fairy tales were not only a form of escapism: the allegories of good and evil, threat and rescue helped to touch the anxieties and uncertainties of the time.[84]

[Pair of photos:]

No. 15. A community of commemoration and sorrow: Memorial Day for the Fallen at the Hero's Cemetery in Vyborg, May 1943. Photo: SA 127562.

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[83] O. Korpijaakko, *Puhe sankarivainajien päivänä 15.5.1943* (Helsinki, 1943), p. 3. Emphasis in original.

[84] Meinander, *Suomi 1944*, pp. 154–63.

No. 16. Dead Finnish soldiers on the Karelian Isthmus, June 1944. The bodies were washed and tidied up in special "evacuation centers for the fallen" before being sent to their home parishes. Photo: SA 153443.

Finally, the psychological burden and the problems of motivation during the stationary war are indicated by Finnish soldiers' suicides, as Heidi Mustajoki has recently shown. At the same time as the combat casualty figures declined and remained remarkably low, the number of suicides rose steadily and reached its peak in May 1944, just before the Soviet summer offensive. During the quiet period of war from January 1942 to May 1944, 2.6 percent of the Army's total fatalities were suicides; in May 1944, the figure was 5.5 percent.[85] Although not exactly "escapism," the suicides tell of the emerging meaninglessness and desperation experienced by many at the front. All in all, it would be wrong to say that the Finnish Army and home front in the spring of 1944 would have been largely demoralized: the majority of soldiers and civilians fulfilled their tasks and were ready for further hardships. But the war weariness had taken its toll. Had the sacrificial ethos of 1939–40 and 1941 neared an end in itself, now the suffering and stamina demanded were seen pragmatically as a necessary requirement for stepping out of the war and saving as much as possible of national sovereignty.

The Crisis and Recovery in the Summer of 1944

[85] Heidi Mustajoki, *Kohtalo omissa käsissä: Suomen sodissa 1939–1945 itsensä surmanneiden sotilaiden omaisten asema vuosina 1939–1960*, unpublished MA thesis (University of Helsinki, 2010).

The great Soviet offensive against Finland began on the Karelian Isthmus on 9 June 1944. The first and second Finnish defensive lines were soon penetrated, counter-attacks failed and by 15 June the Finnish Army on the Isthmus was in full retreat. The following week was characterized by the strong Soviet initiative and superiority, failed Finnish attempts to consolidate the front and the improvised, sometimes panicky withdrawals of the Finnish units fearing encirclement and annihilation. On 20 June, the defense of Vyborg collapsed in a few hours. A day later, the Red Army also launched its offensive in Eastern Karelia, which the Finns had stripped of reserves in an effort to transport all possible troops to the Karelian Isthmus. From the last week of June until mid-July, the repeated Soviet assaults were finally repulsed in fierce battles, whereby the military support from Germany had an important role. Unconditional surrender was avoided, but in the armistice of September 1944, Finland was faced with the burden of heavy peace terms.[86]

The period of about six weeks from 9 June 1944 onwards has come to define much of the Finnish memory of World War II. For a long time, it overshadowed both the Winter War and the expansive offensive of 1941. The events of 1944 largely defined the political reality and position of Finland for the coming decades until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The canonic Finnish story of World War II in Väinö Linna's *The Unknown Soldier* pushed aside the "lyrical" Winter War and emphasized the prosaic experience of 1944. Today, in the "neo-patriotic" trend of commemoration, the mythic Winter War has made a

[86] The military and political history of the summer of 1944 is studied in detail in Pasi Tuunainen's and Henrik Meinander's chapters in this book.

come-back and the summer battles of 1944 are mostly interpreted as a defensive victory,[87] but such a significance was not so readily at hand for the postwar contemporaries: for many, the hasty retreat and the outcome of war in 1944 signified national defeat, the shipwreck of Greater Finland idealism and the final loss of Finnish Karelia. Besides the horrific strength of the Soviet offensive, the particularly traumatic features in the summer of 1944 were the military desertion and the Army's countermeasures. Regarding the matter of violence, they posed cracks in both the cherished ideal of a soldier's sacrificial death and the perception of the state's monopoly on violence, which was thus enforced through executions.

The corrosive effects of the prolonged stationary war became indeed visible in the summer of 1944. Unlike in the Winter War, the Soviet assault in June 1944 resulted in desertions on an unforeseen scale, and combat motivation also dipped among those who did not leave their duties. Regarding the desertions, there were great differences between different units: some regiments experienced only minor incidents, whereas in others the desertion developed into a mass-scale phenomenon, which seriously handicapped battle performance. Under a violent Soviet onslaught, some Finnish units dispersed to the woods. Shocked soldiers wandering towards the rear and telling horror stories of the Red Army's power welcomed the new reinforcements arriving at the front, thus spreading the resignation further. The lack of proper anti-tank weapons and the heavy concentration of Soviet firepower caused demoralization even among the experienced Finnish troops before the situation became more balanced at the end of June. During the most chaotic week of

[87] Vesa Vares, "Kuitenkin me voitimme! Uuspatrioottiset tulkinnat talvi- ja jatkosodasta suomalaisissa populääriesityksissä," in Markku Jokisipilä, ed., *Sodan totuudet: Yksi suomalainen vastaa 5.7 ryssää* (Helsinki, 2007), pp. 183–5.

withdrawal on the Karelian Isthmus, the average daily number of both deserters and the soldiers who had lost their unit was around 6,000 – roughly the strength of two infantry regiments – and their total number on the Isthmus in June was estimated to have been as high as 29,000.[88] In June–August 1944, the psychiatric military casualties requiring hospital treatment also climbed to several thousand, although the number did not reach the highest figures during the Finnish offensive in 1941.[89] Yet all this does not mean that the Finnish troops would not have fought in 1944: as Jukka Kulomaa has counted, even in the infantry division with the worst proportional desertion figure, there were two wounded or fallen soldiers for each deserter. In the division, which suffered the heaviest casualties of all, there were only 0.14 deserters for each fallen or wounded soldier.[90]

Nevertheless, the desertion and other perceived signs of disintegration among the troops were a real shock to the Finnish military. At the Finnish High Command in Mikkeli, the swift loss of Vyborg on 20 June caused great alarm and the fear of Soviet tanks rolling deep into Finland in a matter of days or even hours. The most dramatic consequence of desertions and the fear of collapse was the use of death penalties. As stated above, the execution of Finnish soldiers had been very rare before the summer of 1944. Now, the code of law was hurriedly changed so that death sentences could be passed for repeated desertions and "war cowardice." This extended right for the military was immediately put into action: in July 1944 alone, 45 death sentences were given and 31 of these immediately

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[88] Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, pp. 263–6. The total number of Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus grew from 88,000 to about 150,000 at the end of June 1944.

[89] Matti Ponteva, "Psykiatriset sairaudet Suomen puolustusvoimissa vv. 1941–1944," *Annales medicinae militaris Fenniae* 52 (1977): Suppl. 2a (pp. 31–208), p. 87.

[90] Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, pp. 268–71.

carried out. Between July and September, 46 Finnish soldiers altogether were executed after court-martial.[91] The executions had a demonstrative and symbolic nature: they were meant to show the determination of the military to uphold the front at any cost. Yet the executions were also understood to be very problematic, and the frontline soldiers reacted to them in controversial ways. On the other hand, they effectively underlined the ultimate authority of the state over its citizens and thus made clear that there was no way to escape from one's martial tasks. But on the other hand, they caused depression, anger and resentment among the troops by cruelly revealing the inherent violence of the military institution towards its subjects.[92]

Such a notorious phenomena as the executions were, there were attempts to consign them with some collective significance other than a mere draconian punishment. Here, again, we are at the question of the relationship between violence and sacrifice: the executions threatened to undermine the *willing* nature of soldiers' sacrifice, which was essential for the national self-image and for the understanding of democratic citizenship. Furthermore, the dead bodies of the executed needed a place in the national cosmology based on regenerative sacrifices; more precisely, as with the deceased Reds of 1918, the

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[91] Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, pp. 319–28. These are the figures for officially court-martialed cases; the officer's use of weapon to shoot deserters at the spot is still a contested topic among researchers and no exact figure of these unrecorded shootings can be given here. Heikki Ylikangas has estimated this figure to be as high as 250, whereas other researchers have considered Ylikangas' number a wild exaggeration. Heikki Ylikangas, *Romahtaako rintama? Suomi puna-armeijan puristuksessa kesällä 1944* (Helsinki, 2007), pp. 292–7; Jukka Kulomaa & Jarmo Nieminen, eds., *Teloitettu totuus – Kesä 1944* (Helsinki, 2008).

[92] Cf. Pipping, *Infantry Company*, p. 165; Kulomaa, *Käpykaartiin*, pp. 327–8; Ylikangas, *Romahtaako rintama*, pp. 297–306.

society's internal violence, which they epitomized, required a shared meaning in order to become neutralized as a divisive threat.[93] Interestingly, the Army's chief of chaplains Johannes Björklund explicitly touched this question when giving advice on how to organize the burial of the executed at the home front: the burials should not have offered easy opportunities for criticism of the Army, but nor should they have become occasions for "cheap condemnation" of the men, who through their heavy punishment "had redeemed discipline" for the whole Army.[94] Björklund's conciliatory wording represented the executed as an offering at the altar of national survival.

Lutheran religion was one of the most decisive cultural forces shaping wartime Finnish identity. In the summer of 1944, military chaplains working at the front recognized soldiers' emerging need to find religious consolation for their burdens and thus to resort to Christian motives and symbols.[95] Nevertheless, in the heat of combat, the motivation of the

[93] It is depictive that the Finnish soldiers executed by the Finnish military were considered disturbingly problematic, although they presented only a small part of the total number of wartime death penalties in Finland. All in all, 681 death sentences were given between 1939–46, and at least 528 of them were carried out. About 77 percent of the sentenced and 84 percent of the executed were Soviet citizens, their main crime being espionage; Jukka Lindstedt, *Kuolemaan tuomitut: Kuolemanrangaistukset Suomessa toisen maailmansodan aikana* (Helsinki, 1999), pp. 196–203.

[94] KA/SArk, T 21731/30 III, Ecclesiastical Department of the High Command (Kirk.os./PM), chief of chaplains Johannes Björklund, No. 7193/3/30 henk., 12 October 1944.

[95] E.g. KA/SArk, T 21731/16 II, V Army Corps Headquarters (V AKE), army chaplain Jyrki Järnefelt, No. 303/XVI/81.sal., 21 August 1944.

troops was largely shaped by the situational and military factors at hand.[96] After the initial shock, the confidence in successful defense was restored by the end of June 1944, along with the growing sentiment that the struggle was about national survival rather than some undefined aim of "final victory." At the home front, where the violence of war was less concrete and more symbolic, the news from the front and the imminent "Bolshevist threat" boosted religious fatalism similar to the Winter War, but more desperate in nature. Especially for those who had strongly identified with the national ethos of war and with the idea of Greater Finland, the rapid loss of all that had been gained in 1941 presented a truly shattering, even traumatic experience.[97]

The fear of total collective disintegration created a necessity to reinforce national unity and to experience concretely the existence of the collective. In an interesting example of interplay between religion, nationalism and the concepts of time in the sense of Benedict Anderson,[98] Finnish radio began to broadcast the bell tolls of the national cathedral in Turku at every noon from 19 June 1944 onwards. These tolls were meant as a reminder of the religious basis of the Finnish "way of life," and as a kind of collective heartbeats, they symbolized both the faith in a living nation and the threatened vulnerability of the national "organism." Ideally, the noon tolls on the radio acted as a symbolic synchronization mechanism restoring the sacred time of sacrifice, which was seen as having disappeared in

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[96] This is well illustrated by the large questionnaire on the causes of desertion and panic, which was circulated among the Finnish front officers in August 1944; KA/SArk, T 9776, "Upseerikysely joukkoilmiöistä kesällä 1944," with 192 responses.

[97] "Traumatic" in the meaning of cultural rather than psychological trauma, see Jeffrey C. Alexander et al., *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity* (Berkeley, CA, 2004).

[98] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 22–36, 145.

the midst of the banalities of war. In an important radio speech given by the First Lady Gerda Ryti at noon on 16 July 1944, the whole Finnish nation was called to take part in collective prayers:

> *Our fatherland is in dire need, and no man, no woman, no child can withdraw from this battle that God has made our inevitable share. The fatherland needs all of the strength that each of Her citizens has, because the frighteningly somber hostility of the Bolsheviks threatens to drown our lives in a bottomless sea of misery. The fatherland will release no one from responsibility, because we are all tightly bound to each other*. […]
> *Let therefore each one of us silently pray to the Almighty every noon. And in those moments we shall grow into a united, praying people who shall believe in finding help from God*.[99]

In the end, the Finnish soldiers in the summer of 1944 fought with considerable skill and determination, measured by any reasonable military standards and compared to the similar Red Army offensives elsewhere in Europe during the latter half of World War II. For each occurrence of panic and bad performance, there were a number of examples of spirited resistance and dutifulness.[100] At the home front and in the high staffs, the shock caused by

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[99] Gerda Ryti's radio appeal for prayers, 16 July 1944, website of the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE, www.yleradio1.fi/id5133.shtml, accessed 29 March 2010.

[100] Halsti, *Ratkaisu 1944*, pp. 358–60, 394–402; U.E. Moisala & Pertti Alanen, *Kun hyökkääjän tie suljettiin: Neuvostoliiton suurhyökkäys kesällä 1944 Karjalan kannaksella veteraanitutkimuksen ja neuvostolähteiden valossa* (Helsinki, 1988), passim.

the Red Army's rapid advance and the seeming lack of spirit among the Finnish troops was largely a result of anachronistic expectations. During the long lull of 1942–44, the mythic memory of the Winter War had created an unrealistic faith in the overall Finnish capabilities and the superiority of a Finnish soldier. Faced with the radically different circumstances of 1944, these high expectations made quite normal phenomena of a modern warfare seem as signs of unforeseen disintegration and demoralization. It is illustrative that after the first major defensive successes at the end of June 1944, the commander of the Finnish troops on the Karelian Isthmus called forth the binding legacy of the Winter War, the spirit of which was to be found again.[101] Yet there was no return to 1939–40; the cohesive ethos of 1944 was the solidarity in survival rather than the communion in sacrifice.

The official armistice between the Finnish and Soviet troops came into force on 4 September 1944. Or it should have – as a violent reminder of the Finnish defeat, the Soviet artillery revengefully barraged the Finnish positions for a further 24 hours. This incident is well and bitterly remembered by the war veterans in many reminiscences: it was a final demonstration of Soviet power and aimed at underlining the Finnish vulnerability.[102] As such, it was a symbolic overture for the dawning Cold War period.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the Lapland War against the German troops in Northern Finland from September 1944 till April 1945 has no major place in the Finnish memory culture of World War II. Indeed, this last episode required by the Allied Powers was a kind of a symbolic anti-climax if compared to the two wars against the Soviet Union:

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[101] Lieutenant General K.L. Oesch, 3 July 1944, cited in KA/SArk, Order of the Day No. 24 of Infantry Regiment 12, Colonel Yrjö Hanste, 21 July 1944.

[102] See e.g. Halsti, *Ratkaisu 1944*, pp. 479–80.

the Lapland War was understood to be a political necessity, but it was void of any other collective, national meanings and symbolism. The final defeat of Nazi Germany was expected soon, and the Finnish Army was demobilized already in November 1944. After the first intensive battles around Tornio and Rovaniemi in October, the war in the far north was fought with reduced conscript units and thus fittingly called the "Children's Crusade." It did not really touch the everyday life of the great majority of the Finns, although the German scorched earth tactics, which destroyed much of Lapland's infrastructure, caused public anger. It was difficult to uphold the combat motivation of the troops, when the rest of the country was already returning to a civilian life, and the continuing sacrifices and violence were hard to consign with any regenerative significance other than fulfilling the political articles of the Armistice Treaty.[103] Any attempt to describe the Lapland War against the former "brothers-in-arms," who had just a few months earlier delivered crucial military support to halt the Red Army offensive against Finland, as an "antifascist liberation war" would have been absurd – instead, the conflict was characterized by resigned bitterness and the experience of futility, probably on both sides.

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In a grim irony, only two European countries are able to put such an emphasis on the patriotic memory of World War II in their national epic: Russia as the successor state of the Soviet Union, and Finland. Everywhere else, with the exception of Great Britain, the years

[103] Cf. Sampo Ahto, *Aseveljet vastakkain: Lapin sota 1944–1945* (Helsinki, 1980), pp. 182–5, 273, 278–80, 294–7.

1939–45 were branded by (consequent) occupations, the loss of independence, devastating violence with no regenerating meaning and the trauma of Holocaust and collaborationism. Although the societal context and the political system of the two countries were completely different, the rationale regarding violence in Finland and the Soviet Union is surprisingly analogous. For the latter, the "Great Patriotic War" of 1941–45 against the external "fascist intruders" undid the horrifying internal violence of the Great Terror and collectivization. Thus, the war and its mythic interpretations consolidated the Soviet system in the postwar period.[104] In Finland, the Winter War symbolically purified the divisive violence of 1918. "The Spirit of the Winter War" devalued the reciprocal violence of the Civil War. In this respect, the ethos of the Winter War in the popular Finnish memory managed to include also the Continuation War. In both Finland and the Soviet Union, the fallen soldiers of World War II acted (and still act) as the sacrificial cornerstones in the nation building.

As we have shown above, the varying meanings of wartime violence can be seen as a pendulum oscillating between the altruistic, nationally regenerating sacrifice and the pointless, devastating death. Notwithstanding the myriad of individual and situational experiences, the Finnish wartime culture was, by and large, able to consign collective significance to soldiers' and civilians' hardships and suffering, thus upholding the social cohesion. One reason for this was the exceptional fact that, in an age of total war, the Finns were able to limit the violence almost exclusively to the frontlines: civilian casualties were scarce and the country was not occupied. Thus, the Finnish war experience followed a rather "conventional choreography" of warfare, in which the roles for soldiers and civilians

[104] Amir Weiner, *Making Sense of War: The Second World War and the Fate of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 2001); Catherine Merridale, *Ivan's War: The Red Army 1939–45* (London, 2005).

remained clear. The losses of war could be seen as meaningful sacrifices in the nationalist sense of the word – indeed, they were quite justifiably seen as the reason for avoiding the fate of the Baltic States and other Eastern and Central European countries devastated by consequent foreign occupations. Nevertheless, the prolonged Continuation War seriously challenged the meaning of further sacrifices and compromised the mythic unity experienced during the Winter War. In the end, the regenerative power of sacrifices did not vanish, but it lost its highly elevated, self-contained edge in the spirit of *pro patria mori*; the sacrifices came to be seen more modestly as a painful, yet unavoidable means to secure the political existence of the country. Maybe paradoxically, for the Finnish left and working class the wars of 1939–40 and 1941–44 against the Soviet Union were a demonstration of loyalty, which thus redefined the memory of 1918 and empowered the descendants of the Reds to an equal political citizenship. Thus, despite the many controversies and violent ruptures the war had created, the shared war experience also made way for various politically overarching societal contracts and bonds in the emerging postwar welfare state, the history of which would require a presentation of its own.

In contrast to the ethos of patriotic sacrifice, the defenseless victims of war rightly characterize the contemporary Western memory of World War II. The case of Germany and the Holocaust is naturally the most horrendous in scale and nature. Furthermore, the glorious image of the liberating Red Army is stained both by the fate of Eastern and Central European civilians under its power in 1944–45 and by the draconian measures of the Stalinist regime towards its own soldiers and citizens. But the British and the Americans, too, have the troublesome memory of Dresden and Hiroshima to cope with. All in all, it is the brutal, excessive, often racist and genocidal violence towards the innocent that defines the years 1939–45. As the other chapters in this book make clear, Finnish wartime history

is far from immaculate regarding the civilians of Eastern Karelia, the Soviet prisoners-of-war and even the Holocaust. But these issues, even if recognized, have not managed to touch the core of the Finnish experience and memory of war. Instead, the violence of 1939–45 has been successfully embedded with continuing national meaning and significance. The major reason for this may be found in the fact that World War II serves as the virtual birth myth and the cornerstone of the Finnish nation even today. The remembrance of the war is the key element in national celebrations, as it usually goes without mentioning that Finland actually gained its independence in 1917, not in 1939–44. Thus, it is difficult to change the perception of the war – the nation cannot ground its existence on ambivalent memories. The sacrifices of World War II still stand at the center of national self-image and history. This may be one (but only one) explanation for the relatively strong contemporary Finnish national identity and social cohesion; it may also be one explanation for the rather exclusive and introspective understanding of Finnishness. Nevertheless, it seems that recent years have seen a gradual change in the collective remembrance of the war. Besides the politicized memory culture of the Cold War era and the neo-patriotic identity politics of the 1990s, a collective narrative of mourning and even acceptance of the losses has emerged. This narrative emphasizes common people's suffering across the borders; it is also more open to perceive the true violence of war.