



Breaking the Silence

A Discussion of the Finnish SS-volunteers in Finland 2018-2019

Name: Anni Kemppainen
Supervisor: Tomislav Dulić
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Abstract

Since the 1960s the memory of the Finnish SS-volunteers has been seen as a special group which did not participate in the atrocities while serving in Waffen-SS. A new study about the Finnish SS-volunteers was published at the end of 2018, a new study about the Finnish SS-volunteers sparking an active discussion about the role of Finns in the Holocaust and atrocities in World War II. The debate about the painful past further invigorated when the National Archives of Finland carried out an archival survey concluding that volunteers *most likely* participated in atrocities against Jews, civilians and prisoners of war. This master's thesis investigates the discussion that took place in the newspapers, tabloids and journals, and based on the arguments used, it analyses how the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers is dealt with in Finnish society. The discussion confirms that there are uncomfortable parts in Finland's past which are yet to be dealt with and the old interpretations of Finland having separate war and being a victim still has a meaningful place in the historical consciousness. There is also a need to further investigate the empty pages of Finnish history, the painful ones too.

Introduction

In late 2018, a new war history study on the Finnish SS-volunteers was published leading to an active public discussion about what the role of the Finnish SS-volunteers in the atrocities against Jews, civilians, and prisoners of war.¹ The media discussion of the study before its publishing had gained the attention of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre (henceforth SWC) which asked the president of Finland Sauli Niinistö for an official survey about the topic. The task was given to the National Archives of Finland, which published its archive survey in early 2019 confirming that indeed Finnish SS-volunteers had most likely participated in the atrocities while serving in Waffen-SS in the years 1941-1943.

The uproar about the condemning argument was expected since the image of the Finnish SS-volunteers has been one-sided for decades and this much-needed discussion had been delayed. The history of the volunteers has been studied a lot, but questions about Finns participating in the atrocities have been neglected. Thus, the topic has not been completely dismissed but a certain image of the Finnish SS-volunteers has been created, stemming from the monumental study dating in the late 1960s. Historian Mauno Jokipii's *Panttipataljoona* ("Pledge Battalion"²) was the study that created an interpretation where Finnish volunteers were special from other volunteers and soldiers in the Waffen-SS. It concluded that the Finnish SS-volunteers had nothing to do with the war crimes and certainly nothing to do with the Holocaust. Studies conducted since *Panttipataljoona* supported the idea of Finnish SS-volunteers being young men who were sent to Waffen-SS to serve their home country and fight for the independence of Finland. They did not have a strong ideological connection to Nazism rather they were motivated by getting military training and by the adventurous nature of the service. Additionally, after the war, Finnish Waffen-SS veterans were vocal about only focusing on warfare and being unaware of the atrocities and persecutions. The speciality of Finnish volunteers has been accepted to collective memory and the truthiness of it has not been questioned before as loudly as it was in the new study.

In this master's thesis, I will investigate the discussion that took place in the newspapers and journals about the Finnish SS-volunteers, and analyse what it tells about the relationship Finland has regarding possibly participating in the atrocities. The image of the Finnish volunteers has stayed the same since the 1960s, which makes me wonder why it had not been

¹ When discussing the Finnish volunteers, I will use all three terms: Finnish volunteers, Finnish SS-volunteers, and Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers. While technically SS-volunteer could mean volunteers in SS in general not just in Waffen-SS, but in Finnish language the Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers are called mainly SS-volunteers or SS-men, which is why I regard it is suitable term.

² All the translations are mine, unless mentioned otherwise.

challenged earlier. Moreover, the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers is connected to the wider European context and how the history of the volunteers has been discussed around at the national perspective where the connection to Europe is overlooked. The memory of the World War Two (henceforth WWII) is experienced through the national lens of Finnish suffering and victimhood, which connects the collective memory of Finland to that of Eastern Europe, with the Soviet Union as the common enemy. Indeed, the connection to Nazi Germany and the comradeship with the perpetrators is still an uncomfortable topic in Finnish society.

Research Problems and Aims

In the past few decades, Finnish society has been coming face to face with the past and the trauma of acknowledging the possibility of having more dark roles in history than what has been covered or glossed over. Indeed, Finland's role in WWII has been studied recently more thoroughly from the point of view of the brothers-in-arms connections to Nazi Germany. Finland's comradeship with Nazi Germany has been a sensitive topic and the connection to the Holocaust has been avoided in the past with the theories of separated wars: Finland was not a willing German ally but was forced into the situation without having any active agency. One of these uncomfortable parts of history is the 1 408 Finnish volunteers who served in the Waffen-SS in the years 1941-1943 in the Caucasus and Ukraine. The history of Finnish SS-volunteers has been studied quite thoroughly except for the notion of war crimes they might have committed while serving in the Waffen-SS. The reputation supported the image that Finnish SS-volunteers did not participate in the atrocities and some volunteers have argued that they were unaware of systematic killings of Jews and other civilians until they returned to Finland.

The history of Finnish SS-volunteers has been quite one-sided focusing on the heroic actions of the soldiers and their rough time in the Waffen-SS. Docent André Swanström caused a sensation when challenging the lopsided memory of Finnish SS-volunteers by publishing *Hakaristin ritarit – Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset (Knights of the Swastika – Finnish SS-Men, Politics, Religion and War Crimes)*.³ Swanström argued volunteers participated in the atrocities critiquing the false image created of the special Finns in the Waffen-SS. The legacy of Jokipii's arguments has persisted for a long time and the public responded to the possibility of Finnish volunteers having a role in the Holocaust

³ André Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit – Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset*, (Atena, 2018).

and committing war crimes with mixed feelings. The history of Finnish volunteers has been mainly dictated by Jokipii, whose arguments of elitist non-political and dutiful patriotic soldiers, who fought for their homeland with clean weapons at otherwise notorious Hitler's Waffen-SS, have not been questioned. Swanström argues that this mythical image of Finnish SS-volunteers is strong especially for the war historians and military hobbyists, and moreover it has been reinforced in novels and in other pieces where the uniforms, weapons, and SS aesthetics are glorified.⁴

Swanström's study could have been seen as the work of a radical historian, but when the National Archives of Finland's archive survey "*The Finnish SS Volunteers and Atrocities in against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*"⁵ by Lars Westerlund supported Swanström's arguments, the public discussion grew even more. The new arguments challenged the image that Finnish SS-volunteers had enjoyed in the public's eyes for decades. Coming to terms with that there might be a different 'truth' than what has been believed for decades, led to arguments like the demand of new, correcting studies and the need to restore the lost honours of volunteers, but also arguments recognising the importance of why hurtful issues in the past should be studied. Indeed, the debate and arguments in newspapers and journals reveal that there are issues and painful spots in the past that have not been acknowledged and Finland has not yet become resigned to their connection to Nazi Germany, their role in the side of the perpetrator, and the possibility of even being a perpetrator.

The Finnish SS-volunteer discussion has not been the first scandal where Finland has been dealing with dark parts of its history, especially connected to the Holocaust. In 2004, book by journalist Elina Sana caused almost an identity crisis when she argued that Finland deported 3 000 civilians to concentration camps to Germany in exchange for prisoners of war.⁶ The scandal led to a request from SWC to make an archive survey about the allegations made in Sana's book and the Prime Minister's Office commissioned professor Heikki Ylikangas to the task.⁷ The discussion of Finland's role in the Holocaust and exchanging prisoners of war led to soul-searching where the deeply rooted ideas of Finland being separate from what happened during WWII in Europe were questioned and challenged. Some years later,

⁴ Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*, 17–18.

⁵ Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS Volunteers and Atrocities in against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura, 2019).

⁶ Elina Sana, *Luovutetut - Suomen ihmislouvutukset Gestapolle* (Helsinki: WSOY, 2003).

⁷ Ilkka Ahtiainen & Jaakko Hautamäki, "Hallitus selvittää jatkosodan sotavankien luovutukset natsseille", *Helsingin Sanomat*, November 20, 2003, <https://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/art-2000004183323.html>.

President Tarja Halonen held an event called the President Forum. The topic of the event was the silent years of Finnish history and the deportations as well as the comradeship with Nazi Germany were discussed among other topics.⁸ Around the early 2010s, new generations of historians started to argue over the use of separate war theory⁹ being irrelevant and having political connotations.¹⁰ This led to new studies where Finland's and Germany's comradeship was studied from unrepresented viewpoints causing the together but separate image to crumble even more.¹¹ The discussion of the Finnish SS-volunteers can then be seen as part of the trend of questioning and challenging the deep-seated beliefs (which were started by the deportations), of Finland's role in the Holocaust and its relationship with Nazi Germany. Undeniably, there have been outsider elements pushing the academics to look into the dark past but also new generations of historians who have been questioning the history writing of the past as well as its approaches and motivations.

The topic of Finnish SS-volunteers, on the other hand, has been missing from these discussions, not because it has not been studied but because of how the image of Finnish SS-volunteers has been painted as separate from other soldiers in Waffen-SS. When looking at other countries allied with Germany in WWII, the notion of avoiding the responsibility of being perpetrators is not unusual. It has been easier to ignore one's role in the Holocaust and appeal to being a victim than to come to the terms with one's involvement. In the German context, coming to the terms with the past and the role of perpetrators happened properly when the post-war generation started to look into their fathers' involvement in the Third Reich.¹² Countries like Austria and Italy have been reticent to admit to having also played a role in the atrocities instead of arguing that they were victims of Germany.¹³ Gradually there have been changes in European countries' relationships with the Holocaust remembrance and the narratives of their role in it. There is discussion about the difference ways WWII is remembered in Eastern and Western Europe. Eastern Europe had its experiences with the

⁸ "Presidentti Halonen: Avoin yhteiskunta tutkii ja keskustelee historiastaan" Presidentti, accessed August 17, 2020. <https://www.presidentti.fi/halonen/public/default54fb.html?contentid=177833&nodeid=42419&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI>.

⁹ More information about the theory in the chapter *History and Memory of Finnish SS-volunteers*.

¹⁰ Editorial "Jatkosota - erillissota?", *Helsingin Sanomat*, November, 30.2008. <https://www.hs.fi/paakirjoitukset/art-2000004616397.html>.

¹¹ See for example Oula Silvennoinen, *Salaiset aseveljet: Suomen ja Saksan turvallisuuspoliisiyhteistyö 1933-1944*, (PhD diss., University of Helsinki, 2008), Markku Jokisipilä, *Aseveljiä vai liittolaisia? Suomi, Saksan liittosopimusvaatimukset ja Rytin-Ribbentropin-sopimus* (PhD diss., University of Turku, 2004), Lars Westerlund, *Saksan vankileirit Suomessa ja raja-alueilla 1941-1944* (Helsinki: Tammi, 2008).

¹² Stefan, Berger, "Remembering the Second World War in Western Europe, 1945-2005," In *A European Memory: Contested Histories and Politics of Remembrance*, edited by Pakier Małgorzata and Stråth Bo, 119-36. Berghahn Books, 2010, 120-122.

¹³ Berger, "Remembering the Second World War in Western Europe, 1945-2005," 121-122.

terror of Stalin, which is not given the same meaningful part in memory production as Holocaust victims do for Western Europe.¹⁴ Indeed, the memory of WWII in Finland is somewhere between eastern and western memories, and the interesting part is the speciality and the notion of separateness that has been pushed for decades.

Memory studies are an important part of researching the Holocaust as well as any other mass violence case since memories are used in process of nation-building and shared identity for example. Organising public occasions, where societies remember, celebrate and mourn, is an essential ritual *so that* culturally relevant events are passed down to generations as well as the founding statutes and memorabilia that act as concrete symbols for remembering. Memory and history are also used to determine what is important for the nation, having collective memories strengthens the sense of belonging in society and but it also plays a healing role in reconstruction. Remembering the past and what one's role was in it is meaningful since it gives an insight into how the complex and hurtful parts are acknowledged and also what is missing in the remembrance. Indeed, the narrative of Finnish volunteers being special among the other soldiers in the Waffen-SS has been well and alive for decades and the discussion in 2018-2019 demonstrates that the narrative has not been challenged before. The aim of this thesis is to analyse the recent discussion bringing forward its arguments while demonstrating that the old interpretations about Finland's role in WWII and the narrative of special Finnish SS-volunteers are well alive in people's minds.

Disposition

When it comes to the structure of the thesis, I will move to discuss the theories and the methods I will be using in my analysis. Before that, I will present the previous studies giving an overview of them and arguing that there are indeed lacunae in the topic of Finnish memory of WWII and connection to the Holocaust. The theories I have selected are mainly based on the memory study field with some studies coming from the topic of historical consciousness and the use of history. As mentioned, I will look into the memory production and the role of history when analysing the arguments used in the discussion of Finnish SS-volunteers. The theories are then followed with a chapter *Formulation of the Research Questions*, where I formulate properly what the lacuna is and with what questions I will tackle the issue. In the methods section, I will introduce the technique I used to collect my primary sources that are

¹⁴Maria Mälksoo, "The Memory Politics of Becoming European: The East European Subalterns and the Collective Memory of Europe," *European Journal of International Relations* 15, no. 4 (December 2009): 655.

analysed. Before moving into the empirical analysis, in the chapter *History and Memory of Finnish SS-volunteers* I will first provide a quite summarised historical background of Finland in WWII, the alliance between Finland and Nazi Germany I will also give some information about the Waffen-SS unit. To understand the history writing of WWII in Finland, it is useful to be familiar with some narratives that have shaped the way the war years have been understood in Finland and to comprehend the debate that took place in 2018-2019. Indeed, I will explain more about the separate war theory, the narrative of special Finnish SS-volunteers, and discuss the changing in the European memory around the Holocaust and influence on Finnish memory.

The primary sources are then introduced and analysed in the following way: in the chapter, *The Finnish SS-volunteer's Image is Challenged* I start chronically from the time when the study by André Swanström started to get the public's attention before its publication in 2018, following how an archive survey conducted by the National Archives' commission came to be and what the role of SWC was in the matter. After that, I will present how Swanström's study was received summarising what kind of reviews it got and what the prominent arguments around the topic were at first because they set the tone of the discussion and give an interesting insight on the themes that follow the debate. I will briefly mention the National Archives survey's publication and the reporting of it, but the primary analysis of it is done together with the *Hakaristin ritarit* -study. The reason to have one section just about *Hakaristin ritarit* is that it is a study and it was reviewed in newspapers and journals whereas Westerlund's survey is an archive survey and not an academic study, even though it can be looked at that way. Nevertheless, there were no book reviews about it and the argumentations of the survey's results were done in the opinion pages and comments in newspapers and journals.

In the latter chapters, the debate around the topic of Finnish SS-volunteers is analysed together using the writings about both studies. The subchapters are divided into two main categories: the arguments about history writing and the role of absolute sources, and the discussion of the Finnish SS-volunteers and how these studies have affected the memory of them. There is a small chapter where positive and supportive attitudes towards the studies are presented. I will discuss with the theory in each of these chapters, but the summarisation of analyses is done in the *Summary Discussion of the Findings* chapter. Since in these chapters and their subchapters the debate around the topic is discussed using arguments for and against both studies, the timeline is not accurate, but the focus is on the themes of arguments rather than on their chronicle order. Rarely, the topics were mentioned on their own, but

nonetheless, I hope dividing between the chapters is more helpful and supportive for the reading experience. Lastly, there is a conclusion chapter, where I will conclude the research questions and aims and the results that I obtained from the primary sources.

Research Overview

The memory of the Nazi connections in Finland has been studied in growing numbers from the beginning of the 21st century. The memory culture studies of the Second World War deals with the national memory of the Winter War and Continuation War, but recently the history of Nazi connections is becoming more popular in the memory study field. The wars have been heavily researched: war history and remembering the Second World War has a prominent place in Finnish society, as long it is connected to remembering it from the Finnish perspective. In the following section, I will introduce studies that discuss the memory of WWII and that mention the alliance with Germany and the Holocaust from the Finnish point of view.

In “*Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretation*” edited by Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki, the theme is explored from different approaches such as the cultural meanings and wars of memory. In the latter, for example, the memory of the Holocaust in Finland is analysed. In general, the memory of WWII in Finland is about the two wars fought against the Soviet Union, and thus, the Lapland War against Germans is pushed aside. “Contrary to the central role given to these two wars fought against the Soviet Union, the Lapland War (1944– 45) against Germany, Finland’s ally in 1941– 44, stands on the margins of today’s memory production”¹⁵. The memory of Germany, first being an ally and then being an enemy at the end of the war, is in the background in the remembering and one of the reasons for that is the fact that the national experiences dominate the memory culture. The researchers argue that “The destruction and suffering of World War II, the Holocaust included, is recognized and commemorated, but the “Finnish wars,” on which the memory production is centre, are predominantly seen as being separate from the other theatres and phenomena of World War II.”¹⁶ Throughout the post-war decades, the official memory was constructed by Finnish-Soviet relations and geopolitics. Today, the memory production of WWII is more or less of the combination of private and public.

¹⁵ Tiina Kinnunen & Markku Jokisipilä “Shifting Images of “Our Wars” in *Finnish Memory Culture of World War II*” *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* ed. Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki (BRILL, 2011), 436.

¹⁶ Kinnunen & Jokisipilä “Shifting Images of “Our Wars”, 436.

Antero Holmila argues that the memory of the Holocaust is silenced in Finland claiming that in Finland the memory studies have not focused on the Holocaust and Finland's tendency is to stay away from uncomfortable topics. The alliance with Germany is downplayed and "Finland's war against the Soviet Union in 1941–44 has been understood as being largely independent of Operation Barbarossa and German policies and practices in the war in the east."¹⁷ Holmila uses the term *institutional memory* which is the efforts of "political elites, their supporters and their opponents to construct meanings of the past and propagate them more widely or impose them on other members of society."¹⁸ The institutional memory is connected to the idea of the *politics of memory* which studies how certain historical events are used and presented in such a way that they "obtain wanted significance". Holmila argues, that the wanted significance in the case of Finland and the Holocaust is it "essentially relates to the (dominant) view that Finland and the Holocaust do not have a shared history".¹⁹

Holmila discusses how Jokipii's study of Finnish SS-volunteers *Panttipataljoona*, as well as other historians' studies of Finland's policymaking during the WWII from the 1960s, were meaningful when creating the memory and narratives. Holmila argues, that the historians at that time were fixated on building Finnish national identity and their having close ties with the political elites is not surprising. In Holmila's mind, these prominent historians and their way of portraying Finland's connections to Holocaust still affects history writing arguing "The fact that [Tuomo] Polvinen did not even attempt to analyze Finnish attitudes towards the extradition is a fine example of how the Holocaust and especially Finland's role in it were written out of the Finnish historical consciousness".²⁰ Similarly, historian Oula Silvennoinen criticises Jokipii, arguing that Jokipii's arguments about special volunteers were accepted by both professional historians and former volunteers. Indeed, Silvennoinen argues that even though Jokipii's other scholarships are beyond reproach, his connection to the Finnish SS-volunteers heritage association Veljesapu²¹ and their financial support the second edition of *Panttipataljoona*, affected the image of volunteers. Jokipii's created image follows the line of *Soldaten wie andere auch*²² soldiers like any other, where the "other" SS soldiers are blamed

¹⁷ Antero Holmila, "Varieties of Silence: Collective Memory of the Holocaust in Finland" in *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* ed. Tiina Kinnunen & Ville Kivimäki (BRILL, 2011), 519.

¹⁸ Holmila, "Varieties of Silence", 520.

¹⁹ Holmila, "Varieties of Silence", 521.

²⁰ Holmila, "Varieties of Silence", 535-537.

²¹ More about Veljesapu in the chapter History and Memory of Finnish SS-volunteers.

²² *Soldaten Like Any Other* is title of the book written by the former Waffen-SS general Paul Hausser, who successfully created an image of Waffen-SS not being part of atrocities.

for the war crimes, atrocities, and genocide and again the Finnish volunteers are exceptions.²³ The memory of the Holocaust in the literature written by Finns and their arguments has been also studied by Silvennoinen and Holmila. They conclude that Finland's history writing of the Holocaust has been minimal and slow because of the theory of separate wars, but the study of the Holocaust in the Finnish context is gradually rising. They argue how it is not useful "continuing to pretend that Finland alone does not have anything to do with the Holocaust will not serve the general interest of broadening our knowledge or the purpose of educating ourselves about our own past."²⁴

Other memory studies of WWII that mention Finland's alliance with Nazi Germany includes Ville Kivimäki's article where he mentions the memory of the Lapland War. He argues that the memory of alliance with Germany has been an unpleasant topic in Finland's memory culture, continuing that Finnish memory culture has been hypocritical towards Germans soldiers in Finland. Their image is split in two: "the good Germans"²⁵ who fought alongside Finns for a good cause, the independence of Finland, and "the evil Nazis"²⁶ who were responsible for horrible crimes elsewhere in Europe. Finland was also never occupied by Germans and it was felt that Germans treated Finnish soldiers as equals. Even today, there are still positive attitudes towards Germans because of their help during the wartime, despite the existence of narratives claiming that when the Lapland War began the good relationship changed and the good Germans changed to Nazis in the eyes of Northern Finns, but this is inaccurate, according to Kivimäki. Instead, the war is seen as an "unnecessary, regrettable conflict between old friends".²⁷ The memory of the Lapland War is also different since it was not a collective national struggle. Indeed, the Lapland War taking place in the north of Finland caused it to be meaningful to the residents and the soldiers in the area, whereas in the rest of Finland the war was practically over. Kivimäki argues the memory of the Holocaust in Finland is exceptional: the Holocaust is not denied in Finland and it does occupy a central place in how WWII is viewed, but it is understood as something that happened outside

²³ Oula Silvennoinen, "Comrades-in-Arms: Finnish Volunteers Among the Scandinavian Members of the Waffen-SS," in *Skandinavien im Zweiten Weltkrieg und die Rettungsaktion Weisse Busse: Ereignisse und Erinnerung*. ed. O von Wrochem & L Jockheck (Berlin: Metropol, 2012), 116.

²⁴ Antero Holmila, & Oula, Silvennoinen "The Holocaust Historiography in Finland", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 36 no.5 (2011),13.

²⁵ Ville Kivimäki "Between Defeat and Victory: Finnish Memory Culture of the Second World War", *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 37 no.4 (2012), 492.

²⁶ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory",492.

²⁷ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory", 492.

Finland and it did not have much of an effect even if Finland handed in Jews over to the Germans among the other prisoners of war.²⁸

The media perspective on the topic of the Holocaust and the Nazi connection has been studied less. Hannu Savolainen's thesis, wrote about the scandal caused by Elina Sana's book "*Luovutetut*" (Deported), which challenged the argument that Finland deported only eight Jews revealing a much higher number. Savolainen's thesis analyses how the scandal was discussed in media, the narratives of Finland having a role in the Holocaust, and the meaning of historical consciousness.²⁹ Karin Kvist Geverts has studied the Holocaust and how the dark past has been negotiated in the media in 2000-2008 in the Swedish newspaper in Finland and Sweden.³⁰

Based on these memory studies of how the memory of WWII has been dealt with in Finland, one can see a certain pattern memory culture of silencing and distancing. The public debate in 2018 and 2019 caused by Swanström's study and the National Archive's survey clearly shows that the memory of the Nazi connection is an uncomfortable topic that needs to be addressed. The public debate in newspapers and journals supports Holmila's argument on how the conversation needs to move from whether Finland had its part in Holocaust to acknowledging the fact that the memory of WWII needs to take into account the fact of Finland being part of the wider context. By studying the arguments in the newspapers and journals about the Finnish SS-volunteers, one can analyse how the Nazi past is dealt with in Finnish media through the collective memory lens. Indeed, some studies focus on the Finnish memory of the alliance with Nazi Germany, but the Finnish SS-volunteer memory in the society is barely mentioned. Of course, the newest studies were published a year or so ago and have not yet been given a chance to study the reaction they caused. However, Finnish SS-volunteers have not been in the core of the memory studies before either. There is a gap in the academic literature regarding memory studies concerning Finnish SS-volunteers which tells the sensitivity of the topic. The problematic dealing with the topic needs to be acknowledged and by looking at the debate in the media this thesis will contribute to the study field of memory of the WWII in Finland and the downplayed comradeship with Nazi Germany.

²⁸ Kivimäki "Between Defeat and Victory", 492-493.

²⁹ Hannu Savolainen "Jatkosodan ihmisluovutukset menneisyyden kipupisteenä – Elina Sanan Luovutetuteoksen aiheuttama kohu", (Master's Thesis University of Helsinki, 2011), 1-3.

³⁰ Karin Kvist Geverts "Negotiation a Dark Past in Swedish-language Press in Finland and Sweden" in *Finland's Holocaust: Silences of History*, ed. Simon Muir & Hana Worthen, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 173-193.

Research Design

Theory

When discussing memory and remembrance in societies, the concept of *collective memory* usually comes up. French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs first introduced collective memory in the 1920s and has been seen as the founding father of memory studies.³¹ Halbwachs argued that memory is about how minds work together in society and the related social arrangement. Indeed, “It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories”.³² Halbwachs highlighted that even individuals remember together with others, they are the only ones remembering and belonging to the group who will provide material for the memory as well as prod one to recall and forget events. Groups can even lead one to produce memories of events they did not directly experience.³³ The concept was and is still challenged, questioned and criticised, but in everyday language, collective memory is accepted and used widely.³⁴

Professor emerita Aleida Assmann argues that collective memory is too narrow and vague concept to understand the relationship and connections of one memory formation to another. That is why she suggests that it should be replaced with terms of *social* or *political memory*. Indeed, political, or official, memory is processed collectively and one of its forms is political memory. Since forgetting is a constitutive part of both individual and collective memory, it is natural that there needs to be a way to distinguish between what is important and what is unimportant, and what is relevant and what is irrelevant to remember and forget. In political memory, and especially in national memory, history is “put to the service of identity formation when it is appropriated by citizens and attested to by politicians”. National memory is from above: it has its role in making the nation and political institution.³⁵ Nations transform certain historical experiences into myths by dictating the ways they are processed, interpreted, and appropriated. The myths are kept alive with the help of monuments, memorials, and sites.³⁶

³¹ Sarah Gensburger, “Halbwachs’ Studies in Collective Memory: A Founding Text for Contemporary ‘Memory Studies’?”. *Journal of Classical Sociology* 16, no. 4 (2016), 397-398.

³² Jeffrey K. Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures”, *Sociological Theory* 17, no. 3 (1999), 334.

³³ Olick, “Collective Memory: The Two Cultures”, 335.

³⁴ Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. by Linda Shortt (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 16–17.

³⁵ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 22–23.

³⁶ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 25.

Indeed, myths and myth creations form a part of political memory. Political memory simplifies, sees events from one perspective, is exasperated by uncertainties, and reduces events to myths. Also, in collective memory, mental images turn into icons and stories into myths whose defining features are their “persuasiveness” and “affective force”.³⁷ Such myths come from historical events and they are transferred from generation to generation and their relevance determines how long they are passed on due to the relevance simply diminishing or other myths becoming more appropriated. The word myth has two meanings. It can either mean *falsification* of historical facts or a form in which history is seen through the lenses of identity, meaning the myth is an *effective appropriation* of one’s history.³⁸ Igor Torbakov argues mythmaking and history writing are deeply connected to nationalism, national identity and nation-building, which is also a meaningful part of political memory and memory production. Similarly, to Assmann’s ideas of political memory, *politics of memory* is used as a relevant tool to politicize and instrumentalise history to serve a certain purpose. It can have many forms, as Torbakov argues is to have two main purposes: “first is the construction of a maximally cohesive national identity and rallying the society around the powers that be. Second it is eschewing the problem of guilt”.³⁹ They do not exclude each other but are connected since each has liberated itself from the sense of historical, political, or moral responsibility it is easier to connect with the “new” guiltfree past enjoying it instead of coming to terms with a hurtful and traumatic history. Tuija Parvikko describes the memory in politics in the following way: “Thus, the politics of memory is about how and what past events will be remembered and what kind of political significance will be given to these events”.⁴⁰ Indeed, the memory is used as a tool to give meaning to certain events and dimensions of the past and not give the same for other happenings of the past. This way it presents and narrates them for today and the future in a meaningful manner. As Parvikko argues, we do not remember for the sake of remembering but rather the sake of the future, and over time, memories are no longer authentic and correct but are rather changed and adjusted from what one hears and reads.⁴¹

Trauma, silence, forgetting, and mourning indeed have a role in remembering as well in forgetting. *Trauma* can be for example mean that individual dissociates themselves from an

³⁷ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 26.

³⁸ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 25-26.

³⁹ Igor, Torbakov, “History, Memory and National Identity Understanding the Politics of History and Memory Wars in Post-Soviet Lands”. *Demokratizatsiya* 19, no. 3 (2011), 210.

⁴⁰ Tuija Parvikko, “Memory, History and the Holocaust: Notes on the Problem of Representation of the Past”, *Redescriptions: Yearbook of Political Thought and Conceptual History* no. 8 (2004): 189.

⁴¹ Parvikko, “Memory, History and the Holocaust: Notes on the Problem of Representation of the Past”, 190.

experience which has identity-threatening quality in order to protect themselves. While the event is registered, it is distanced from the conscious mind staying isolated.⁴² *Silencing* is both about silencing the victims and their experiences for examples not giving them space to come forward, but also focusing on the perpetrators or liberators. For perpetrators, silencing essentially means “keeping quiet”.⁴³ *Forgetting* is a normal part of remembering, but it is also sometimes used as a tool in nation-building. Forgetting can be of two different types: it can be a punishment, or it can be a blessing and a mercy. In punishment, for example, a person is erased from the history writing essentially erasing their membership in the community and from social memory. Erasing can have healing effects; when it is about forgetting guilt and of releasing who are guilty from it, accompanied by acquittal. It does not mean that the acts and existence of the pain and event should be forgotten.⁴⁴ *Mourning* is not just personal grief over lost loved ones, but also communal act and important social function. It brings a sense of community and continuity, leading to remembrance becoming an important part of collective memory. Assmann brings up the mourning of German soldiers and civilians who died in WWII as embarrassing, left mainly to nationalists and far-right supporters.⁴⁵ It is important to mention also the change in politics of history and how changes affected remembering. Indeed, as long as the central values were about honour and reputation of victories, one’s guilt was not recognised. The perpetrators’ guilt was and still is “vigorous forgetfulness”⁴⁶ until one stops distancing oneself from their guilt and their perpetrator’s role. Moreover, it’s easier to see other’s guilt than be mindful of one’s own. The phenomenon of recognising suffering alongside heroism has made hiding and silencing of the dark history difficult, and especially with globalised media, one must anticipate that hiding the perpetrator’s history cannot be hidden forever.⁴⁷

Historical Consciousness

Besides looking at the memory, memory production, and the politics of memory, it is meaningful to see the role of history and how history writing connects to memories. *Historical consciousness* is “a mental process which helps human beings orientate themselves

⁴² Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 74.

⁴³ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 80.

⁴⁴ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 83, 86.

⁴⁵ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 86–87.

⁴⁶ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 90

⁴⁷ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 90–92.

in time by ascribing meaning to the past” according to Klas-Göran Karlsson.⁴⁸ Everyone has a connection to the past and history, but it also connects us with others. The consciousness rises not only from life and death but also from us and them, right and wrong, true and false are meaningful in creating historical consciousness.⁴⁹ In this sense, Peter Seixas too argues individuals’ understandings and experiences of the world are shaped by what they have inherited from the past, and an individual can never think independently without the influence of their historical situation.⁵⁰ Indeed, historical consciousness is not stable, but ever-evolving and it can be triggered by different problems and anxieties related topics such as politics and ideologies, ethics and morality, as well as existence and identity. Moreover, traumas, crisis, and defeats are in a great role in time-transcending historical thinking, and the Holocaust particularly has a special place in historical consciousness.⁵¹ Siobhan Kattago argues that “one can never totally free oneself from the past and be a purely rational being, neither is one condemned to reproduce blindly the prejudices of one’s tradition”.⁵² The individual then has the potential to criticise as well as evaluate their past and learned traditions while coming to terms with the fact that one’s knowledge is never completed.⁵³ Jörn Rüsen also discusses the role of historical consciousness in human life, and one of them being the relationship between historical consciousness and memory. Rüsen argues that memory is seen as original and subjective whereas history is derived and constructed as “the reflection of research results of historical studies through intersubjective validity that is often (and mistakenly) called ‘objective’”.⁵⁴ Memory and history do have their differences but they also share the same sources of the cultural formation of *meaning*.⁵⁵ Indeed, Rüsen highlights the role of metahistory⁵⁶ and the role of historical meaning, and how it is created. He argues that “historical thinking brings together past and future in the temporal orientation of the present way of life and that this is carried by a consistent level of meaning”.⁵⁷ Since history is not just

⁴⁸ Klas-Göran Karlsson, “The Uses of History and the Third Wave of Europeanisation,” in *A European Memory*, ed. Małgorzata Pakier & Bo Stråth, (Berghahn Books, 2010), 44.

⁴⁹ Karlsson, “The Uses of History,” 45.

⁵⁰ Peter Seixas, “Historical Consciousness and Historical Thinking” in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, (University of Toronto Press, 2004), 60.

⁵¹ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 45.

⁵² Siobhan Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History: Memory, Pluralism and Europe after 1989”, *European Journal of Social Theory* 12, no. 3 (2009), 377.

⁵³ Kattago, “Agreeing to Disagree on the Legacies of Recent History”, 377.

⁵⁴ Jörn Rüsen, *Evidence and Meaning: A Theory of Historical Studies*, English-language edition (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 171.

⁵⁵ Rüsen, *Evidence and Meaning*, 173.

⁵⁶ Metahistory, also known as historiology or historiography, is a theory of historical studies and it is composed of three elements: history, scholarship and theory.

⁵⁷ Rüsen, *Evidence and Meaning*, 216.

a collection of facts but is also an element of human culture and part of determining the human culture too.

To understand historical consciousness, it is meaningful to see in which way history is used, for example in nation-building after events have shaken the society. Karlsson divides the use of history into five categories: existential, moral, ideological, political, and scholarly-scientific. To summarise, the existential use of history is triggered by the need to remember (or to forget) to uphold or intensify feelings of orientation and identity in a society characterised by insecurity, pressure or sudden change. Moral use is based on annoyance at the limited attention given to certain aspects of history in society and on the attempt to acknowledge, restore or rehabilitate the same history.⁵⁸ The ideological use of history is an “extension of a prevailing moral use of history, [which] may be a trial or a history commission, organised by a harassed state power or a radically new government, to find out what ‘really’ happened in history”⁵⁹ and history is transformed into an ideological, nationalist use. In the political use of history, something from the past, in deliberate, comparative, metaphorical or symbolic ways, is transferred to today and rendered simple and unproblematic, while “the traditional scholarly idea that history is anchored in the structures of the relevant period is toned down”.⁶⁰ Finally, the scholarly-scientific use is based on professional and discipline-specific rules and standards.⁶¹ History is indeed strongly connected to our everyday life and it is just not a study of the past but it is also used to make one connect to their past in different ways.

One must also look at the memory of the Holocaust from wider the perspective by understanding the European memory and how the history of WWII, moreover the history of Holocaust, has been used to create a certain understanding of the past and of European identity. The historical consciousness of the Holocaust as well as the memory of the Holocaust has a meaningful role in European countries. It is part of European identity and the never again -attitude is ascribed to the virtue of the European Union. Karlsson discusses the Holocaust being used as the *European canon* and how not including the Soviet Union’s crimes in common memory and remembrance creates tensions to unity.⁶² Karlsson argues about how “the European Holocaust interpretation as a founding history has no connection to

⁵⁸ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 48-49.

⁵⁹ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 50.

⁶⁰ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 52.

⁶¹ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 53.

⁶² Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 40-43.

historical facts”⁶³ and the “present European public’s remembrance is not rooted in historical achievements of the post-war era but rather gains strength from contemporary needs and interests”.⁶⁴

The European memory of WWII focuses heavily on the Holocaust and Maria Mälksoo argues that collective memory has been Western European, has focused largely on the German memory and “the realities of the war in Eastern Europe have generally been concealed in the Western public consciousness and formed the byways rather than institutionalized parts of the ‘European account’ of World War II”⁶⁵. The Western European, old European memory is challenged by the Polish and Baltic memories and they are questioning, for example, the Holocaust being “*the crime* against humanity of the 20th century”⁶⁶ and its uniqueness by putting forward the crimes and actions of the Stalinist regimes. Mälksoo connects the European memory of WWII to politics of the memory as well as the core building block of European identity and how politics have influenced what kind of memory dominates memory culture. The Eastern European experience of WWII sets the test to the collective identity and coherence of what being European means.⁶⁷ Truly, there are tensions between the Eastern and Western memories of WWII and how it is used in remembering the past for example when discussing European identity. Finland being in a strange position in WWII means that its memory of the Holocaust is neither straightforwardly Western nor Eastern European.

Formulation of the Research Questions

As said in the introduction, I am interested in looking at how the memory of the Finnish SS-volunteers and the memory of being on the side of the perpetrator is discussed in Finnish society through public writings. The public discourse was interesting because of the strong opinions it caused by academics but also from private persons. Indeed, I have framed my main question as:

⁶³ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 43. Karlsson argues that the Holocaust gradually turned into an important historical-cultural symbol, neither the inspiration nor the initiative was European.

⁶⁴ Karlsson, “The Uses of History”, 44.

⁶⁵ Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European”, 654.

⁶⁶ Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European”, 656.

⁶⁷ Mälksoo, “The Memory Politics of Becoming European”, 654–655.

1. How is the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers and them having possibly played a role in the Holocaust and atrocities dealt with in public discussions in during the years 2018-2019?

This core question needs a few supporting and specifying questions:

- a) What do the discussions and reactions reveal about the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers in society, and how is this image is upheld?
- b) How has the history writing of the past responded?
- c) What could be the reasons for the delay of the conversation until now?

The aim is then to look at the discussions and arguments surrounding the topic and conduct a microstudy of how the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers is dealt with in the public discourse. What types of arguments are used, how were the studies responded to, and which kinds of narratives about the volunteers are present at the discussion today. Also, it is important to look at who has been active in the discussion and what their relation to the topic is e.g. personal or professional, who are the ones participating in the debate. The connection to the European context is meaningful since for decades Finland had a notion of a “together but separate war” with Nazi Germany, which has meant distancing itself from the idea of Finland and the volunteers having a role in the Holocaust. While the separate war theory no longer seems like a relevant way of seeing Finland’s role in WWII, the separation ideas are still alive when looking at the discussion around Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers.

Methodology

The method I use in this thesis is content analysis, which has different characteristics, uses, and aims. Firstly, content analysis is an empirically grounded method and its used to “examine data, printed matter, images, or sounds-texts-in order to understand what they mean to people, what they enable or prevent, and what the information conveyed by them does.”⁶⁸ Secondly, content analysis surpasses traditional notions of symbols, contents, and intents meaning that content analysis has been developed and shaped over the years to answer the challenges of development, for example, the birth of electronic media. Thirdly, content analysis has developed a methodology of its own which “enables researchers to plan, execute,

⁶⁸ Krippendorff, Klaus, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (California: Sage, 2004), XVII-XVIII.

communicate, reproduce, and critically evaluate their analyses whatever the particular results”.⁶⁹ The reason for this is three-fold: the material available to use is larger than ever, growing numbers of researchers collaborate in pursuit of large data and they need reliable ways to examine it, and the huge number of electronic sources requires “qualitatively different research techniques for computer aids”.⁷⁰ Content analysis can be either qualitative or quantitative or in some cases both. The range of the content analysis is enormous and different scholars from different fields have modified the method for their needs.⁷¹ Since the concept of the content analysis is so broad and the definitions are varied depending on the researcher, in this thesis I rely on Klaus Krippendorff’s definition: “content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use”.⁷²

Certain issues and aspects need to be taken into consideration when using the content analysis method. First, the techniques used need to be reliable, meaning that anyone using the same techniques should get the same results. Second, the results should be valid and open for scrutiny.⁷³ In practice, Krippendorff that argues one should follow this procedure: “sample text, in the sense of selecting what is relevant; unitize text, in the sense of distinguishing words or propositions and using quotes or examples; contextualize what they are reading in light of what they know about the circumstances surrounding the text, and have specific research questions in mind”.⁷⁴ Using the content analysis from the qualitative point of view differs slightly from the quantitative content analysis. Firstly, qualitative is based usually in the humanistic tradition. It might yield testable hypotheses but it is by no means the purpose of it and White and Marsh argue “replacing the hypotheses are foreshadowing questions, that is, open questions that guide the research and influence the data that are gathered”.⁷⁵ Also, the data itself is differently meaningful when using qualitative content analysis since the researcher examines them closely to identify concepts and patterns, and sometimes there will be new patterns and concepts that were not predicted at the beginning. Indeed, those new elements will also be meaningful to analyse even though their existence was not

⁶⁹ Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, XX.

⁷⁰ Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, XVIII- XXI.

⁷¹ Marilyn Domas, White & Emily E. Marsh, “Content Analysis: A Flexible Methodology” *Library Trends* 55, no.1 (2006): 23.

⁷² Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 18.

⁷³ Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 18.

⁷⁴ Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*, 87.

⁷⁵ White & Marsh, “Content Analysis”, 34.

foreshadowed. If this does happen, White and Marsh argue that it is legitimate to change the research interest and questions to examine these new patterns.⁷⁶

When selecting the data and sampling in qualitative content analysis one should, of course, find relevant data but also focus on the exceptionality of the texts and be “consciously aware of the multiple interpretations than can arise from a close perusal of it”.⁷⁷ Since analysing the data is specific and repetitive, the sample of data should be limited. When coding in qualitative content analysis the main focus of the researcher is not the priority to make codes, but rather “the initial foreshadowing questions he aims to answer through his research”⁷⁸ and the process is inductive rather than deductive. Indeed, it is possible to read the data before coding to understand the bigger picture of the data and tag the key phrase and concepts when reading through.⁷⁹

Since the data and my primary sources are writings of all kinds relevant to the topic in newspapers and journals, including academics ones too, their proper collection was extremely important. The writings about the Finnish SS-volunteers were primarily opinion pieces in newspapers including text messages and comments in the comments sections under the articles, book reviews, interviews, news and analysis regarding the study and the scandal around it. In some cases, the comments sections are used to highlight that similar opinions were frequently used, and they have common themes with longer opinions. The data used in the thesis is collected from various databases and platforms but the main one was two databases where the newspapers and non-academic journals are collected. The first one is ePress which is a digital newspaper service and the other one is Media-Arkisto Alma which is a database from newspapers, tabloids and journals from the same publishing house. ePress was the most used database since it had everything on the same site. One meaningful website for data collection was Agricola which is a humanistic study-based online publication forum.⁸⁰ They collect information and discussion about topics connected to humanistic studies and report on interesting occurrences in society.

I narrowed the data selection period time to November 2018 to the end of December 2019. Reasons for this were practical, first of all, the discussion started when Swanström’s *Hakaristin ritarit* was published on the 17th of November in 2018 and the discussion stayed active for about a year. Furthermore, I started writing my thesis and doing the data selection

⁷⁶ White & Marsh, “Content Analysis”, 34

⁷⁷ White & Marsh, “Content Analysis”, 36.

⁷⁸ White & Marsh, “Content Analysis”, 37.

⁷⁹ White & Marsh, “Content Analysis”, 36-38.

⁸⁰ “Suomalaiset SS-miehet”, Agricola, accessed January 15, 2020.
<https://agricolaverkko.fi/julkaisusarja/suomalaiset-ss-miehet/>.

in early 2020, so it was better to limit the data collection period to the end of 2019. Since it was such a topical discussion, I already had a general idea about what kinds of discussion there had been, who has been active in discussions, what kind of arguments were presented, thus I had an idea of what search words I should use when sampling the sources. Indeed, the search words used in the beginning were (in Finnish) “SS volunteers”, “SS-men”, “Waffen-SS”, “Finnish Volunteers”, “SS-survey”, the names of the authors, “the National Archives’ survey”, “Hakaristin ritarit” and so on. This led to the snowball sampling and finding the next search words that I should use, what to follow. When seeing the pattern of what topics popped up the most, I started searching by using more specific search words e.g. using the names of the opinion writers. In newspapers, there would sometimes be an exchange of opinions spread over the span of a few weeks where two or more writers would comment on each other’s perspectives. If there were references in the articles and opinion pieces, I would follow the trail and try to find out what they were referring to and commenting about. Since I use qualitative analysis instead of a quantitative method, the number of articles was not the main criteria, rather their content was. I had about 100 different articles, opinion pieces in different forms, book reviews, reports, and comments about the topic.⁸¹

The newspapers were selected randomly, and the data selection was guided by which papers’ and journals’ articles I used. Since Finland’s population is only around 5 million, the number of different primary sources, meaning different newspapers, and journals, are not very diverse. Even if there are regional newspapers, they sometimes use the same articles provided by the owners. Indeed, there are two major media organisations: Sanoma and Alma Media. Collectively Sanoma’s mission is “to build a sense of solidarity, democracy, and entertainment”.⁸² The biggest newspaper in the country, and part of Sanoma, is *Helsingin Sanomat* (henceforth *HS*). *HS* had a strong role in nation-building and the success of the paper has been argued to be due to its disengagement from party politics in favour of bridge-building between the political left and right. It has been a paper for both the bourgeoisie and the working class and today it has maintained its role as the “power centre of Finnish media.”⁸³ Also *Ilta-Sanomat* (henceforth *IS*) is part of Sanoma, but as a tabloid paper it does not seem to have a political background, similar to its rival *Ilta-Sanomat* (henceforth *IL*), which is

⁸¹ The full list of the sources can be found in the *Appendix*.

⁸² “Tietoa meistä” Sanoma, accessed October 20, 2020. <https://sanoma.fi/tietoa-meista/>.

⁸³ Lotta, Lounasmeri, “‘Power Investigation’ Neglected: The Case of the Finnish Newspaper Helsingin Sanomat”, *Journal of contemporary European studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 2013), 385.

part of Alma Media.⁸⁴ Alma Media's mission and values are democracy, freedom of speech, and reliable communication and different newspapers and journals work independently regardless of others and the owner.⁸⁵ In early 2020, Sanoma bought *Aamulehti* (henceforth *AL*) and *Satakunnan Kansa*, so when the data collection was done they were still part of Alma Media.⁸⁶ The third publishing company is Keskusomalainen Oyj, which differs from the two others as it is not a multimedia company. Parts of the company include (used in this thesis): *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat* ("South Finland's News" henceforth *ESS*), *Keskisuomalainen* ("Central Finnish" henceforth *KSML*), *Savon Sanomat* (Savo's News) and *Uusimaa* ("New Land"). Keskusomalainen Oyj argues to be a reliable, politically independent and non-partisan media company.⁸⁷ Lastly, there is *Lännen Media Oy*⁸⁸ ("Media of the West") which is a union of regional newspapers and produces contents for (used in this thesis): *AL*, *Hämeen Sanomat*, ("Häme's New), *Ilkka-Pohjalainen*⁸⁹ ("Northern"), *Kainuun Sanomat* ("Kainuu's News" henceforth *KS*), *Kaleva*, *Lapin Kansa* ("Lapland's People" henceforth *LK*), *Satakunnan Kansa* ("Satakunnan's News"), and *Turun Sanomat* ("Turku's News henceforth *TS*). *Aamuset* ("Mornings") is a local free paper and part of *TS*. *Lännen Media Oy* does not mention any specific values on their website. *Karjalainen* ("Karelian") and *Uudenkaupungin Sanomat* ("Uusikaupunki's News") newspaper are not part of the mentioned companies, they are published through their own company. Both of them have no listed values but they are part of the responsible media movement lead by Council for Mass Media which "is a self-regulating committee established by publishers and journalists in the field of mass communication for the purpose of interpreting good professional practice and defending the freedom of speech and publication".⁹⁰ Indeed, most of the newspapers are connected and all of them claim to not have political agendas. *HS* has influence inside and outside the capital area, whereas the other newspapers are strongly connected to their regional areas since they focus their reporting on regional issues.

⁸⁴ Laura Berg, et al, "Politiikan julkisuuden perusvirta", *Politiikan journalismin tila Suomessa* ed. Ville Pernaa, Mari K. Niemi, & Ville Pitkänen (Turku: Kirja-Aurora, 2009), 49.

⁸⁵ "Toimintamme perusta", Alma Media, accessed October 22, 2020. <https://www.almamedia.fi/tietoa-meist%C3%A4/missio-visio-ja-arvot>.

⁸⁶ Marika Harjumaa & Kari Ikävalko, "Sanoma ostaa Aamulehden, Satakunnan Kansan ja 13 muuta Alman lehteä," *Yleisradio*, February 11, 2020. <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-11202282>.

⁸⁷ "Vastuullisuus", Keskusomalainen, accessed October 20, 2020. <https://www.keskisuomalainen.com/mediatalo/vastuullisuus/>.

Lännen Media Oy's shareholders are Alma Media Kustannus Oy, Hämeen Sanomat, I-Mediat Oy, Kaleva Oy, KPK Yhtiöt Oyj, SLP Kustannus Oy, Turun Sanomat Oy and Marva Media Oy.

⁸⁹ *Ilkka* and *Pohjalainen* merged into one newspaper at the beginning of the 2020 called *Ilkka-Pohjalainen*. This means when searching from ePress, the newspapers were already under one name, but the articles were either from *Ilkka* or *Pohjalainen*.

⁹⁰ "Council for Mass Media", JSN, accessed October 24, 2020. <https://www.jsn.fi/en/>.

From journals used in the thesis, *Suomen Kuvalehti* (“Journal of Finland”, henceforth SK) is also a non-political journal taking part in social debates.⁹¹ Historical scholarly journal *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* (“Historical Journal”, henceforth HAIK) is published by the Finnish Historical Society and the Society of the Friends of History. The journal publishes articles, reviews, critiques and commentaries related to all fields of historical research.⁹² A philosophic journal called *niin & näin* (“so and thus”) publishes multi-disciplinary articles and other types of texts.⁹³ *Vartija* (“A Guardian”) is an ideologically and economically independent political journal specialised in questions about religion, humans, and societies.⁹⁴ *Sotaveteraani* (“A Veteran”) is the leading journal of war history and topics related to veterans, according to themselves.⁹⁵ Another war and military-focused journal is *Sotilasaikakauslehti* (“A Soldier’s Journal”) which is a professional journal for soldiers and those interested in the military profession.⁹⁶ *Vapaussodan perintö* (“The Heritage of the War of Liberation”) is a journal of the same name organisation. The organisation’s idea is “cherish the memory of those who participated the to wars of our liberation or had had other ways contributed to the freedom” and “collect and record historical material from War of Liberation, and promote traditions connected to the War of Liberation”.⁹⁷ The War of Liberation is not a neutral term and by using it, one takes the right-wing side of The Civil War⁹⁸, which makes *Vapaussodan perintö*’s articles politically connected.

History and Memory of Finnish SS-volunteers

When looking at WWII from the Finnish viewpoint it is divided in three different wars: The Winter War (1939–1940), the Continuation War (1941–1944) against the Soviet Union, and the Lapland War (1944–1945) against Germany. The secret protocol in the Stalin–Hitler Pact struck in late autumn 1939 led to the Winter War, in which the Soviet invasion was resisted temporarily. The peace agreement written in 1940 was unfavourable to Finland and made future invasion attempts easy for the Soviet Union. When Germany occupied Denmark and

⁹¹ “Suomen Kuvalehti”, Otavamedia, accessed October 27, 2020. <https://otavamedia.fi/tutustu-ja-tilaa/suomen-kuvalehti/>.

⁹² “Historical Journal”, Historiallinen aikakauskirja, accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.historiallinenaikakauskirja.fi/in-english/>.

⁹³ “niin&näin”, Niin & näin, accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.netn.fi/lehti>.

⁹⁴ “Vartija vuodesta 1888”, Vartija-lehti, accessed May 20, 2020. <https://www.vartija-lehti.fi/mika-vartija/>.

⁹⁵ “Sotaveteraani-lehti”, Sotaveteraani, accessed March 12, 2020. <https://sotaveteraanit.fi/sotaveteraani-lehti/>.

⁹⁶ “Sotilasaikakauslehti”, Upseeriliitto, accessed March 8, 2020. <https://www.upseeriliitto.fi/sotilasaikakauslehti>.

⁹⁷ “Etusivu”, Vapaussodan perintö, accessed March 7, 2020. <https://www.vapaussodanperinto.fi/>.

⁹⁸ Civil War in Finland was fought between patriotic “whites” and communistic “reds” in 1918, which ended of the win of whites and terror against reds. For more information look for example: Tuomas Tepora & Aapo Roselius, *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy* (Leiden: BRILL, 2014).

Norway in the same spring it put Finland in a tricky situation: either to try and balance between the two dictatorships or devise a military alliance with Germany. Cooperation with Germany would mean the opportunity to get back lost territories from the Soviet Union and get much needed financial and military support. In 1941, the Continuation War began, and Finland started its own belligerent actions in east Karelia and spent three years fighting alongside Germany.⁹⁹ When it began to be clear that Germany would lose the war, Finland sought a peace deal with the Soviet Union. According to the agreement the former brothers-of-arms needed to leave the country and so the Lapland War started in the north of Finland, where the German troops were stationed.

The 1 408 Finnish SS volunteers served in Waffen-SS between 1941-1943. To strengthen the relationship with Germany, Finland accepted Germany's request to send volunteers to the newly formed Wiking SS-division in early 1941. The Finnish government would have preferred volunteers to be sent to Wehrmacht, where they would have followed in the footsteps of the Jäger movement of World War I.¹⁰⁰ It has been argued that the SS-volunteer movement was a quid pro quo solution: Finland proved its tactic support to Germany and their aims, and in return, Germany would offer military and economic support, if the war between Finland and the Soviet Union would break out. In May 1941, the recruiting process ended, and 1 408 volunteers were sent to Germany in five separate groups. Most of the volunteers were young, on average twenty-years-old, and it has been estimated that one in five supported far-right ideologies.¹⁰¹ The motives to join were an "ambition to receive outstanding Germany military training, to benefit from the economic, material, and status advantages of the Waffen-SS, hopes of an individual position of power in the future and, in addition, as a means of fomenting anti-Soviet feelings and pro-German attitudes".¹⁰²

The Waffen-SS (until 1940, the SS-Verfügungstruppe) was a relatively small section of the SS, separate from the Allgemeine or General SS, created to participate in battles alongside the German army. It has been argued there was no overlap between the two organisations but the arguments do not hold up since there was a regular exchange of personnel between the two SS

⁹⁹ Henrik Meinander "A Separated Story?" in *Nordic Narratives of the Second World War: National Historiographies Revisited* ed. Stenius, H., Österberg, M., & Östling, J (Nordic Academic Press, 2011), 55-56.

¹⁰⁰ In the Jäger movement Finnish volunteers were sent to Germany to learn warfare and they later became the core of the Finnish Army. Micheal Jones, "The Politics of Alliance" in *Finnish Memory Culture of World War II" Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* ed. Kinnunen & Kivimäki, 99.

¹⁰¹ Swanström argues that Jokipii has on purpose diminish the number of volunteers who supported far right and National Socialistic ideologies by using the primary sources selectively when analysing the political backgrounds. He analyses that the number of those supporting fascist ideologies are actually higher than it was formerly believed. Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*, 45-47.

¹⁰²Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and Atrocities*, 20.

groups. While the majority of the Waffen-SS soldiers were Germans, deliberate strategy soldiers were recruited from occupied countries.¹⁰³ Since the race was preferred over nationality participation in Waffen-SS was first reserved for ethnic Germans and for Europeans seen as being part of the German race.¹⁰⁴ According to Heinrich Himmler, the creator of Waffen-SS, it was designed to be “the basis of a ‘pan-Germanic’ and ‘Nordic’ blood community; as such, it was to serve as the birthplace of a future pan-Germanic Europe”.¹⁰⁵ When the need for soldiers grew volunteers were enlisted from non-Germanic races.¹⁰⁶ The SS-Waffen was divided into different divisions and Finnish volunteers were separated mainly into three different regiments in SS-division Wiking: the majority in Norland, some to Westland, and Germania, and a few in some other units.¹⁰⁷

The Narrative of the Separate Wars

During the war as well as right after the leaders of Finland pushed the idea of separate war, where Finland was Germany’s ally but fought different war alongside them. Indeed, the actions of Germany elsewhere in Europe were separated from Finland, where the goal was only to stop the occupation of the Soviet power. The first theory about the separation and exclusion is called *driftwood theory*, essentially meaning that Finland was floating between the two powers and had no choice itself but to drift in the stream without any agency of its own. In the late 1950s and the theory was challenged by American historian Leonard Lundin arguing that “Finnish–German wartime cooperation had been a deliberate choice, which had subsequently been denied because of its complex nature and grave consequences”¹⁰⁸ and how Finns were actively hiding the alliance and their agency. The reply to the accusation came from the Finnish historian Arvi Korhonen, arguing with several reasons why Finland needed to be understood as a victim of big power politics. Korhonen’s ideas were challenged in turn by the American historian Hans Peter Krosby, and it soon became clear that old narratives of an alliance needed to be re-evaluated by Finns as well. Some historian continued to downplay Finland’s participation, claiming that “rather than a piece of lifeless driftwood, Finland had

¹⁰³ Madeleine Hurd & Steffen Werther, “Retelling the past, inspiring the future: Waffen-SS commemorations and the creation of a ‘European’ far-right counter-narrative”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, 50:4-5, (2016), 422.

¹⁰⁴ Jochen Böhrer & Robert Gerwarth, *The Waffen-SS: A European History* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 10.

¹⁰⁵ Hurd & Werther, “Retelling the past, inspiring the future”, 422.

¹⁰⁶ Böhrer & Gerwarth, *The Waffen-SS: A European History*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁷ Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and Atrocities*, 22, 67.

Mauno Jokipii, *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoiset: Waffen-SS:n suomalaispataljoona vertailtavana*, (Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura: 2002) 188-189.

¹⁰⁸ Meinander, “A Separated Story?”, 59.

been a skilfully steered row-boat”¹⁰⁹ steering in the difficult situation between the two powerful states. Both the driftwood theory and the notion of a rowboat was truly questioned by Mauno Jokipii in his significant 1987 study about the Continuation War, and today most historians have lost interest in the separated war theory.¹¹⁰

The Narrative of Special Finnish SS-volunteers

Mauno Jokipii wrote the first academic history study of the Finnish-SS volunteers *Panttipataljoona* in 1968. Jokipii’s study has been seen as a monumental and prominent account of the history of Finnish SS volunteers and its legacy has shaped how Finland’s SS past has been understood. *Panttipataljoona* is the first study of the Finnish volunteers made by someone who did not participate in the SS-Waffen himself. The first edition was published in 1968 and there have been three more editions since then.¹¹¹ The study is over 700 pages long including photos and maps, and it took about ten years to complete. Indeed, it thoroughly explains the journey of Finnish SS-volunteers, Finnish-German relations, how the idea of SS-volunteers came to be, the selection of the volunteers, their time in Germany, and the end of Finnish volunteers as well explaining the political atmosphere alongside. Jokipii’s style of writing is to connect with the volunteers and for example, he talks about the protection of “our land”¹¹² and “our SS-men”¹¹³. Jokipii creates a sentimental connection between the volunteers and the reader: they are the same side and volunteers are working for a better future of Finland. The emotional connection might be connected to the time and reflects the way academic books were written in the 1960s, or it is made to connect the volunteers with the reader and this way creates sympathy and patriotic attachment towards the Finns who went to Germany with good intentions. His study also contains a lot of hindsight, explaining how the decision was directly correlated to other events later on.

¹⁰⁹ Meinander, “A Separated Story?”, 59.

¹¹⁰ Meinander, “A Separated Story?”, 58-59.

¹¹¹ The third edition was published by Veljesapu Ry, which got the rights for it from Jokipii in 1992. The third edition included also the remade list of volunteers, corrected, and a analyse of the change of the history writing of SS-men and Jokipii’s opinion of it. The fourth edition’s pre-words talk about how the book is available in bookstores, when before the publication has been done by Veljesapu Ry. Jokipii writes, how there has been wrongly public accusation of the group Veljesapu and having the book available everywhere would hopefully help with the accusations and spearing the academic knowledge. Mauno Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 3rd ed. (Veljesapu: 2002), 8.

¹¹² Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 34, 57. 63.

¹¹³ Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 429.

Indeed, the image one gets from Jokipii's study is that Finnish SS-volunteers had barely any ideological motives to join the Waffen-SS, even though some had far-right sympathies.¹¹⁴ In a subchapter *Wiking and International Justice*, he talks about the war crimes committed in the Waffen SS and the connection of war crimes to Finnish SS-volunteers. First, he points out that no Finns or other soldiers in Wiking battalion have been convicted. Among the Wiking, it was ideal that no Russian commissioners should be executed, and SS-soldiers should take no prisoners of war, but from the diaries of Finns, it becomes clear that this ideal was not followed. Based on the volunteers' diary writings, Jokipii argues that Finns were not comfortable with the cruel ways the Germans executed Russian prisoners and they mention being lucky to be able to avoid the task of executions.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless, when Jokipii writes about the atrocities towards Jews and civilians it is mentioned that the actions were done by the Germans. For example, he remarks on how Finns participated in 'organising' (looting) food, alcohol, clothes, and other personal belongings while Germans took care of destroying synagogues with the help of locals.¹¹⁶ Also, the killings of civilian prisoners and civilians are mentioned in the Finns' diaries. One says that he believes that shooting prisoners and Jews was started with the mischievous use of arms. Finnish SS-volunteers indeed witnessed the execution of Russian prisoners, civilians, and Jews, but all the sources say that not only did Finns avoid participating in these atrocities, but they also condemned them. Jokipii points out, that even in vilest internal critic about the possibility of the participation, there is no evidence backing it up. He also reminds that Finns were in no position to stop the atrocities and bad treatments since no Finns occupied higher official positions.¹¹⁷ This sounds as if Jokipii believed it was possible that Finns would have objected to the actions and act morally in the situation. Jokipii also reminds that as a collective group Finns in 1942-1943 did not witness what the volunteers witnessed in 1941 and he believes that it was because the cooperation wanted to keep thriving and showing amoral methods would hinder the collaboration.¹¹⁸

Beside *Panttipataljoona*, Jokipii's other study *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoisliikkeet: Waffen-SS:n suomalaispataljoona vertailtavana (Hitler's Germany and Voluntary Movement: Finnish SS-Waffen Battalion in Comparison)* published in 2002, strengthened the image of volunteers being a special group among the other voluntary groups on Waffen-SS. The reason for the study, according to Jokipii in his foreword, is the media discussion around the Finnish

¹¹⁴ Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 98.

¹¹⁵ Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 211-212.

¹¹⁶ Look for example: Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 193-194.

¹¹⁷ Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 214-215

¹¹⁸ Jokipii, *Panttipataljoona*, 216.

SS-volunteers regarding the memorial stone in Ukraine, that is planned to be established in the memory of fallen Finnish SS soldiers. Jokipii argues that the memorial stone discussion has brought unkind judgement towards Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers saying how he wants to bring the conversation back to the facts, but at the same time to be critical and present new information that the field has gained over the years.¹¹⁹ Compared to earlier arguments, Jokipii acknowledged that the Wiking battalion faced similar situations as every other division and no one would come out clean if investigated thoroughly, but he still believes that most men fought within the limits of international law but that there cannot be general “remission”.¹²⁰

Besides seeing Finnish volunteers as special in the Waffen-SS, the group was dubbed an elite group differing from other SS units. The Waffen-SS and particularly the Division SS-Division Wiking enjoyed a particular reputation in the early war years: it was not only one of the forces of the Waffen-SS but had an elite status among the entire German military.¹²¹ It has been argued, that “Wiking’s trans-European profile had been useful in promoting Germanic propaganda during the war”¹²² and Europeanness continued to be useful in the argument that the Waffen-SS had been unique in not fighting for Germany only but in defence of all of Europe. Waffen-SS veterans also wanted separation from Allgemeine SS or questionable Waffen-SS units like the SS-Totenkopfverbände of the concentration and death camps.¹²³ The role of the Waffen-SS as an elite unit in SS got even more support after the war with the arguments of German SS commander Felix Steiner. Indeed, “Steiner’s book proves the purity of the Waffen-SS volunteers’ hearts by completely erasing anything that might resemble war atrocities. He is, indeed, careful to detail the volunteers’ excellent relations with Eastern Europeans, the troops’ natural allies against the Bolsheviks.”¹²⁴ The rewritten history is free from racism and more about the honourable fight to defend Europe against Bolshevism. This version of events was launched as a counter-narrative during the Cold War and “its final validity was established (Waffen-SS veterans’ publications maintained) by the fall of the Soviet Union” which can be seen as the last confirmation of the Waffen-SS volunteers sacrifices for Europe, finally free from Bolshevism.¹²⁵

¹¹⁹ Mauno Jokipii, *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoisliikkeet. Waffen-SS:n suomalaispataljoona vertailtavissa*, (Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura: 2002), 9–13.

¹²⁰ Jokipii, *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoisliikkeet*, 91–96.

¹²¹ Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and Atrocities*, 33.

¹²² Hurd & Werther, “Retelling the Past, Inspiring the Future”, 424.

¹²³ Hurd & Werther, “Retelling the Past, Inspiring the Future”, 424-425.

¹²⁴ Hurd & Werther, “Retelling the past, inspiring the future”, 431.

¹²⁵ Hurd & Werther, “Retelling the past, inspiring the future”, 432.

It is important to mention that the Veljesapu heritage association is often mentioned in this thesis and it has its role in the debate. Veljesapu (“Brotherly Aid”) is an association formerly known as SS-Aseveljet (“SS Comrades-in-Arms”) which was founded 1942 to organise different kinds of events, help their members in need, and spread literature, but also uphold the spirit of the brothers-in-arms attitude and good cooperation between Finns and Germans. The original association was cancelled after the war since it was seen as breaking the peace agreement.¹²⁶ Veljesapu in these days¹²⁷ are upholding the traditions of Finnish SS-volunteers and it “*was founded to act as an apolitical link between the Finnish volunteers who served in the German armed forces in 1941-1943 and to provide financial aid to said volunteers and their families in need*”.¹²⁸ In the past, they have been active and have caused scandals when trying to get a memorial stone in Ukraine for the fallen Finnish SS-soldiers¹²⁹ and organising events at the memorial stone in Helsinki.¹³⁰ Truly, Veljesapu has been an important association for publishing literature about volunteers and cherishing the traditions of Finnish SS-volunteers (though it is unclear what these traditions include)

While the speciality trope had been alive since the 1960s it had not been challenged until Swanström’s study in 2018. Then what caused the discussion to stay one-sided without any question about the image of Finnish SS-volunteers? If looking at the Western European countries and the remembrance of the Holocaust, there has been a change from avoidance to taking responsibility and drawing the attention to their victimhood in the early decades after the war, to the radical reinterpretation in the 1960s and 1970s once overcome from the need of national healing.¹³¹ From the 1980s to the 2000s the memory of the Holocaust and WWII had become a crucial element for uniting Europe and making it part of the base of European foundational memory.¹³² In Eastern Europe however, the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 created the need and opportunity to start a discussion about countries role in WWII, Soviet

¹²⁶ Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*, chapter SS-aseveljet.

¹²⁷ When doing the double-checking the sources, the website of Veljesapu is completely down and there is no information whether the association is still active or not. (23.9.2020)

¹²⁸ “Etusivu”, Veljesapu, access November 22, 2019, <http://www.veljesapu.fi/>.

¹²⁹ “SS-miesten muistomerkistä kiistaa,” *Yleisradio*, May 12, 1999, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-5133706>. The memorial stone project was called off since the publicity it got from SWC and in national press. The memorial stone would have been seen as hurtful towards those who were the victims and their families of the atrocities committed by Nazi Germany. “Waffen-SS -kivi jää pystyttämättä,” *Aamulehti*, May 20, 1999, Media-Arkisto.

¹³⁰ “Pääesikunnalle päänsärkyä SS-miesten tapaamisesta,” *Pohjolan Sanomat*, July 6, 2000, Media-Arkisto. In the event at the memorial stone, the General Headquarters gave their permission to Veljesapu to have guard of honour when setting flowers to the memorial stones in Helsinki. Veljesapu’s Helsinki department had arranged an event, where they also invited SS-veterans from Germany. Media discourse and the request from Jewish association lead to the defence minister asking officially General Headquarters the reasons giving the guard of honour and later apologising the harm caused. “Valtiollista tukea SS-joukoille?,” *Pohjolan Sanomat*, July 7, 2000, Media-Arkisto.

¹³¹ Berger, “Remembering the Second World War,” 121-122, 133.

¹³² Berger, “Remembering the Second World War,” 132-135.

Union oppression and the Holocaust. Indeed, the former members of the Eastern Bloc had the possibility of restructuring their public memory through new anniversaries, monuments, museums, and apologies.¹³³ Torbakov calls the period following the fall of the Soviet Union as “battle over history”.¹³⁴ The memory of the Holocaust has not been an easy task and there is “much at stake in the reckoning with the Holocaust: it is emerging as an important station in the region’s ‘return to Europe’”.¹³⁵ Finland was not occupied by the Soviet Union nor it did it experience a critical or traumatic crisis in historical thinking, (as Rüsen calls it) like the Eastern Bloc countries did after the fall the Soviet Union in 1989. There is no denying of the Soviet Union’s grip in Finnish politics since the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance (FCMA-Treaty) with the Soviet Union in 1948 tied Finland to the Soviet defence system¹³⁶ leading to the *Finlandization*¹³⁷, but it did not cause a crisis in the terms of the connections to the Holocaust. It has been argued that the fall of the Soviet Union caused “a period of memory conflicts”¹³⁸ leading to the (neo-)patriotic culture and ideas of finding the truth. Similarly, on the one hand, the anniversaries of war are celebrated and devoted and on the other hand, researchers are critically challenging and looking at the nationalist interpretations of the wartime and the silenced parts.¹³⁹

As Karlsson has argued, the Holocaust is indeed a meaningful part of the European memory and it has been implemented into European memory. One meaningful event in Europe was the Stockholm International Forum in 2000 brought the Declaration of the Stockholm International Forum on the Holocaust (Stockholm Declaration). The declaration has eight points which are about acknowledging the Holocaust having universal meaning, a commitment to fighting mass violence, and a commitment to promote education, remembrance and research about the Holocaust.¹⁴⁰ Even though the declaration was founded in 2000, it took 10 years of Finland to become a member of IHRA¹⁴¹.¹⁴² While Finland was

¹³³ Susan C. Pearce, “Delete, Restart, or Rewind? Post-1989 Public Memory Work in East-Central Europe”, 256.

¹³⁴ Torbakov, “History, Memory and National Identity,” 211.

¹³⁵ Susan C. Pearce, “Delete, Restart, or Rewind?”, 267.

¹³⁶ Marjo Uutela, “The End of Finlandization’. Finland’s Foreign Policy in the Eyes of the Two German States 1985–1990,” *The International History Review*, 42 no.2 (2020): 410.

¹³⁷ The term Finlandization was introduced in Austria in the 1950s, meaning of an undesirable model of neutrality changing negatively to refer Finland’s appeasement policy towards the Soviet Union. In the 1980s, the term neutralised to mean “more loosely how, in order to maintain its sovereignty, a small nation with a powerful neighbouring country adapted itself to the demands of the bigger one”. Uutela, “The End of Finlandization,” 411.

¹³⁸ Kinnunen & Jokisipilä “Shifting Images of “Our Wars”, 480.

¹³⁹ Kinnunen & Jokisipilä “Shifting Images of “Our Wars”, 471, 473.

¹⁴⁰ “Stockholm Declaration”, Holocaust Remembrance, accessed October 26, 2020.

<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/about-us/stockholm-declaration>.

¹⁴¹ IHRA was originally called Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF).

not part of the IHRA, the country issued an official apology to the victims of the Holocaust and erected a memorial stone in 2000. At the request of the Yad Vashem's Finnish department,¹⁴³ Finland decided to implement Holocaust Remembrance Day in the Finnish calendar with the name the remembrance day of the victims of atrocities (“Vainojen uhrien muistopäivä”).¹⁴⁴ Briefly, in 2004-2005, there was active discussion about the deportations of Jews and prisoners of war from Finland to Germany during WWII. The discussion led to the survey being conducted by the National Archives and for a moment Finland's role as a perpetrator briefly discussed and acknowledged, but it did not continue to a discussion on the Finnish SS-volunteers. As mentioned, in 1999 Veljesapu organised a memorial stone for the volunteers, which sparked a public discussion and the project was later cancelled. It was acknowledged that the memorial stone would be hurtful to the victims of Nazism, but the conversation did not lead to a deeper critical exploration of the volunteers' connections to the atrocities.

The discussion on Finnish SS-volunteers has been dominated by Jokipii's studies, Veljesapu, and the former volunteers and their memoirs, and there has not been a crisis in society about a topic would have led the academic realm to study and explain the change in the historical thinking. Sure, one reason for this is the academia being strongly connected to upholding the separate war and special volunteers' images. While in Europe the remembrance of Holocaust has been active due to the European Union and Stockholm Declaration as well as the fall of the Soviet Union, but it has not pressured society enough to create deeper crisis in historical thinking about Finland's role in Holocaust.

The Empirical Analysis

The Finnish SS-volunteers' Image is Challenged

The discussion of the history of Finnish SS-volunteers began in the media when André Swanström's "*Hakaristin ritatit – Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset*" (*Knights of the Swastika – Finnish SS Men, Politics, Religion and War Crimes*) was published in October 2018 sparked a debate that revealed how painful the SS-volunteer past still is. The discussion was further invigorated when the National Archives of Finland's archive survey

¹⁴² "Finland", Holocaust Remembrance, accessed October 26, 2020.
<https://www.holocaustremembrance.com/member-countries/finland>.

¹⁴³ Today the organisation is called Holokaustin uhrien muisto ry.

¹⁴⁴ Johanna Maria Sorsa, "Vainojen uhrien muistopäivä Suomi ja holokaustin eurooppalainen muistokulttuuri", (Master's Thesis, University of Helsinki), 2017, 2.

called *The Finnish SS Volunteers and Atrocities in against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943* by Lars Westerlund was published in 2019. The majority of the discussion about Finnish SS-volunteers took place after the publication of the survey, so most of the primary sources come from that debate. Nevertheless, the arguments did not drastically vary whether it was about Hakaristin ritarit or the archival survey.

Before the publication of the study, some articles in the Finnish press had already been published, and Swanström had written a few articles about his findings. The tabloid paper *IS* had written about it already in 2016. The short article mentions the diary writings of a Waffen-SS volunteer priest, who witnessed the shooting of Jews, and the possibility of Jokipii falsifying the truth about volunteers' participation.¹⁴⁵ The promotion of the study started in 2017, and Swanström's wrote articles in early 2017 in the academic journal focused on the history of the church, *Teologia*, about the same diary writings¹⁴⁶ and in another article in an academic blog in *The Finnish Society of Church History* (henceforth *FSCH*)¹⁴⁷. The writing in *FSCH* was spotted in *IS* which reported how there are new arguments about how "Finnish SS men shot Jews on the eastern front".¹⁴⁸ Swanström also appeared in the *Yleisradio*'s (henceforth *YLE*) morning TV-show.¹⁴⁹ This was his first proper public appearance, where the general public became familiar with his arguments of the SS volunteers' involvement in atrocities. These appearances and articles of SS-volunteers caught the interest of the SMC's chairperson Efraim Zuroff, who sent an official request to the president of Finland Sauli Niinistö asking Finland to conduct an official investigation as to whether Finnish SS-volunteers participated in atrocities.¹⁵⁰ Some months later *HS* wrote that Finland was starting an official archive survey project to discern whether Finns had played a role in the Holocaust

¹⁴⁵ Tuomas Manninen, "Suomalaisen SS-sotilaspastorin sensuroimaton päiväkirja paljastaa karneita yksityiskohtia," *Ilta-Sanomat*, October 19, 2016, <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000001933444.html>.

¹⁴⁶ André Swanström, "Uskonto, nationalismi ja fasismi SS-pastori Ensio Pihkalan sotapäiväkirjassa," *Teologia*, January 30, 2017, <https://teologia.fi/2017/01/uskonto-nationalismi-ja-fasismi-ss-pastori-ensio-pihkalan-sotapaeivaekirjassa/>.

¹⁴⁷ André Swanström, "Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka ja uskonto," *Suomen kirkkohistoriallinen seura*, September 28, 2017, <http://www.skhs.fi/suomalaiset-ss-miehet-politiikka-ja-uskonto/#more-1732>.

¹⁴⁸ Tuomas Manninen, "Tutkijan uusi väite: Suomalaiset SS-miehet ampuivat juutalaisia itärintamalla," *Ilta-Sanomat*, October 15, 2017, <https://www.is.fi/kotimaa/art-2000005407785.html?ref=rss>.

¹⁴⁹ Hanna Hanhinen, "Tutkija: Lähes puolet suomalaisista SS-miehistä fasisteja – "Ampumataidoille olisi parempaakin käyttöä kuin juutalaisten teloittaminen", *Yleisradio*, October, 6, 2017, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9868903>.

¹⁵⁰ Heikki Heiskanen, "Juutalainen ihmisoikeusjärjestö vaatii virallista selvitystä suomalaisten SS-miesten väitetyistä sotarikoksista," *Yleisradio*, January 16, 2018, <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-10025148>.

while serving in the SS-Waffen¹⁵¹ The task was given to the National Archives of Finland. IL revealed the request based on Swanström's arguments and especially the writings about the diary of the SS priest.¹⁵²

The diary writings of SS-priest Ensio Pihkala are used as an example in all articles and it is one of the most pressing sources, which proves Finns' close connection to the atrocities. Pihkala's diary revealed how 15 Finnish volunteers told him how they witnessed the executions of Jews, his own experiences of witnessing the treatment and execution Jews and civilians, and his realisation of Nazis' opinions about the religion. Swanström argues, that the diary shows the change Pihkala had towards military service from excitement and poking fun at Jews to the horror of the realisation of what Nazism entailed. Swanström analysed Pihkala's writings, abolishing the image of the Waffen-SS being elite troops with no connection to the atrocities. Pihkala's diary is valuable testimony not only about the knowledge of atrocities but also the role of religion in the nationalistic ideologies in Finland in 1940s.¹⁵³ Nevertheless, the press was already familiar with the topic when *Hakaristin ritarit* was published, but the first wave of discussion truly started after the release of the study in October 2018. The most interesting articles about the study are the book reviews and the discussions the academics had in the reviews. *Hakaristin ritarit* got a quite mixed response and from the book reviews, one can already see what kind of routes the discussion of SS-volunteers would take later on when the archival survey was published.

The First Response to the New Studies

In *HS*, historian Oula Silvennoinen reviewed *Hakaristin ritarit* arguing in the title in his article "The "flawless image" of ordinary Finns in SS troops is breaking down in the most important war history study of the year".¹⁵⁴ Silvennoinen strongly argues that in academic circles the image of innocent volunteers had been questioned for some time already, and

¹⁵¹Minna Nalbantoglu, "Osallistuivatko suomalaiset SS-miehet juutalaisten ja siviilien surmaamiseen? Kansallisarkisto aloittaa selvityksen," *Helsingin Sanomat* May 31, 2018, <https://www.hs.fi/politiikka/art-2000005701247.html>.

¹⁵² See for example Sanni Mattila, "Suomi tekee selvityksen: Murhasivatko suomalaiset SS-miehet juutalaisia toisessa maailmansodassa? - "...päivänvaloon tuomani todisteet viittaavat vahvasti siihen"" *Iltalehti*, January 26, 2018. <https://www.iltalehti.fi/kotimaa/a/201801252200694367>.

¹⁵³ André Swanström, "Uskonto, nationalismi ja fasismi SS-pastori Ensio Pihkalan sotapäiväkirjassa," *Teologia*, January 30, 2017, <https://teologia.fi/2017/01/uskonto-nationalismi-ja-fasismi-ss-pastori-ensio-pihkalan-sotapaeivaekirjassa/>.

¹⁵⁴ Oula Silvennoinen, "Särötön kuva "tavallisista suomalaispojista" SS joukoissa romuttuu vuoden tärkeimmässä sotahistorian teoksessa", review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström. *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 17, 2018. ePress.

Swanström was now shattering the image with relevant and trustful arguments. Even Swanström had controversial arguments against Jokipii's study and the general perception of SS volunteers. His reasonings proved that the image of volunteers had been twisted, incorrect and 'too good to be true'. Silvennoinen argued that the question of how it could be possible that Finnish SS-volunteers were the only ones not participating atrocities when rest of the Waffen-SS soldiers did, is answered and the results shatter the image of "innocents Finns".¹⁵⁵ Silvennoinen believed Swanström's study would challenge the image and the past of volunteers is finally discussed critically. The positive book review and the recognition of the meaningfulness of the study in HS gave *Hakaristin ritarit* a huge public platform and Silvennoinen loudly supported the changed image of volunteers as an important discussion opener. Silvennoinen's opinions were challenged by older academics who argued that Swanström's findings were weak and his analysis was inadequate.

Hakaristin ritarit got a mixed welcome and the book reviews range from praise to harsh criticism in professional journals. Compared to Silvennoinen, Ohto Manninen, emeritus professor of history and war history, did not find Swanström's study to be ground-breaking suggesting it was weak in the *Sotaveteraani* journal. Moreover, he argued the use of source and criticism of sources was inadequate and the study did not meet the requirements of an academic study. Interestingly, Manninen believed that the study succeeded in bringing about more knowledge about instances of Finnish volunteers being horrified of the actions of Nazis.¹⁵⁶ In *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, war historian Sampo Ahto agreed with Manninen's sentiments of weak argumentations being more critical towards the study writing how he has never felt such a second-hand embarrassment when reading the indiscretion study. Ahto was a close friend of late Jokipii and he is angry about how Swanström was "shamefully traducing" Jokipii's monumental work.¹⁵⁷ Ahto also attacked historians who have been congratulating the work, saying to him those historians have taken their job "as a task to question the past of their own country". Ahto was displeased about various parts of the study: the lack of respect towards soldiers and their memory e.g. how war graves were shamed, labelling volunteers as fascists, and the fact that *Hakaristin ritarit* does not introduce new relevant arguments and uses disconnected sentences from diaries as proof and having inadequate findings. Overall

¹⁵⁵ Silvennoinen, "Särötön kuva "tavallisista suomalaispojista" SS joukoissa romuttuu vuoden tärkeimmässä sotahistorian teoksessa".

¹⁵⁶ Ohto Manninen, "Etsii, etsii ja soisi löytävänsä," review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström. *Sotaveteraani*, December 19, 2018, https://agricolaverkko.fi/hallinta/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/ohto_manninen_sotaveteraani_6_2018.pdf.

¹⁵⁷ Sampo Ahto, "Teologi fasistijahdissa" review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström. *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, 12/2018, 48–49, https://agricolaverkko.fi/hallinta/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/sampo_ahto_teologi_Sotilasaikakauslehti-12-2018-kirjat.pdf.

Ahto's opinion is that the study is "an accusation study" rather than research, and Swanström is not familiar enough with what happened at the front line and has not read works favourable of the SS-Wiking division.

In the *Vartija* journal, Professor of History of the Church Eino Murtorinne was thankful that Swanström had taken an interest in the topic that has been somewhat glossed over because of its sensitivity. Murtorinne was not as harsh as Ahto and Manninen seeing that the study does a great job discovering the ideological background of the volunteers and challenging Jokipii's biased findings. Murtorinne's criticised that the arguments about Finns participating in atrocities and war crimes still lacked watertight evidence, making analyses weak. Another issue he disagrees with is how fascism is defined and used when talking about the political ideologies of the volunteers. Murtorinne called for analyses about the question of *why* besides the question of *what happened*, reminding that the situation of Finland was difficult during 1941 and this should be remembered when analysing the insane [Finnish SS-volunteers'] trip.¹⁵⁸

In *HAIK* Associate Professor of War History, Mikko Karjalainen from the National Defence University wrote along the lines as the previous critics about the weakness of the study, but he also disapproved of Ahto's emotional comments. The positive side of the study is it has raised the important questions of Finn's role in atrocities and that this is a necessary area to study. Karjalainen wrote how these questions need to be done in a "neutral" and "academic" way.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, he wrote that even though there are many problematic issues in *Hakaristin ritarit*, it has opened up a debate that needs to happen. The emotional responses should be left out of the conversation and there should be no room for arguments that advocate the SS.¹⁶⁰ Both Murtorinne and Karjalainen got a response from Swanström, where he replied to the criticism continuing the academic debate mainly over the ideological stance of SS-volunteers and the use of the word fascism.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Eino Murtorinne, "Hakaristin ritarit – tervetullut uusi näkökulma" review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström, *Vartija*, December 29, 2018, <https://www.vartija-lehti.fi/hakaristin-ritarit-tervetullut-uusi-nakokulma/>.

¹⁵⁹ Mikko Karjalainen, "Uusia tulkintoja suomalaisten SS-vapaaehtoisten sotatiestä" review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström. *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, 1/2019, 80. https://agricolaverkko.fi/hallinta/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/karjalainen_uusia_tulkintoja_suomalaisten_SuS-vapaaehtoisten-sotatiesta%CC%88_HAik_1_2019.pdf.

¹⁶⁰ Mikko Karjalainen, "Uusia tulkintoja suomalaisten SS-vapaaehtoisten sotatiestä" review of *Hakaristin ritarit* by André Swanström. *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, 1/2019, 79-80.

¹⁶¹ The reply to Murtorinne: André Swanström, "Vastine professori Eino Murtorinteelle," *Vartija*, January 19, 2019, <https://www.vartija-lehti.fi/vastine-professori-eino-murtorinteelle/>. The reply to Karjalainen: André Swanström, "SS-miehet, tulkinnat ja tendenssit. Kommentti Mikko Karjalaiselle" *Historiallinen aikakauskirja*, 3/2019.

In newspapers and tabloids *Hakaristin ritarit* got a quite varied response as well and from the book reviews, one can see already what kind of routes the discussion of SS-volunteers will take later when the archival survey is published. There were neutral reports about the Swanström study. In *Hämeen Sanomat*, journalist Ilari Tapio wrote “Dark spots in Finnish SS-volunteers’ history”¹⁶², arguing that until Swanström’s study, the general understanding has been that SS volunteers were following the footsteps of Jägers and they were correcting the wrongdoings of the Winter War, the SS-movement was a non-political and patriotic elite group with soldiers only motivated by adventure. Tapio mentions that image is Jokipii’s *Panttipataljoona*’s doings, writing about how the history writing of the SS past is still not an easy task believing that dissenting arguments would be made.¹⁶³ Journalist Seppo Turunen recognised the meaningfulness of the study in *KS* writing about how it was time to face the lies about SS-volunteers which we had been fed to the public for decades. Turunen interestingly referred to Christopher Brown’s *Ordinary Men* and how ‘ordinary men’ participated in atrocities without being forced or punished not participating. Turunen asked, how we can just believe that Finnish SS-volunteers did not witness anything and trust Jokipii’s ‘we saw nothing, we heard nothing, we never did nothing’ -sentiment. To Turunen Swanström’s sources are relevant and telling enough, but the study is only a star for the needed conversation, arguing, that based on the response it has received, there is more to be discussed.¹⁶⁴

In the tabloid paper *IS*, it is written how Swanström plausibly argued that volunteers were aware of annihilation and their roles were both as witnesses and actors. The title says how the “image of flawless SS-volunteers shattered down in the eyes of a researcher”.¹⁶⁵ They do not offer their arguments, they only present Swanström’s ideas and how they are different from Jokipii’s. The rival tabloid *IL*, on the other hand, titled its article with “SS-men are accused of cruelties”.¹⁶⁶ *IL*’s article is more argumentative taking a more critical route for example when writing that no sources are backing down about Finns participating in the shooting of Jews and civilians, and Swanström “cut corners” when arguing that everyone in the company was under the same orders. *IL* was not happy about how SS-volunteers were blamed simply by

¹⁶² Ilari Tapio, ”Suomalaisten SS-miesten historiassa synkkiä kohtia,” *Hämeen Sanomat*, October 17, 2018, ePress. (Published also in *Aamulehti* and *Satakunnan Kansa*) See also Jari Pietiläinen, ”Murtaako tämä teos vihdoin sitkeän Suomi-myytin? – Uusi kirja: ”Suomalaiset SS-miehet syyllistyivät sotarikoksiin””, *Uusimaa*, October, 17, 2018, ePress.

¹⁶³ Tapio, ”Suomalaisten SS-miesten historiassa synkkiä kohtia.”

¹⁶⁴ Seppo Turunen, ”Ei nähty, ei kuultu, ei ikinä tehty”, *Kainuun Sanomat*, November 1, 2018, ePress.

¹⁶⁵ Jouko Juonala, ”Myytti Suomen puhtoisista SS-vapaaehtoisista mureni tutkijan silmien edessä – ”Kyllä he tiesivät””, *Ilta-Sanomat*, November 17, 2018, ePress.

¹⁶⁶ ”SS-miehiä syytetään julmuuksista,” *Italehti*, October 18, 2018, Media-arkisto.

saying that they were close to the places where prisoners were shot. The arguments are not credible to *IL* since there are no proper sources and to *IL* it looks like Swanström is repeatedly trying to find ways to connect Finns to the Holocaust.

IL's article was not the only one criticising the study and its arguments. In *HS*, the chairperson of Veljesapu, Pekka Kääriäinen argued Swanström's arguments are taken out of the time of the war. He was annoyed that the findings are not new, and researchers have been aware of them all this time. The main take from Kääriäinen's interview is that he believes that there is no evidence supporting that volunteers were more involved as known before and Jokipii and former volunteers were never trying to hide the fact, that they were not clean. He asked that if anyone has any shreds of evidence, they should come forward since Veljesapu does not need to hide, though this changes later when the archival survey is published and some of the family members of volunteers demand the National Archive of Finland to change the results, which I will cover later.¹⁶⁷

In *EES* journalist Annamari Haimi argued the study sometimes feels to be about criticising Jokipii and his arguments, by saying that continuing Swanström overanalyses the diary writings making his assumptions. Haimi argued, that even though Swanström presents some watertight evidence, they are the same ones that have been known already. Haimi is not convinced about the study and she questioned whether there is a fundamental gap in the history knowledge and that Swanström's arguments alone cannot be the foundation of "new history of SS-volunteers" and one should wait until the official archive report and the findings are there.¹⁶⁸ The immediate response to *Hakaristin ritarit* was a combination of sentiment that Swanström has done an important study, but its relevance with the use of sources is questionable. Another sentiment is that the archival survey is expected to answer to the demand of needing "neutral study". It is official and neutral so it should not include analyses based on unreliable sources and it is expected to clear the accusation if aggravating sources are not found.

¹⁶⁷ Jarmo Huhtanen, "Sotahistoriallinen kirja" romuttaa kuvan tavallisista suomalaispojista" SS-joukoissa – nyt SS-perinneyhdistys tyrmää teoksen väitteet sotarikoksista," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October, 27, 2018. See also Janne Yläjoki, "Saksaan lähdettiin Suomen asialla," *Karjalainen*, February 9, 2019, ePress (Published also in *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, *Savon Sanomat*, *Keskisuomalainen*). Vanessa Valkama, "SS-miehen pojalla ei ole salattavaa", *Hämeen Sanomat*, December 16, 2018, ePress.

¹⁶⁸ Annamari Haimi, "Kirja-arvio: André Swanströmin teos suomalaisista SS-sotilaista lataa kovia väitteitä," review of *Hakaristin sanomat* by André Swanström, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, January 6, 2019, ePress. See also Janne Könönen, "Todistajat ja tekijät", *Karjalainen*, December 3, 2018, ePress. Similar comments about waiting for the archival survey and the proper evidences, see: Veikko Leväniemi, letter to the editor, "SS- vapaaehtoisten syyllistäminen vaati näyttöjä", *Ilkka*, December 18, 2018, ePress.

Indeed, the wave of new articles emerged when the National Archives of Finland publishes the archival survey in early 2019 and the public discourse about Finnish SS volunteers truly started. On the 8th of February, the archival survey “*The Finnish SS Volunteers and Atrocities in against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*” was published. At the press conference, the findings of the independent survey were presented: *Finnish SS volunteers were not aware of German plans to annihilate Jews at the beginning, but as a part of SS, they most likely participated in the atrocities and killings of Jews, other civilians and prisoners of war.*¹⁶⁹ The results were acknowledged widely in the newspapers and most of them reported using the words “most likely” in the titles. For example, in *Satakunnan Kansa* the title stated “Finns most likely participated killings of Jews” and *IS* uses Swanström’s comment in headline writing that “there are several smoking guns” of Finnish participation in the atrocities¹⁷⁰.

The Debate About Truth and History Writing

The most important and frequently asked question was *where* is the evidence that would prove participation in the atrocities and the Holocaust? There is a need for the absolute source of any kind, diary entry, document or picture which would give reliable evidence of Finnish SS-volunteers participating in the killings. The main reason for the disbelief about the results was the lack of strong, watertight proof that would plausibly prove participation in the atrocities.

Where is the Smoking Gun?

The loudest disapproval came from Jussi Niinistö, the Minister of Defence at the time who wrote in his blog with the title “Innocent until proven guilty”.¹⁷¹ Niinistö’s comments summarised well the arguments which were used to disagree with the results of the archival survey. Niinistö seemed irked that there were no actual sources where volunteers could be found guilty for atrocities that could be deduced and the arguments were only based on

¹⁶⁹ ”Selvitys suomalaisten SS-miesten osallisuudesta juutalaisten, siviilien ja sotavankien surmaamiseen vuosina 1941–1943 on luovutettu valtioneuvoston kanslialle”, Valtioneuvosto, accessed April 21, 2019, https://valtioneuvosto.fi/artikkeli/-/asset_publisher/10616/selvitys-suomalaisten-ss-miesten-osallisuudesta-juutalaisten-siviilien-ja-sotavankien-surmaamiseen-vuosina-1941-1943-on-luovutettu-valtioneuvoston-kan.

¹⁷⁰ Jouko Juonala, ”SS-selvitys löysi uutta tietoa suomalaisten osallisuudesta julmuuksiin: ”Useita savuavia aseita”, *Ilta-Sanomat*, February 9, 2019, Media-Arkisto.

¹⁷¹ Jussi Niinistö, ”Syytön kunnes toisin todistetaan,” *Jussi Niinistö* (blog), February 12, 2019. <https://jussiniinisto.fi/index.php/2019/02/syyton-kunnes-toisin-todistetaan/>.

analyses of the possibilities. This has led to a situation where innocent volunteers were "unjustly" blamed. He used his background as a historian as an authoritative voice when arguing that in a democracy one is innocent until proven guilty and this sentiment should be used in the historical research as well. Niinistö's blog text was noticed widely in the media and he was described in many articles as criticising and "tearing the results to shreds".¹⁷² Indeed, his position of power made his criticism widespread and also gave him an authority on the issue as the defence minister. Niinistö's political background is in the True Finns party, it is very much a party where "home, fatherland, and religion" are core values.¹⁷³ Juha Sipilä, the Prime Minister at the time, commented on the topic after he was asked about Niinistö's writings because of his role as the Minister of Defence by the opposition parties in their letter.¹⁷⁴ Sipilä argued that one should not tear to shreds history research and studies about difficult topics needs to be done. He reminded too that one should not either forget the role volunteers had in defending Finland.¹⁷⁵ If there were more comments made by politicians about the topic, they did not get the attention of the media.

As Assmann has argued, silencing as a meaningful role in remembering and in the case of perpetrators essentially means keeping quiet. While Niinistö did not directly say one should not discuss the Finnish volunteers and their role in the atrocities, he did argue that the volunteers should not be falsely accused of war crimes without proper evidence. Keeping quiet can also mean not being able to believe the arguments that challenge old beliefs and demanding absolute evidence instead of discussing the possibilities of Finnish SS-volunteers participating in the atrocities. Belittling the credibility of academic studies also echoes the sentiment of keeping quiet by not wanting to have the conversation without absolute proof and later on in the discussion, there are thoughts that the topic should be left alone completely.

The missing "smoking gun" argument was used widely in the early stages of the discussion when *Hakaristin ritarit* was published, especially in the book reviews mentioned earlier. The sources are only telling that there is a possibility for example that some Finnish volunteers were nearby, or that they were asked to execute prisoners of war but they shot past the

¹⁷² Jouko Juonala, "Jussi Niinistö arvostelee SS-selvitystä: "Syytetty on syytön kunnes toisin todistetaan", *Ilta-sanomat*, February 2, 2019. Media-Arkisto. Other examples see *HS*, *IL*, *Lapin Kansa*, *AL*, *Ilkka*.

¹⁷³ "Arvomaaailmamme – Our Values," Perussuomalaiset, access April 19, 2019, <https://www.perussuomalaiset.fi/tietoa-meista/arvomaaailmamme/>.

¹⁷⁴ The opposition parties demanded Prime Minister's comment about whether Niinistö's writings were accepted by the PM and Government.

¹⁷⁵ See example Anita Simola, "Hallitus elää eduskunnan luottamuksesta", *Lapin Kansa*, February 22, 2019, ePress.

victims. The unreliable diary writings are not seen as relevant and credible sources because of their uncertain nature, so when there is no concrete evidence of participation in atrocities, for some it means that it did not happen. The lack of evidence argument is also connected strongly to the feeling that both studies were made poorly, and the historians do not know what they are talking about. In reviews of *Hakaristin ritarit*, sentiment about Swanström's skills as a researcher was brought up and it was used as an argument for his study being incomplete and lacking credibility, or it just being a sensational study. Not only was Swanström's professionalism questioned but history writing in today's society general was criticised. For example, reviews by Ahto and Manninen summarised well the sentiment that Swanström had no idea what he was talking about (especially when speaking about the ideologies of Finnish volunteers), he did not have enough knowledge about what kind situation Finland was in WWII (the pressure coming from the Soviet Union), and the personal attack towards Jokipii, for example, seem to be most common arguments against the study.

Swanström indeed got feedback about his professional abilities: he is not recognised as a war historian¹⁷⁶ and he is also seen as attacking Jokipii and hurting his "research honour".¹⁷⁷ In his opinion, *KMSL*'s lead author Pekka Mervola wrote how the SS past needs to be studied more but accusing Jokipii from whitewashing was "sad".¹⁷⁸ Mervola supported his previous teacher Jokipii's talents as a historian and argued that even though every generation writes their history, it is understandable that Jokipii's *Panttipataljoona* emphasised different aspects since it was written 20 years after the war. Mervola still felt that Jokipii set a "historical framework" of volunteers. For example in *AL*, opinion writers argued how "Historical research cannot be based on today [s history research]", continuing that in back then [1940] there was no such term as "war crimes" and because of it the soldiers in the front line could not have conceived of the brutal deaths they were witnessing as war crimes.¹⁷⁹ To the writer, Swanström failed what research should avoid when indicating past crimes with today's definition of the crime. In *Uudenkaupungin Sanomat*, opinion writer discussed "Nazi connections" and they too argued that the discussion of volunteers the situation of Finland in 1941 is forgotten.¹⁸⁰ In *Satakunnan Sanomat*, an opinion writer is surprised how "not even the professors of history are familiar with Finnish WWII history". The writer defended that

¹⁷⁶ Hannu Purola, "Omaisiet putsaavat SS-miesten mainetta loppuun saakka", *Pohjalainen*, July 16, 2019, ePress.

¹⁷⁷ Veikko Leväniemi, letter to the editor "Dosentti desanttina", *Karjalainen*, February 15, 2019, ePress.

¹⁷⁸ Pekka Mervola, "SS-panttipataljoona syytä edelleen tutkia", *Keskisuomalainen*, 21.7.2019, ePress.

¹⁷⁹ Ulla Mattelmäki, letter to the editor "Historiantutkimus ei voi nojata tähän päivään", *Aamulehti*, October 23, 2018, Media-Arkisto.

¹⁸⁰ Kauno Pietilä, letter to the editor "Suomalaiset SS-miehet ja historia", *Uudenkaupungin sanomat*, March 7, 2019, ePress.

Finnish SS-volunteers were “men of honour” and they were part of “the most disciplined and efficient army in the world”. He was also irked by that “even today the concepts of the Waffen-SS and Allegemeine-SS are confused” since in the Waffen-SS the soldiers were “decent soldiers”, whereas in Allegemeine SS-soldiers were the guards in concentration camps. To the writer, the legacy of the Waffen-SS is that Europe was not “Sovietized”.¹⁸¹

In one opinion, a son of a veteran is angry how it is “unbelievable” that one has to read the news these days that do not have any “base on truth”.¹⁸² Indeed, the historical truth is often discussed in the opinions. For example, in one exchange of opinions between three people, the roles of (historical) facts and personal opinions are debated, started by Matti Jaakkola who commented how “history is an interesting thing since one usually remembers the things one wants to remember and forgets the less honourable parts”.¹⁸³ He talked about the other Nordic Waffen-SS volunteers, which led to a reply by lieutenant colonel Tapani Hankaniemi who worked as defence attaché in Norway in the late 1990s. When working there he was asked by Norwegian press his opinion of Waffen-SS volunteers and he replied how Norwegian, as well as Swedes, Estonians and Germans, are our brothers-in-arms and he is not ashamed to admit it. Indeed, Hankaniemi gave his opinions and facts about the SS-volunteer movement and how badly the Finnish ones were treated compared to others.¹⁸⁴ Hankaniemi’s opinion is titled “History – facts or opinions?” which got a reply from Pentti Heiska and his text “History – facts and opinions”. Heiska argued that Hankaniemi’s writing is a great example of how one uses a combination of history and opinions to produce suitable half-truths that serve one’s purposes. In this case, the historical facts are separated when discussing the volunteers only from the viewpoint that Hitler came as a saviour to save Finland from bolshevism and volunteers are unambiguously seen as heroes.¹⁸⁵ As Heiska pointed out, people have different ways of seeing the volunteers’ past and how they are using history to support what they believe is the truth.

¹⁸¹ Antti Pekola, letter to the editor “Eivätkö edes historian professorit tunne Suomen historiaa toisessa maailmansodassa?”, *Satakunnan Kansa*, April, 29, 2019, Media-Arkisto. See also Oskari Laukkanen, letter to the editor “SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 17, 2019; Anonymous, letter to the editor “Kari Rajamäki syyllistää suomalaiset SS-miehemme”, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, January 29, 2019, ePress, and Rajansa kaikella, letter to the editor, *Uusimaa*, March 27, 2018, ePress.

¹⁸² Sotaveteraanin ylpeä poika, letter to the editor, *Ilkka*, July 20, 2019, ePress.

¹⁸³ Matti Jaakkola, letter to the editor “Historia – aika veitikka”, *Pohjalainen*, June 5, 2019, ePress.

¹⁸⁴ Tapani Hankaniemi, letter to the editor “Historia – faktaa vai mielipiteitä”, *Pohjalainen*, July 13, 2019, ePress.

¹⁸⁵ Pentti Heiska, letter to the editor “Historia – faktaa ja mielipiteitä”, *Pohjalainen*, July 19, 2019, ePress. Similar comments about uses of history, see Miika Raudaskoski, “Historia on yleissivistyksen ydinainesta”, *Tehdään historiaa*, *Karjalainen*, April, 17, 2019, ePress.

Who Influenced the Studies and the Results?

The lack of evidence argument was strongly connected to the *Hakaristin ritarit* study, but *The Finnish SS-volunteers and Atrocities* got it is part of being unreliable. In an opinion in HS, Doctor of Philosophy Eljas Orrman commented that history research should be left to the scientific community in universities, and the National Archives should stick to keeping archives, not to participate in actions that affect their neutrality. Orrman argued that when the National Archives does surveys for political clients it makes those who disagree with the result question them, even if there might not be any reason for it.¹⁸⁶ Some months later journalist Jarmo Huhtanen commented in an opinion piece on the National Archives' role in making the surveys when discussing the need for a similar archival survey about Stalin's terrors towards Finns. He argued that the National Archives survey failed due to its weak results and agreed with Orrman adding that historical surveys are useless if they have the feeling of the truth commission, arguing that "there is no official truth since history writing is analysing sources".¹⁸⁷ It seems that Huhtanen connected the Westerlund survey as an "official truth" since it came from a government agency, not from universities, which he believes should have the primary position to do research.

The role of the National Archives was not the only issue criticised. In the *Vapaussodan perintö* journal, Doctor of Political Science Mikko Uola criticised the National Archives about the survey saying, "volunteers wanted to label based on feeble arguments". Uola claimed that since 2003, Zuroff and SWC started their *Operation Last Hunt* they have also supported the Nazi hunt in Finland when they requested president Halonen order a survey about the Jews that were deported from Finland and later supporting Swanström when he started to carry out Zuroff's wish of finding Nazis in Finland. Since Nazi criminals are hard or even impossible to find in Finland, Swanström then focused his attention on Finnish SS-volunteers Uola argues, adding that the planned project seemingly continued when Zuroff contacted president Niinistö requesting the archival survey. Uola alleges Zuroff, Swanström and the National Archives were manipulating history for ideological and financial goals when falsely accusing volunteers as war criminals. Uola also argues that Swanström and the National Archives lacked evidence, using history to support ideological ideas, and shaming

¹⁸⁶ Eljas Orrman, letter to the editor "Historiantutkimus tulisi jättää tiedeyhteisön tehtäväksi – Kansallisarkisto on tutkimuksen tuottajana ongelmallinen", *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 20, 2019, ePress.

¹⁸⁷ Jarmo Huhtanen, "Kansallisarkiston kannattaisi jättää Stalinin vainojen tutkiminen yliopistoille," *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 13, 2019, ePress.

the work of Jokipii and his professionalism.¹⁸⁸ Uola also commented in newspaper *Pohjalainen*, that the results of the survey were known before the survey itself was made, arguing that it was done by people who have a negative attitude towards volunteers. From the article, one finds out that Uola has written a study about Finnish SS-volunteers' organisational activities and Veljesapu published it. Uola commented that Veljesapu has been an exceptional organization since it had been a work of small group veterans cherishing the traditions "without drawing attention". Uola claimed Veljesapu had been in the firing line several times, saying that one of the most farfetched issues was when 35th-anniversary celebrations were cancelled due to a great stir caused by the use of the Sonnenrad symbol in the programme leaflet since the Sonnenrad was interpreted as a swastika.¹⁸⁹ Uola's partiality towards the SS-volunteers discussion indeed becomes transparent when knowing his connection and sympathies to Veljesapu.

In an opinion piece in *Vartija*, Doctor of Theology Paavo Ahonen commented on Uola's "conspiracy theory" presented in *Vapaussodan perintö*. Ahonen wrote that the supporters of volunteers' memory and those in patriotic circles who cherished the traditions of the old ways of interpretation history were not happy about the results of the archival survey. In the debate on the topic, people were "getting offended and upset their feelings" but also insulted the results and the researchers without proper criticism. Ahonen felt that Uola purposely interpreted the results of both studies, and the sources they used, as wrong and even created a conspiracy theory to back his accusations. Ahonen then proceeds to correct Uola's theory of why Finnish SS-volunteers are suddenly seen as war criminals and participants in the Holocaust. Indeed, based on Ahonen's argument, Uola has gotten many details wrong to make his theory reliable. Ahonen has studied anti-Semitism and argues Uola's arguments might be coming from anti-Semitic attitudes but did not directly accuse him of anti-Semitism since there was no clear proof of it.¹⁹⁰

The Challenging History Writing

What is the truth if there is no evidence to support or counter it? In a column in TS, Professor of Political History, Vesa Vares commented on the debate on SS-history bringing a much-needed academic perspective to the public discussion. He speaks for the importance of a

¹⁸⁸ Mikko Uola, "Suomalaisvapaaehtoiset leimattiin aiheetta," *Vapaussodanperintö*, 3/2019, 15-16.

¹⁸⁹ Jari Karjanmaa, "SS-selvityksen tulos oli tiedossa jo etukäteen", *Pohjalainen*, April 29, 2019, ePress.

¹⁹⁰ Paavo Ahonen, "Dosentti U:n salaliittoteoria," *Vartija*, December 1, 2019, <https://www.vartija-lehti.fi/dosentti-uolan-salaliittoteoria/>.

neutral survey but also about the problems it has caused because of the wording of how Finnish SS-volunteers “most likely participated” in atrocities. The counterargument of the “missing gun” is fuelled by neutrality since there are no condemning facts and Vares believed that the lack of concrete evidence would not create a change of heart among those who believed in the innocence of Finnish SS-volunteers. He also commented on the “shadow of suspicions” that had been cast over volunteers saying it was not unfair since it has not been personally targeted on anyone whose participation cannot be proven.¹⁹¹ Vares’ arguments summarised the academic point of view well, but shamefully it was one of the only comments in the media that brought the academic and relevant voice of historians into the discussion.

The academic discussion seemed to be absent in the media, and I was barely able to find comments in newspapers made by academics other than Swanström and Westerlund, the authors of the studies. For example, the newspaper *Ilkka* interviewed Mika Hakanpää, an amateur war historian, giving his opinions exposure and giving him a relevant role as an expert. Hakanpää said that he had personally known around 200 Finnish volunteers and based on these connections he rejects the archival survey’s results.¹⁹² The personal connection to volunteers is used as an authoritative position to comment on the correctness of the survey and *Hakaristin ritarit*. Indeed, the academic voice was very quiet in the conversation held in the press accessible to everyone, allowing room for anyone who had an opinion about the topic to be an expert. As a former police officer that had also worked as a journalist under a false name and co-written a non-fiction book about Finnish SS-volunteers, he condemned Swanström’s research simply saying “it is full of shite” without giving any proper arguments to back up his statement. His work is heavily based on Jokipii’s work and his research that lasted “decades”, and he is also suspicious about “who is behind all this”.¹⁹³

Other than the articles and book reviews by academics mentioned earlier that mainly saw *Hakaristin ritarit* in a negative light, few scholarly articles discussed the topics in length. Historian Marko Tikka commented on the discussion in the philosophic journal called *niin & näin*. Tikka combines the debate on the Nazi past to a conversation on communism and how the dialogue about Westerlund’s and Swanström’s studies are circulating evidence or even

¹⁹¹ Vesa Vares, “SS-miehet kiistelyn kohteena,” *Turun Sanomat*, February 18, 2019, ePress.

¹⁹² Jari Karjanmaa, “SS-selvitys ei paljastanut oikeastaan mitään uutta”, *Ilkka*, February 16, 2019, ePress.

¹⁹³ Tiina Aho, “Paljastuskirja kirja näyttää pimeän puolen,” *Länsi-Savo*, March 27, 2019. ePress. Silmilar comments about suspicions towards why the study was conducted see Jotain outoa!, letter to the editor, *Uusimaa*, February 13, 2019, ePress.

more their lack of evidence. Tikka studied the terror of the 1918 civil war¹⁹⁴, and while no sources were condemning the killings, there were still other documents proving all of the terror and violence that was committed. The lack of one type of sources does not mean that the terror did not happen, but the analysis was based on other sources and the empty parts that needed to be filled by the researcher. Tikka argued that even if there were a full list of volunteers who participated in the killings, it still would not be enough for some. He is sorry that the conversation on Westerlund's and Swanström's studies is stuck in criticizing the use of sources, and for him, it feels like it is easier and safer to concentrate on that, rather than focus on the entire study, potentially changing what was believed before. Tikka argued that it is absurd to wonder how many participated in the killings or how many victims there were before we can feel shame about this part of our history. Tikka feels that both of these studies show how there is hostility towards academic studies among the public, and researchers need to react to the public conversation and defend their studies. Tikka discusses how to those who see history as concrete events, the rest is not history continuing that for some only *event history*, that studies events or persons based on strictly to sources, is "real history", which in the case volunteers would be the study by Jokipii. "No history" then again is something like Swanström's study represents, which is mental history. Indeed, the event history seems more real and believable than the history of mentalities.¹⁹⁵

Similarly, Antero Holmila commented on how history writing is like a puzzle, where a picture is built using various pieces and the missing pieces are not a problem for a researcher who is familiar with the topic. Holmila argues how once again the nature of (war) history writing is exposed. The public wants to see it as black and white without any shadows of grey: either the war crimes happened or they did not. Holmila felt that was it seen as a failure if the study can only say that conditional volunteers *most likely* participated. Indeed, the study did not reveal "a smoking gun", that was not even the goal of the study but instead it revealed how difficult the topic is to some. To some, the missing smoking gun means that there are no watertight facts and only a new fact can change the history to them and reality, it is much more complicated. Holmila recalled that sometimes it is as important to notice what is not said than what is said, but in the media discussion, it is challenging to discuss the philosophy of history. For him, it should now be clear that the nature of the war is recognized as an

¹⁹⁴ The Civil War in Finland was fought between patriotic "whites" and communistic "reds" in 1918, which ended with the win of whites and terror against reds. For more information see Tuomas Tepora & Aapo Roselius, *The Finnish Civil War 1918: History, Memory, Legacy* (Leiden: BRILL, 2014).

¹⁹⁵ Markko Tikka, "Natsikortti ja kommunistileimasin – Sotarikokset, akateeminen historiantutkimus ja kansallinen henki", *niin & näin*, no. 2 (2019), 73–82.

extermination war and that Finns likely had a part in the atrocities. Most likely, we will not get a smoking gun, since there are only a half dozen SS volunteers still alive and the atmosphere of silence has been strong until now, argues Holmila, but it does mean that the work is done.¹⁹⁶

From these two academic articles, one can see the more in-depth perspective the discussion and it is such a shame that there was no academic contribution to the debate in the media other than the one mentioned earlier. The academic discussion is staying in its circles, even though the public discussion would benefit from articles and opinions that would have given depth to the argumentation. In the *Pohjalainen's* column titled “*The Devil Wears the SS-uniform*”, the columnist writes how historians’ role is to study what happened and why they should not work as judges even “if the Nazis brutal killings make it difficult”.¹⁹⁷ This is what Tikka argued is difficult in a historical study when it is not only about studying the events but also the mental side of the events, it is more difficult to comprehend. Simplification and the desire for a black and white understanding of history lie at the centre of the discussion, and since plausible evidenced is missing, the accusations are regarded as intentional shaming of Finnish volunteers without evidence. The historical consciousness of Finnish SS-volunteers has been similar for decades and history has been used to enforce a certain image that has been taken as truth. Black and white history is part of political memory and in the creation of myths. As Assmann argued, mythification can be either falsification of history or effective appropriation of one’s history, and the Finnish volunteers’ history has indeed mythical elements which can be one reason why there was a backlash when the myth was challenged.

The Discussion about the Honour of Finnish SS-volunteer

If the comments and arguments about the lack of proper evidence, badly done history research and writing were somewhat rational and based on the different ways of seeing and understanding the primary sources, then the comments about name-calling and bullying Finnish volunteers came from the emotional feelings and connections to volunteers. Right away, when *Hakaristin ritarit* was published, counterarguments from people who had known volunteers came forward. In the discussion, the honour and respect towards Finnish volunteers were obvious, and many were worried that their good reputation was now gone and they were now suspected as war criminals.

¹⁹⁶ Antero Holmila, “Kiistanalainen SS-palapeli”, *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja*, no.1 (2019), 81–83.

¹⁹⁷ Toni Viljamaa, ”Paholainen pukeutuu SS-univormuun,” *Pohjalainen*, July 21, 2019. ePress.

The Personal Connection to Finnish SS-volunteers

In the former years, Finnish volunteers had given media interviews about their experiences, emphasizing either their ignorance of atrocities or knowing that they happened but that they did not participate in them.¹⁹⁸ In 2018 and 2019, only a dozen or so Finnish volunteers were still alive, so it is not surprising that there were no vocal voices of volunteers in the discussion because of the low number, but also the controversiality of the topic. Swanström also argued in 2018, that it was unlikely that living volunteers would publicly tell a different story than what volunteers had been telling for years. I was able to find only one comment made by former Waffen-SS volunteer Sakari Lahtinen, who was depressed by the archival study's results saying it was nonsense and that no one "spoke or knew about Jews" in the Finnish battalion. Lahtinen is grateful for the comments made by former Defence Minister Niinistö and how it "softened the blow" of the results of the archival survey.¹⁹⁹

The interview in HS of the Chairperson of Veljesapu, Pekka Kääriäinen was not the only one he gave. Kääriäinen's connection to his father being one of the volunteers and him being the chairperson gave him an opportunity and relevance to be an authoritative and vocal voice. As in the interview in HS, his other comments followed the same lines: both *Hakaristin ritarit* and the survey offered nothing new to the narrative and Veljesapu and the families of volunteers would be alright with the fact if there would be relevant and condemning sources supporting the participation in the atrocities, but as long as the evidence was lacking, the studies were just smearing the honour of volunteers. Kääriäinen truly distinguished himself as the mouthpiece and as the supportive family member of the volunteers. The reason for his interviews seemed to be Kääriäinen's displeasure about how the media has been taking the arguments as a fact when they were based only on assumptions. In the interviews after Swanström's study and before the survey, one can see that there is hope that the survey will overrule Swanström's arguments, and end the shaming of Waffen-SS volunteers. Kääriäinen's interviews are indeed similar from paper to paper, first Kääriäinen is presented as the Chairperson of Veljesapu and as the son of a volunteer and for example in newspaper *Savon Sanomat* he is described as someone who is "well versed on the topic".²⁰⁰ Veljesapu is mentioned to be an association for Waffen-SS volunteers and their families, those who are

¹⁹⁸ For example, when non-fiction book was published about SS-volunteer Aarne Kähärä's time in Waffen-SS in 2015 and when diary of SS-volunteer Sakari Haikala's diary was published in 2016.

¹⁹⁹ Jari Karjanmaa, "SS-selvitys ei paljastanut mitään uutta", *Ilkka*, February 16, 2019, ePress.

²⁰⁰ Terhi Säynäjärvi, "SS-miehen poika ei usko sotarikoksiin", *Savon Sanomat*, November 6, 2018, ePress. Similar articles see *EES*, *KSML*, *Hämeen Sanomat*.

interested in war history. Their agenda is to support the Waffen-SS volunteers and their families but also keep alive traditions. What those traditions are and how they are being upheld remains unclear. When talking about the Finnish volunteers and their motivations to enlist, the ideological side is dismissed and Kääriäinen argues that the reasons were for adventure, they wanted to see the world and get proper military training. He acknowledges some might have had political motivations but since the major part of the volunteers were young men, they most likely would have lied about it, as they did about other things, like age and height. The lying in the application forms is his main argument on the possibility that some had ideological motives, however, both Jokipii and Swanström have argued that there was an agenda of not approving *too many* nationalist candidates.

In the interviews, Kääriäinen's father, Keijo's experiences in the Waffen-SS are about him getting severely wounded and the road to the recovery. Indeed, it was told that Keijo wrote in his diary every day about his time in the Waffen-SS, getting wounded and regaining his health, but according to Kääriäinen, there are no mentions of atrocities. Kääriäinen is also strongly bringing up the shame and exclusion that volunteers felt after the war, how the SS past was not seen as "a merit" in the eyes of Finns, and how SS-volunteers feared governmental police and the possible consequences. Truly, the from the interviews of Kääriäinen the image of volunteers followed the lines of Jokipii's impression where innocent young men joined SS without better judgment and suffered after the war because of their Waffen-SS past when their sacrifices for their country should have been acknowledged by the state. In the articles, Kääriäinen argues that the few volunteers who are still alive got upset about the accusations, as well as their families.²⁰¹ Compared to the newspaper articles, the article in *SK* magazine titled "Father did not know" the topic is discussed more thoroughly and Kääriäinen's arguments were harsher towards Swanström's opinions and more defensive of SS-volunteers. Indeed, Kääriäinen felt that it was actually his place to defend the volunteers, he is also surprised about "how much work there is to be done to defend the honour of veterans against unfounded accusation and suspicions".²⁰²

Like in other articles, the pictures of Finnish volunteers' belongings such as knives and military uniforms are used. The journalist commented how normally one hardly wants to be connected to these notorious items, but Kääriäinen is proud of his father's Waffen-SS past as one can see him posing with his father's Waffen-SS belongings. When *SK* asks about the Holocaust, Kääriäinen argues that according to his father Finns had no idea of it, but they

²⁰¹ Säynäjärvi, "SS-miehen poika ei usko sotarikoksiin".

²⁰² Terhi Hautamäki, "Isä ei tiennyt," *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 47/2018, ePress.

knew about the camps, they witnessed killings and Germans' attitudes towards Jews. Kääriäinen strongly denies the participation in war crimes and atrocities since one can only guess based on the diaries.²⁰³ Kääriäinen strongly believes that ordinary soldiers did not commit war crimes, but if there would be some evidence suggesting otherwise, it would hardly mean that all of the volunteers participated in the war crimes and atrocities. If they did participate atrocities, it would not be the volunteers' fault since they were acting under the orders of their superiors.²⁰⁴

HS's Sunday edition wrote an article about Lars Kihlström, who had been going through the National Archives trying to find his father Lennart's involvement in the Waffen-SS. In Lennart's diary, he found one entry saying "Four Jews were shot"²⁰⁵ which was accidentally missed by the National Archives survey research team. The statement is in passive, but Kihlström believes it has must mean that his father was at least near the shooting or was participating in it. Kihlström is shocked by the finding and his relationship to his father's past being drastically different from Kääriäinen's. Kihlström was desperate to find the accounts that would prove his father's innocence or that he did not support Nazism. Indeed, Kihlström wants to believe his father is a hero but from his diaries and letters, Kihlström cannot find proof that Lennart disapproved of the Nazis' actions or was disgusted by the warfare he participated in. Kihlström's feelings towards Jokipii's work is suspicious. It was Lennart's diary that Jokipii quoted wrongly changing the quote from "over 100 Russians were killed" to "100 Russians were shot". *HS* argued the change in the quote significantly changed the atmosphere and it seems to have been done deliberately making one question what else had been falsified.²⁰⁶

Both men told of how their fathers never talked about their time in the Waffen-SS, but it was known in the family and some of the memorabilia was visible in their homes. Their fathers were not completely ashamed about their SS past but neither spoke openly to their sons and other family members. Then their connection to their fathers' SS past does not come from the shared memories and tales, and their view of the past is quite different from each

²⁰³ Suomen Kuvalehti mentions letter by Olavi Karpalo, signed by signed volunteers, where they applied transfer to another position because they did not want to go back Finland or continue in the position they were now. In their current position they were "denied the joy" to shoot Russians and in the letter is mentioned how one needs "-- worse skills to shoot Jews than ours" ("*lisäksi Juutalaisten ampumiseen riittää heikompi ampumataito kuin meidän*", "... *sämre skjutskicklighet än vår väl skulle hinna till vid avrättandet av judar*") which can be interpreted they felt that their skills are not that needed in their current position and they would feel more useful somewhere else. See the full letter in Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*, 155-157.

²⁰⁴ Terhi Hautamäki, "Isä ei tiennyt," *Suomen Kuvalehti*, 47/2018, ePress.

²⁰⁵ In Finnish "Neljä juutalaista ammuttiin".

²⁰⁶ Marko Junkkari, "Mitä isä teki?", *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 17, 2019, ePress.

other's, even though their opinions are not based on personal accounts. Kihlström does believe the innocence of his father when there is no proof of it. On the contrary, Kääriäinen will not believe that his father participated in the war crimes and or that he had an ideological reason for joining without the condemning evidence.

Family members were indeed angry, one son commented on the accusations calling them “lies, character assassination and slander”.²⁰⁷ In May, a few months after the archival survey was published, some family members of the volunteers demanded that the National Archives correct the results of the survey. In the letter sent and signed by 81 family members to the director-general of the National Archives Jussi Nuorteva, they argue that the results of the archive survey “shame the memory of our fathers and cause continuing pain to elderly volunteers who are alive and family members of the volunteers”.²⁰⁸ In the letter, they argue the archival survey and its international media coverage have caused and continue to cause financial losses, and “other damages” especially for those working in an international setting. They demand that the National Archives correct the statement and do it “publicly and internationally” like the shaming of the Finnish SS-volunteers was done when the results were published. HS also reports that there was at least one legal proceeding against National Archives.²⁰⁹ To them, the argument “most likely participated and were aware of the atrocities” needed to be changed since it stains the memory of SS-volunteers, their part in fighting for Finnish independence and paints them as Nazis. In the interview in *Pohjalainen*, few of the family members said that their letter of demand had nothing to do with the Veljesapu and it has been organised by four family members of the volunteers’ who were good friends together. They are surprised that the National Archives did not yield results at all. They argue that if they had been more active in collecting the signatures, there would have been “a lot more” support for the cause. Furthermore, the reason for their activism is to uphold the honour of their memory of Finnish volunteers in the fact that their fathers are not alive anymore and few volunteers are still alive these days, adding that they will keep up their work to “cherish the memory and clear reputation” of Finnish volunteers “until the end”.²¹⁰ The director-general of the National Archives Jussi Nuorteva replied to the letter that there is no

²⁰⁷ SS-miehen poika, letter to the editorial, *Lapin Kansa* February 20, 2019, ePress.

²⁰⁸ Jarmo Huhtanen, ”SS-miesten läheiset vaativat ”häpäisevän” selvityksen oikaisemista,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 14, 2019, ePress.

²⁰⁹ In the autumn of 2020, I was not able to find any information of the court case and what happened to it.

²¹⁰ Hannu Purola, ”Omaisat putsaavat SS-miesten mainetta loppuun saakka”, *Pohjalainen*, July 16, 2019, ePress
See also Tuomas Manninen, ”Neljä miestä päätti haastaa SS-selvityksen – ”Me loukkaannuimme”, *Ilta-sanomat*, July 15, 2019, Media-Arkisto.

need to change the results of the survey, but he apologised for the resentment it caused the former volunteers and their families.²¹¹

The reaction of family members of volunteers is interesting since it is not just supportive of the fathers, uncles and other family members who fought in the Waffen-SS, but they are actively defending them against the (false) accusation of war criminality. As mentioned briefly in the case of how Kihlström and Kääriäinen felt differently about their fathers' pasts in the SS, both of them share a similar premise about the knowledge of their fathers' past but they had different attitudes about their possible participation in the atrocities. Kääriäinen, and family members who signed the petition, are strongly in the favour of the Jokipii's special SS-volunteers trope, even if there were no personal accounts shared in the family, Veljesapu has been active on keeping up the memory of Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers since the 1940s, even though their work has changed over the years from first providing emotional and financial support to supporting the memory of volunteers today.

They have indeed been part of creating and upholding a certain public memory of volunteers. Their worry about the honour of the volunteers is strongly connected to the position of what Finnish veterans and their memory have in the society. It is no wonder that the families of volunteers feel like outsiders in public memory. Interestingly the political nature of the topic has protected the Finnish volunteers when distancing themselves from the rest of the Waffen-SS and evil Nazis, but at the same time, some family members of the volunteers felt that the volunteers have not been given the respect and honour they deserved for their service to an independent Finland.

Colonels and the Demand for Correcting Study

The arguments about Swanström and the National Archives labelling Finnish volunteers as war criminals were mentioned quite often, especially by family members. Indeed, most of the commentary on the topic stayed in a general discussion in the newspapers' opinion pages and articles, but some of it was directed at the National Archives and the Director-general Jussi Nuorteva. One exchange of opinions that attracted the attention of the media, was an essay written by colonels Kalle Liesinen and Pekka Holopainen. The exchange of words began when colonels wrote an essay in *SK* arguing about many of the same things that

²¹¹ Huhtanen, "SS-miesten läheiset vaativat "häpäisevän" selvityksen oikaisemista, ". Manninen, "Neljä miestä päätti haastaa SS-selvityksen – "Me loukkaannuimme".

I have covered already e.g. unreliability of the sources and the unnecessary pain that digging through the SS past has caused for the family members and living volunteers and so on. They felt strongly that media reporting had been exaggerated misrepresentative and that “Finland’s eagerness to declare itself guilty for the Holocaust” has not been interpreted correctly in international media since they have taken the results of the survey as a fact that SS-volunteers participated in atrocities. This has caused tremendous damage to Finland’s image. The colonels also suspected that history writing these days is driven because scandals sell.²¹²

Their main argument was how the reputation of innocent and honourable Finnish volunteers is ruined and volunteers are now marked as war criminals without proof. As the family members of volunteers, the colonels are irked that volunteers are labelled war criminals, which is impossible to get rid of. Indeed, at the end of the essay, they call themselves descendants of SS-volunteers, which does explain their motivation to write an essay. The colonels suggested that the National Archives should have concluded that there is a possibility that some individuals participated in atrocities and indeed the emphasis should be on the individual and the individual’s action. Without that, all Finnish volunteers are assumed to be war criminals and the colonels argued that there need to be studies that prove the innocence of those who are wrongly accused. They proceed with defending some volunteers and giving proof as to why these men did not participate in the atrocities and demand that the same be done with all Finnish volunteers to release them from the war crime accusations and to clear their reputation. They demand that the actions of all 1,408 SS-volunteers in the Waffen-SS be studied so it can be discerned which of them are innocent.²¹³

The discussion on the war criminality is interesting since neither Swanström nor Westerlund argued that SS-volunteers were war criminals, nor did they accuse any of the volunteers personally. They quoted the diaries and other sources and used the names of the SS-volunteers when recounting their experiences but the studies did not label any of the volunteers as a war criminal, only arguing that Finns had a more active role in atrocities than what was previously told. Director-general Nuorteva replied to colonels with an open letter. In the lengthy reply, he reasoned on why the Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers’ history needs to be studied from a wider international perspective and it is not realistic to think that Finnish

²¹² Kalle Liesinen & Pekka Holopainen, ”Valtioneuvosto teki SS-miehistä selvityksen, ja näin kävi: 1 400 jo edesmennyttä vapaaehtoista leimattiin sotarikollisiksi”, *Suomen Kuvalehti*, June 18, 2019, ePress.

²¹³ Liesinen & Holopainen, ”Valtioneuvosto teki SS-miehistä selvityksen”.

volunteers could act independently and isolated from the other soldiers in the Waffen-SS. Nuorteva gave a historical perspective and replied to the accusation of outside powers influencing the study. To the demand of a study where every Finnish SS-volunteers' role in atrocities is exposed one can learn who was a war criminal and who was not, Nuorteva replies colonels are "stepping on an anti-personnel mine with both feet together" arguing it is a ridiculous idea to use finances on a study that is illogical since there will not be enough sources to find out the innocence or guilt.²¹⁴ Even more ludicrous to Nuorteva is the colonels' incorrect statement that Westerlund's study "labelled everyone war criminals except those who could in court prove their innocence" since most of the evidence about SS-volunteers are lost, the diaries are written in passive, meaning that there are not enough sources to prove or accuse any SS-volunteer of being a war criminal. He also reminds that the point of the study was to get a bigger picture of whether Finns knew about atrocities and if they participated in them too. Nuorteva concludes his reply with a statement that Finland needs to be open about its past and research the painful history from the international viewpoint.²¹⁵

Both letters got the attention of the media, and both of the tabloid papers true to their style commented the exchange dramatic style in the titles. IS called Nuorteva's reply a "boisterous letter"²¹⁶ and IL writes that Nuorteva was "thundering against colonels" continuing how "the argument over Finnish SS-men's war crimes heats"²¹⁷ In the IS article, the colonels who in turn "are throwing polemic hand grenades" at Nuorteva, answers Nuorteva's letter and his arguments. In the article, colonels keep wondering about the lack of sources and continue demanding a liberating study on war crimes. They argue that those named in the study are labelled war criminals, unless the National Archives says otherwise, or are the living ones liberated from such a label?²¹⁸

Thus, the colonels' comments in the open letter did not offer anything new, and this is how Nuorteva felt too in his second reply to colonels. Indeed, Nuorteva wrote that the lack of

²¹⁴ "Osallistuivatko suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset sotarikoksiin?", Arkisto, accessed June 12, 2020, <https://arkisto.fi/fi/kansallisarkisto/hankkeet/selvitys-suomalaisista-ss-miehist%C3%A4/osallistuivatko-suomalaiset-ss-vapaaehtoiset-sotarikoksiin>. Published also in Demokraatti "Everstit astuvat tasajalkaa polkumiinaan" – Näin Kansallisarkiston pääjohtaja vastaa SS-omaisten kritiikkiin", *Demokraatti*, accessed June 12, 2020, <https://demokraatti.fi/everstit-astuvat-tasajalkaa-polkumiinaan-nain-kansallisarkiston-paajohtaja-vastaa-ss-omaisten-kritiikkiin/>.

²¹⁵ "Osallistuivatko suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset sotarikoksiin?", Arkisto.

²¹⁶ Tuomas Manninen, "Kansallisarkiston pääjohtajalta railakas avoin kirje, maalitauluna SS-selvitystä arvostelleet kaksi everstiä", *Ilta-Sanomat*, July 15, 2019, Media-Arkisto.

²¹⁷ Sakari Nuutila, "Kiista suomalaisten SS-miesten sotarikoksista kuumenee – Kansallisarkiston pääjohtaja jyrähti: "Miksi asiaa ei saisi tutkia?", *Italehti*, July 15, 2019, Media-Arkisto. See also Mikko Niemelä, "Suomalaisia SS-miehiä tutkittiin – Ensin hermostuivat omaiset, sitten vastasi Kansallisarkiston johtaja: "Historia opettaa", *Suomen Kuvalehti*, July 16, 2019, ePress.

²¹⁸ Tuomas Manninen, "Nyt iskevät everstit – väittely suomalaisista SS-miehistä jatkuu tulikivenkatkaisena," *Ilta-Sanomat*, July 17, 2019, Media-Arkisto.

concrete evidence prevents one from prosecuting living and dead volunteers. Nuorteva says that it was important to point out to the international press that no one is pressing charges against the eight living Finnish volunteers. Nuorteva argues about how a group of family members cannot be a panel of judges of what one can and cannot say in research, reminding that research is free in Finland and it is written into the constitution.²¹⁹ Indeed, families of former volunteers responded emotionally to the discussion, being both angry and worried that their loved ones were now labelled war criminals instead of being seen as honourable, patriotic men. The war criminality accusations were mentioned in the reporting of the Westerlund's survey, but none of the volunteers was directly labelled as war criminals, and there were not any attempts or ideas to prosecute Finnish volunteers. Colonels' comments echo tactic of silencing by demanding new studies which would release volunteers from their connection to the Holocaust. Keeping quiet is avoiding the discussion of what if the volunteers participated in the atrocities and trying to shift the focus on the discussion of cleaning the image

Ordinary Men in Extraordinary Situation

Not all those who defended Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers' memory and honour identified themselves as their family members or acquaintances. The comments section, along the side of opinion columns and text messages, usually reveals a few types of comments: the horror of war, the gullible nature of Finnish volunteers, and opinions that there is nothing to study. The discussion touched the warfare and the debate that during the wartime the situations are so unnatural and unexpected, that one should not later judge the decisions made during those times. War is an exceptional time, some argued that Finnish volunteers (and soldiers in general) were normal men in an abnormal situation. The ordinariness of the volunteers and the sentiment of making their possible crimes part of normal warfare is the usual comment. In the comments on articles, the normality of brutal war and how Waffen-SS volunteers did not have a choice but to participate is brought up. Their possible participation in the atrocities is forgiven since it is regarded as a natural part of the war and so the forgiveness is given like it is not a bid deal and without acknowledging what participating in atrocities means for Finnish history and the memory of WWII today.

²¹⁹ ”Pääjohtaja Nuortevan avoin vastaus: ”He eivät ano lupaa eivätkä pyydä anteeksi””, Arkisto, accessed June 12, 2020. https://arkisto.fi/news/2402/61/P%3%A4%C3%A4johtaja-Nuortevan-avoin-vastaus-He-eiv%C3%A4t-ano-lupaa-eiv%C3%A4tk%C3%A4-pyyd%C3%A4-anteeksi/d,ajankohtaista?fbclid=IwAR05-rLste98Gv1KTh1p8lLzAt61xQnRqQn6ouunk11PBvQ_IE9msssoikrk.

Some feel that the discussion on Finnish volunteers should end already since there is nothing to discuss, the past should be let go and the dead volunteers should have their peace. As the comment writer in HS argues “digging up the history of the SS-battalion should be stopped” as has been already 75 years since it happened and there will never be an “absolute truth” of what happened.²²⁰ The writer agrees that the topic is “difficult”, but it has been studied enough over all these years and now it would be best to give the volunteers and their families “absolution”.²²¹ The dismissive energy is expressed well in statements like “war is such an abnormal situation, that adjusting to it one must go numb to the everyday brutality” and how “these atrocities are not committed by psychopaths, throughout the ages in other circumstances, but by normal, decent people”.²²² In a comment piece in AL, the writer commented on how the Finnish volunteers (who had no proper education) followed Germans into the battlefield “often hungry and in cold for all one is worth” and how “their part was just to be baffled of actions of Germans without understanding the bigger ideological aims”.²²³ Indeed, due to the youth of the Finnish volunteers, they were seen as naïve and passive in all their actions and one should not label them war criminals since “they were not the ones giving orders”²²⁴. The discussion also touched on the volunteers’ motivations and it was believed that they enlisted themselves in the Waffen-SS because of their patriotism to fight for the homeland.²²⁵ It was also pointed out in one comment that volunteers and the help of Germans were essential of keeping the independence of Finland and every one was needed to “work together for a common goal”.²²⁶

In one comment piece, the writer argued how the “education tradition of Finnish soldiers” did not support Nazism which in his mind means that Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers cannot have a connection to the Holocaust reminding them that hundreds of Finnish Jews fought in the Finnish Army alongside Germans.²²⁷ In another opinion one comments how “Hitler even gave the Iron Cross to three Jews for their bravery!” and how fine Germans were fighting

²²⁰ Oskari Laukkanen, letter to the editor “SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, July 17, 2019, ePress. See also Arto Pulkki, letter to the editor “Suomalaista SS-pataljoonaa on tutkittu kattavasti”, *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 24, 2018, ePress.

²²¹ Laukkanen, letter to the editor “SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa”.

²²² Hurtti-Ukko March 17, 2019, comment on Marko Junkkari, “Mitä isä teki?,” *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 17, 2019, ePress. See also Jouko Juonala, “Kommentti: SS-kenraalien logiikka elää yhä – olisi jo aika heittää se historian roskakoriin,” *Ilta-sanomat*, March 18, 2019, Media-Arkisto and Laukkanen, letter to the editor “SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa”.

²²³ Mattelmäki, “Historiantutkimus ei voi nojata tähän päivään”.

²²⁴ Viljamaa, “Paholainen pukeutuu SS-univormuun”.

²²⁵ See for example Aarno Muotka, letter to the editor, *Lapin Kansa* March 6, 2019, ePress, and SS-miehen poika letter to the editor, *Lapin Kansa*, February 20, 2019, ePress.

²²⁶ Anonymous, letter to the editor, *Uusimaa*, November 29, 2019, ePress.

²²⁷ Kauno Pietilä, letter to the editor “Suomalaiset SS-miehet ja historia”, *Uudenkaupunki Sanomat*, 7.3.2019, ePress. See also Laukkanen, letter to the editor “SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa”.

alongside 200 Jews.²²⁸ Bringing up the fact that Finnish Jews fought on the frontline in Finland, does not prove that volunteers in the Caucasus and Ukraine did not participate in persecutions and war crimes, but pointing it out does makes Finns look better. The first writer mentioned how war crimes happen in every battlefield, but it is not fair to connect Finnish volunteers to Nazis. Thus, in his opinion if, and most likely, Finns committed crimes while in the Waffen-SS, these crimes should not be seen as being connected to Nazis and their crimes at all. There is a need to separate Finnish volunteers from Nazis, as there was back in the 1960s. Separation from Nazis becomes evident also from the feelings the Finnish volunteers were not fascist, even if some of them marked far-right as their political ideology.²²⁹ In the reviews by Ahto and Murtorinne, they argue that fascism among the Finnish volunteers is over analysed. Murtorinne argues, that for the Finnish, fascism meant anti-bolshevism or anti-communism, and they had no idea what fascism meant adding that anti-communism was used as a “catchword” that made men interested in joining the Waffen-SS.²³⁰

Additionally, it was argued that attention should be focused on other crimes like those committed by the Soviet Union. Furthermore, whataboutism²³¹ is also part of the discussion: Yes, it is possible, that Finnis volunteers were participating in atrocities, but what about the crimes of the Soviet Union towards the Finnish in WWII? In local newspaper *Aamuset*, the commentator asked why not study what Soviet partisans did in eastern Finland like killings of children since we are now revealing the crimes. The sarcastic opinion piece commented on how most likely, this is will not happen since Finns like “hushing up” or just denying these kinds of crimes. Whataboutism is strongly connected to the Soviet Union and how the crimes of the Soviet Union are still not discussed, but “Germany will be forever guilty”.²³² Interestingly, there are also comments about the crimes of Finns towards Soviet prisoners.²³³ Other comments pointed out that the 1918 Civil War still needs to be discussed more

²²⁸ Kalle Lanamäki, letter to the editor ”Jälkiviisauden kirous”, *Pohjalainen*, July 23, 2019, ePress.

²²⁹ See for example: Anonymous, letter to the editor “SS-miehet jääkäreiden perillisiä...”, *Lapin Kansa*, February 20, 2019, ePress, and Vanessa Valkama, “SS-miehen pojalla ei ole salattavaa”, *Hämeen Sanomat*, December 16, 2018, ePress.

²³⁰ Murtorinne, ”Hakaristin ritarit – tervetullut uusi näkökulma”.

²³¹ “What About 'Whataboutism'?”, Merriam-Webster, last access September 6, 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/whataboutism-origin-meaning>.

²³² Antti Pekola, letter to the editor ”Eivätkö edes historian professorit tunne Suomen historiaa toisessa maailmansodassa?”, *Satakunnan Kansa* April 29, 2019, Media-Arkisto. See also Leväniemi, letter to the editor ”Dosentti desanttina”, and the comment section in Jouko Juonala, ”Kommentti: SS-kenraalien logiikka elää yhä – olisi jo aika heittää se historian roskakoriin,”

Iltä-Sanomat, March 18, 2019, Media-Arkisto.

²³³ Leväniemi, letter to the editor ”Dosentti desanttina,”.

thoroughly from the viewpoint of the crimes committed by the Reds.²³⁴ Whataboutism connects to the idea of avoiding the topic and essentially wanting to keep quiet when trying to guide the discussion to another route.

Thus, the discussion of Stalin's crimes was also picked in *HS*'s Saturday Essay by journalist Unto Hämäläinen arguing how Stalin's persecutions towards communist Finns who fled the Soviet Union in the 1930s should be studied. He suggests it should be done in an official way and appealed to the President and Prime Minister at the time to start the project. Hämäläinen points out that the archival study about volunteers shows that there are indeed financing for these kinds of things, arguing that is important to fill in the "white pages of Finnish history" recalling that in the Stalinist persecutions, more Finns died than in the Winter War making this study meaningful.²³⁵ Indeed, there were arguments where one did not want to participate the question of Finnish volunteers' role in Waffen-SS but instead, they wanted to shift the attention of history writing to somewhere else they regarded more relevant. Some also feel that the discussion of volunteers should end already since there is nothing to discuss, the past should be let go and the dead SS-volunteers should have their peace. As the comment writer in *HS* argues "the digging up of the history of the SS-battalion should be stopped" since it has been already 75 years since it happened and there will never be an "absolute truth" about what happened. The writer agrees that the topic is "difficult", but it has been studied enough all these years and now it would be best to give the SS-volunteers and their families "absolution".²³⁶

From the statements and arguments of the family members of the volunteers and others, one can see they are repeating familiar sentiments about the nature of the Finnish volunteers. As argued, memory is used as a tool to give meaning to historical events and memory is used for political ends like unifying and creating a cohesive understanding of certain events. One of the ways to politicise memory is to create myths, simplifying events and exasperating uncertainties and indeed the memory of volunteers seems to be one-sided when looking at the arguments of those who argued strongly against the studies. The political memory of the Finnish SS-volunteers has been simplified and mystified to fit in the political use of history, which has been used to build the national story and a collective understanding of WWII,

²³⁴ For example Lukija in Jouko Juonala, Kommentti: Waffen-SS:n pääkallosotilaista tuli sotien jälkeen "syyttömiä syyllisiä," *Ilta-Sanomat*, November 30, 2019, Media-arkisto.

²³⁵ Unto Hämäläinen, letter to the editor "Stalinin vainoissa kuoli yhtä paljon suomalaisia kuin talvisodassa – Valtiojohto, teettäkää selvitys heidän kohtalostaan," *Helsingin Sanomat*, August 31, 2019, ePress. Similar comments see Editorial "Stalinin vainojen urhrit ansaitsevat selvityksen", *Ilkka*, September 1, 2019, ePress, and Jukka Kujanpää, "Partisaanien tappotyöt", *Aamuset*, February 20, 2019, ePress.

²³⁶ Laukkanen, letter to the editor "SS-pataljoonan historian kaivelu pitäisi lopettaa". See also Arto Pulkki, letter to the editor "Suomalaista SS-pataljoonaa on tutkittu kattavasti," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 24, 2018, ePress.

including separation from the Holocaust. The historical consciousness about Finland's role in WWII has supported separation from the European context and while the separate war theories do not seem relevant in a decade or so, the Finnish volunteers' memory has not faced argument of speciality needing to end, at least not as this publicly. The myth of honourable Finnish volunteers seems to make an atmosphere that the questioning of the myth and volunteers' actions are regarded as out of the question. It is silenced. As Manninen commented on his review, the topic is controversial and writing about it is not easy to due to its nature.

The Ruined Reputation

As the colonels argued in their essay, the image of Finland was now ruined, at least when it comes to possible participation in the Holocaust. One issue discussed was how the archival survey was seen abroad and what harm it caused. Indeed, earlier I mentioned how in the address signed by the family members, the international attention on the topic was harmful to the families. It was felt, that the special situation of Finland in WWII was not understood aboard and the result of the archival survey was taken wrongly which caused the international audience to think Finns had certainly participated in the Holocaust and other atrocities, but as the archival survey stated this was not possible.

The piece of news that caught the attention of colonels was an article in The Jerusalem Post, where the results of the archival survey were reported. They wrote that the "report confirms that Finnish soldiers took part in Jewish massacres during the Holocaust" continuing "the report found that 1,408 Finns volunteered with the Waffen SS Division Wiking, participating in massacres against "Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region" between 1941 and 1943 while serving on the Eastern Front" and "according to the report, at least 10,000 civilians – of whom over 6,000 were Jews – were believed to have been killed by these units between July and August 1941."²³⁷ The article does not drastically differ from what the press release said, neither what the Finnish press reported, except that it is missing the important point of "*most likely participated*" and they had added the numbers of killed people. Nuorteva replied, that he cannot control what Israeli and international media writes, nor what the national press reports. The discussion about the National Archives accusing Finnish SS-volunteers about war crimes was an

²³⁷ Ilanit Chernick, "Report confirms Finnish soldiers took part in Jewish massacres during Holocaust," *The Jerusalem Post*, February 10, 2019. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/report-confirms-finnish-soldiers-took-part-in-jewish-massacres-during-holocaust-580256>.

interpretation made by media. In the survey, the exceptionalism of Finnish volunteers is stressed as being related to the special situation Finland was in compared to the other countries sending volunteers to Germany. Previously, the notion was that Finns did not have anything to do with the atrocities and it was highlighted how few of them sympathized with far-right ideologies, as well as Finland, being unoccupied and independent while being Germany's ally. Nuorteva argued that he has been stressing this special notion to the international press.²³⁸ Indeed, in the opinions and reports, they hardly focused on what else the survey said since the focus was primarily about alleged war crimes. In the Finnish newspapers and articles, there were no discussions abroad about how the arguments of Finnish volunteers being accused of war crimes were reported. As the colonels argued too, there was anxiety about how the international viewpoint did not understand the situation of Finland, and those defending the volunteers were not seen as patriotic but more like sympathizers for SS ideologies.

Indeed, confusion was caused in the Berlin neighbourhood where bar Bryggeri Helsinki owned by Veljesapu Chairperson Pekka Kääriäinen was located. It all started when German newspaper *Die Tageszeitung* wrote about Kääriäinen being a "fan of the SS" and boycott of his bar spread when an organisation against the far-right, Bündnis gegen Rechts, started to hand-out pamphlets about Kääriäinen's Nazi sympathies around the neighbourhood.²³⁹ Due to the scandals and the boycotts, Kääriäinen resigned from the chairperson position and apologised for his actions, which caused the association to look like it supported Nazism. Kääriäinen commented on how he should have realised how "different viewpoints from different nations and countries have towards our shared history".²⁴⁰ He commented being hurt after called as a Nazi and fan of SS, continuing wanting to make a clear difference between himself and those who glorify the Third Reich.²⁴¹ After the angry feedback from people, the bar tried to resign from the Nazi sympathy connections and organised a discussion event about Finland's past and SS-volunteers. The event got the attention of many, who were wondering why a Nazi sympathiser would establish a bar in Berlin. The National Archives'

²³⁸ Hannu Purola, "Kansallisarkisto on valmis oikeuteen SS-asiassa," *Ilkka*, July 17, 2019, ePress.

²³⁹ Arla Kanerva, "Suomalainen olutravintola joutui boikotin kohteeksi Berliinissä, omistajaa syytetään SS-faniksi: "Koen tämän loukkaukseksi veteraaneja kohtaan", *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 6, 2019, ePress.

²⁴⁰ Anna-Liina Kauhanen, "Keskusteluilta suomalaisten natsiyhteyksistä täytti asukastilan Berliinissä: saksalaiset eivät voi käsittää SS-perinnön vaalimista", *Helsingin Sanomat*, March 28, 2019, ePress.

²⁴¹ Visa Noronen, "Antifasistinen viha kohdistui ravintolaan", *Lapin Kansa*, May 21, 2019, ePress. See also "Kääriäinen kertoi somessa missä mustamaalaus sai alkunsa", *Hämeen Sanomat*, April,9, 2019.

Nuorteva also attended the event and while Kääriäinen was in Berlin he did not attend since felt it would aggravate the situation.²⁴²

In *HS*'s article, it is argued that in the event the different culture of remembering, the history writings' varied narratives and two separated national identities which have the common painful spot, the genocide, face each other. People were appalled by the Veljesapu's websites and the pictures of Kääriäinen with his father's SS belongings and as one argues it indeed looks like the association is trying to normalise the memory of the SS. For one listener, there are only two reasons for posing together with SS items either to provoke or to support, saying that Finnish patriotism looks weird for Germans. German Professor of History Cordelia Heß argued that Veljesapu was let off easy and they had free range to monopolize the SS-soldiers, making it seem like no one else was allowed to define them. Heß also felt that in Finland the separation ideology is still strong and it has hindered the making of the critical studies due to Veljesapu financially supporting studies. What seemed striking to him is that the side of the victims is still missing from the discussion adding that the survey is a good first step but there is still work to be done. On the other hand, Nuorteva believed that Kääriäinen and Veljesapu's members were more like victims of false historical consciousness.²⁴³ It was later reported that Helsinki Bryggeri closed its doors because, as they argue, "unfounded social media rage" made customers disappear.²⁴⁴

The lost reputation argument was mainly about the reputation of the volunteers and their reputation, not of Finland from an international perspective. The discussion focused on the reactions of Finns and what these new arguments mean from the Finnish point of view. As the discussion among the Germans demonstrated, there are different narratives about how the SS past is understood and how Kääriäinen's arguments showed tone-deafness regarding the different historical consciousness around the topic. The argument about one being a victim of a false historical consciousness supports the arguments about how Finnish volunteers' history has been used in a political way to support their separation from Nazism and the Holocaust.

The Support to the "New" History of Finnish SS-volunteers

Comments supportive of the studies were milder and less emotional. If the negative responses had multiple reasons for how the new studies have disrespected SS-volunteers and their

²⁴² Kauhanen, "Keskusteluilta suomalaisten natsiyhteyksistä täytti asukastilan Berliinissä".

²⁴³ Kauhanen, "Keskusteluilta suomalaisten natsiyhteyksistä täytti asukastilan Berliinissä".

²⁴⁴ Ines Sirén, "SS-perinnettä vaalivan yrittäjän baari suljetaan Berliinissä – "perusteeton someraivo" vei asiakkaat", *Helsingin Sanomat*, September 10, 2019, ePress.

memory, then in the positive response to the discussion of the SS past is less argumentative. Primarily, the arguments follow along the lines of how new perspectives are needed and one needs to let go of the hurtful past to come to terms with the fact that Finland was not just a victim of crimes but also a perpetrator. Some tried to reason with their arguments such as doctoral student Olli Siitonen who wrote an opinion piece in *HS*, saying that war crimes were not a matter of opinion and even if it might hurt some it is just possible to believe Finns did not participate atrocities. The discussion of the political ideologies of Finnish volunteers and denying their far-right connection does not mean that one needs to be ideologically aware to kill others, ordinary men can do it too. He reasoned that the image of the separate Finnish volunteers in the Waffen-SS echo the idea of separate war theory which have had long traditions in history writing and it has enforced the image of the spotless and the false nature of war.²⁴⁵ In an opinion by the editor of *Kaleva*, Pekka Mikkola, it is reminded that in Finland the political use of history is hindered by the freedom of research, although the funding can sometimes affect what is studied. The discussion about the volunteers has revealed that there are still debate over the right and wrong research results, and interpretations which suit best for individuals is a reality in Finnish society, Mikkola argued. It is also clear to him, that the quarrel between researchers and family members will not resolve in near future.²⁴⁶

In an opinion piece in *Uusimaa*, one writer demanded that the time for being silent about Finnish war crimes needed to end, and *Hakaristin ritarit* has been an important and monumental study, which every Finn should read. The writer's opinion is a comment to someone, who had wished that the topic would be let go and forgotten in the press. The writer disagreed saying that it was not about punishing volunteers but to bring into the light "historical truth" and stop the hiding of the war crimes.²⁴⁷ Learning from history is regarded as important, to keep history from repeating itself.²⁴⁸ An editorial in *Kaleva*, the need for the recognition of a shameful and hurtful past is called for, arguing, "unpleasant truths tend to be healing".²⁴⁹ They also comment that there should not have been a surprise that Finns most likely participated in the atrocities since soldiers do not tend to have an opportunity to choose

²⁴⁵ Olli Siitonen, letter to the editor "Sotarikokset eivät ole uskon asia," *Helsingin Sanomat*, October 30, 2018, ePress.

²⁴⁶ Pekka Mikkola, "Viikon lopuksi: Vereslihalle jääneitä tarinoita riittää Suomessakin", *Kaleva*, November 30, 2019, ePress.

²⁴⁷ Tuomo Arola, letter to the editor "Vastaus Tahallaan unohtetulle," *Uusimaa*, October 29, 2018, ePress.

²⁴⁸ Historia opettaa, letter to the editor, *Turun Sanomat*, February 14, 2019, ePress.

²⁴⁹ Editorial "Ikävä totuus tapaa olla parantavin – Siksi myös suomalaisten tekemät sotarikokset pitää tuoda julki", *Kaleva*, February 11, 2019, ePress. See also Editorial "Suomalaiset SS-miehet eivät olleet pulmusia", *Savon Sanomat*, February 2, 2019, ePress, and U.K. Suominen, letter to the editor "Historiaa hyvä tuntea," *Aamuset*, March 2, 2019, ePress.

their tasks in war, questioning how Finnish SS-soldier cannot be more innocent than German ones. The editorial reminded that simplified history is usually used in countries of strong propaganda, where for example wars are seen in black and white with good and bad sides, victims and perpetrators. It was indeed reminded that the truth about Finnish volunteers is somewhere between “saints” and “criminals”.²⁵⁰ In *EES* too, it is argued that it is time to face the truth, they also wonder were Finnish volunteers participating atrocities as a group as individuals.²⁵¹

Indeed, it is regarded that one needs to be able to discuss and admit the difficult past, and history writing is needed to do this without embellishing and hiding anything.²⁵² Journalist Jouko Jounala commented on *IS* how one should not ask why the SS-past is brought up, but one should ask instead why not. He argues that when asking oneself the reasons why this topic needs to be silent or “gotten over”, it will reveal how important it is to talk about the SS-volunteers and how absurd it would be if the question was “why one should not study”.²⁵³ He also argued about how the logic of SS-generals is still alive in people’s minds, presenting the arguments by SS-general Paul Hausser who was defending the role of the Waffen-SS when trying to keep it away from the accusations of being a criminal association after WWII. To Hausser, the Waffen-SS was a separate branch under the SS, which is also the image Jokipii brings up in his studies and in doing so he participated in clearing the name of SS-volunteers. Jounala argued that the arguments of the Waffen-SS being a separate and non-criminal part of SS have been disproven numerous times, but they still live on in people’s minds and this needs to change. Jounala wrote about how the criticism of Jokipii is not unpatriotic but that part of science is to look at older studies with fresh eyes.²⁵⁴

The writings supporting the studies focused on the idea that discovering the difficult truths about the past will be healing. It is regarded an important that Finland faces the dark past since it is important to understand that Finns were not just victims of Soviet Union, but the fear of communism was also used as a political tool in collaboration with the Germans. Another notion is that history is something that one needs to learn to avoid making the same mistakes again. When it comes to the absolute truth, it was recognised by one columnist that

²⁵⁰ Matti Jaakkola, letter to the editor ”Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset, ei pyhimyksiä eikä roistoja”, *Pohjalainen*, November 29, 2018, ePress.

²⁵¹ Janne Yläjoki, ”Aika katsoa totutta silmiin”, *Etelä-Suomen Sanomat*, February 9, 2019, ePress.

²⁵² Ari Haasio, ”Kaikesta on voitava puhua”, *Ilkka*, August 2, 2019, ePress. See also Jukka Anias, ”Jukka Anias pohtii kolumnissaan menneisyydenhallintaa – syylistyivätkö suomalaisetkin sotarikoksiin?”, *Keskisuomalainen*, November 3, 2018, ePress.

²⁵³ Juonala, ”Kommentti: Waffen-SS:n pääkallosotilaista tuli sotien jälkeen ”syyttömiä syyllisiä”.

²⁵⁴ Juonala, ”Kommentti: SS-kenraalien logiikka elää yhä – olisi jo aika heittää se historian roskakorin”.

history is about interpreting sources and sometimes a new analysis will challenge old ones.²⁵⁵ Not all commentators had sympathy for a family member or those defending Finnish volunteers. As one argued that the whitewashing of SS-men is impudent, and it is self-delusional to think Finns were acting like “Sunday schoolers” on the eastern front.²⁵⁶

The absurdity in the discussion about the innocence of SS-volunteers and their honourable time in the Waffen-SS having no connection to the Holocaust is demonstrated in the sarcastic comments. One opinion writer noted how there was a “small storm in a teacup when it tried to testify that from our 1 400 SS-volunteers some were even shooting people there [in Waffen-SS] for real”.²⁵⁷ In a satiric column, journalist Roope Lipasti comments on how the results of the archival survey came as a surprise to everyone, and especially to Defence Minister Niinistö, since “SS-men have always had a relaxed and peace-loving reputation”.²⁵⁸ In July, Lipasti wrote, “the families of SS-men are upset because a report said that SS-men were a tiny bit evil and SS comes from the word superhero”(SuperSankari²⁵⁹).²⁶⁰ They, of course, simplified the debate but concluded it nicely about how it sounded to those who did not believe that Finnish volunteers could have avoided participating in the atrocities and were separate from other soldiers in the Waffen-SS.

Summary Discussion of the Findings

The arguments for and against “*Hakaristin ritarit*” and “*The Finnish SS Volunteers and Atrocities in against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*” were mainly circling around a few core subjects. To summarize: first, there is the question about the proper sources which would condemn Finnish volunteers. Secondly, there are suspicions of politics being involved and for what reasons why the study was conducted. Thirdly, the honour and respect towards the volunteers were discussed, mainly voiced by the family members. Fourthly, the support and importance of studies discovering the dark past and painful topics were given. Going back to the main research question: *How is the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers and them having a possible role in the Holocaust and atrocities dealt with in public discussions during the years 2018-2019?* The

²⁵⁵ Jukka Anias, ”Suuren Saksan joukoissa”, *Keskipohjanmaa*, March 19, 2019, ePress.

²⁵⁶ Anonyms, letter to the editor ”Suomalaisten SS-miesten valkopesu on hävytöntä hommaa”, *Pohjolainen*, July 30, 2019, ePress.

²⁵⁷ Jaakkola, letter to the editor ”Historia – aika veitikka”.

²⁵⁸ Roope Lipasti, ”Jälkipuinti,” *Turun Sanomat*, February 16, 2019, ePress.

²⁵⁹ The correct way of writing in Finnish is supersankari.

²⁶⁰ Roope Lipasti, ”Jälkipuinti,” *Turun Sanomat*, July 20, 2019, ePress.

reactions are mainly defensive and suspicious, which tells that there are deep-rooted beliefs about Finnish volunteers being separate from the other soldiers of the Waffen-SS. The possibility of volunteers participating in atrocities is regarded as being impossible since the volunteers always said that they did not know, or they did not participate, and one should take their word for it. The doubtful attitude also stems from the ideas that the topic has been studied before and there are no new sources to back up an argument about them participating in atrocities. The studies are also seen as relevant and important, but the loudness of a positive attitude is getting lost in the critical ones. In the centre there are arguments about how the studies did not reveal anything new, how the sources used in the new studies have been known for years, and how participating in the killing of civilians and bystanders is a normal part of the war and accusing volunteers of acting how soldiers should act in wars is not beneficial.

If indeed, the argument that Finnish volunteers most likely participated in the atrocities is old news, why then did the studies create such a backlash? There is a paradox wherein one hand one argues that the Finnish volunteers were innocent and did not participate in the atrocities and persecutions, but on the other hand there are arguments about Finnish volunteers just doing their part without having the possibility to do differently than what the Germans told them to do. It is a tricky combination and it is done to explain the situation in the best way: they never participated in the atrocities, but if they did, it was done under the commands of Germans and in either case, the atrocities should not be pinned on the volunteers' conscience. While new, condemning evidence was not discovered, what was found was the lack of a critical discussion around the topic. Swanström's study or Westerlund's archive survey did not convince everyone about volunteers having participated in atrocities together with the rest of the Waffen-SS soldiers, but it sure caused a stir in terms of historical consciousness and national memory. Indeed, over the discussion, there was the shadow of the suspicions of why these studies were made. As mentioned, political memory essentially has two main functions: create a unified national identity and help with the problem of guilt. Nationalism comes apparent when remembering the story that has been told about small Finland fighting against the powerful Soviet Union and being able to maintain its independence, triumphs over the connection to Nazi Germany, because without the alliance independence probably couldn't have been maintained. Thus, labelling Finns as special Waffen-SS volunteers who had no role in atrocities and the killings of Jews, civilians, and prisoners of war, leads to a crisis when the opposite is argued.

As in many cultures, upholding the national memory and building tool of the nation and unity includes remembering the wars. In Finland, the Winter War and the Continuation War have a strong place in remembering as well as respecting veterans.²⁶¹ Finnish volunteers have said that they felt they were not accepted like other veterans²⁶², they were not banished and hidden from the memory production. Since the volunteers came back to Finland in 1943, they were placed on the front alongside the other Finnish soldiers. Finnish Waffen-SS volunteer past was not hidden, more likely the uncomfortable connection to Nazi Germany and the Holocaust is hidden in plain sight, and the arguments in previous studies have been making sure that the connection to the atrocities is minimised by the attention on volunteers serving their country.

The need to save face and be distanced from reality is easily read in the comments and opinions. In *offsetting* one's guilt is weighed against others so they cancel each other out and the perpetrators seek refuge in the memory of the victim to self-justify the actions.²⁶³ The victimhood comes clear in the arguments of Finnish volunteers saving Finland from the Soviet Union and communism. The political memory of WWII and the ideas of separate war enforces the arguments that if one fought in the name of independent Finland, it does not matter was done in the Caucasus or Karelia. In the opinions, many argued that Finns were just doing what Germans told them to do. This is *externalising the guilt* to others, whose responsibility was giving orders.²⁶⁴ Those who argued, that if the Finnish participated in the atrocities the blame is put on Germans saying that Finns had no agency to do anything else other than following Germans. Other ways to externalize are the arguments that it was the others that executed Jews, civilians and prisoners of war, and Finnish volunteers were just bystanders witnessing the atrocities.²⁶⁵ Externalising the guilt is also done by blaming Germans for forcing Finland to send volunteers and for putting them in the situation in the first place.

Externalising guilt connects strongly to the *erasure of the guilt*, where the role of the other as a perpetrator is pressed and one's guilt is wiped away.²⁶⁶ Assmann argues that the logic of

²⁶¹ Kivimäki, "Between Defeat and Victory," 485–487.

²⁶² See for example "Taistelín Suomen, en Saksan puolesta" *Lapin Kansa*, May 1, 1994, Media-arkisto; "Suomen nuorin SS-mies: Me emme olleet siviiliväestön tappajia," *Keskisuomalainen*, September 25, 2014, Media-arkisto; Swanström, *Hakaristin ritarit*, chapter Sodan jälkeen, and Anu Vertanen, *Rintamalta Ratakadulle Suomalaiset SS-miehet kommunistisen Valpon kohteina 1945-1948*, (Master's Thesis University of Jyväskylä, 2005).

²⁶³ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 142

²⁶⁴ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 143.

²⁶⁵ In the case of Germans, there were also arguments of Hitler "misleading" Germans.

²⁶⁶ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 146.

memory is simple “in order to be able to remember, a memory trace is required”²⁶⁷. The memory of Finnish volunteers in the society is not absent at all, and one can see that Jokipii’s *Panttitaljoona* study has been important ever since it was published in the 1960s, but it started the creation of certain kind of memory. The discussion of the guilt of Finnish volunteers being in the Waffen-SS is not recognised these days since the possibility of this was erased already in the early years after the war. The history of the Finnish SS-volunteers journey has been studied a lot, but a discussion of the atrocities has not been part of the conversation other than they have been denied. The cases where is a possibility for participation, the situation and sources are belittled to diminish the role of the perpetrator due by pointing to inadequate sources. From the comments about how studies digging up SS-volunteers’ past should be stopped and the volunteers and their families should be left alone echoes the sentiment which Assmann calls *remaining silent*. There are two kinds of silence: the silencing of the victims by not giving them room to express their experiences, and the silence of perpetrators that can be understood as a continuation of power.²⁶⁸ Indeed, there were demands about how the topic should be left alone and the peace should be given to the volunteers and their families. What is missing in the discussion is the victims of the atrocities, no comments or sympathies were given in the articles, nor were there ideas about some kind of formal apology to the victims’ descendants. The discussion was rotating around the volunteers and their honour, and suspicions about the studies’ partialities.

The volunteers have not been made problematic and this is shown in the comments that argue why the atrocities are brought up in public now and the suspicions of someone else having a role in the studies and outsider pressure. Instead of focusing and discussing what it means for the history of Finnish SS-volunteers to be one-sided, the emphasis is on who wrote these new studies and their skills as well, but also the possibility of someone seeking certain results or the authors having an agenda. Swanström’s *Hakaristin ritarit*, in particular, was assumed to be cutting corners when overanalysing the sources and he was suspected of having an agenda. He was suspected of trying to connect Finnish volunteers to Nazism and the Holocaust, and as Ahto wrote in his review about how the younger generation historians are trying to find dirt in their own country’s past and shame their country intentionally. The older generation historians, like Ahto and Uola, who have also studied topics related to WWII, did not find *Hakaristin ritarit* as ground-breaking but saw it as a failed attempt to shame volunteers. Also, the criticism of Jokipii is seen as an intentional dishonouring and

²⁶⁷ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 147.

²⁶⁸ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 148.

questioning of his relevance and professionalism, but as it was also pointed out the past should be looked at with fresh eyes and it is not criticism for Jokipii's skills but instead, it highlights the differences in thinking and analysing historical events then and now.

In his article, Holmila wrote how younger generation historians, like himself, should keep in the mind the transitional background they are used to, which has led to seeing Nazism everywhere, maybe even stronger because previous generations were blind to it. In the arguments of historians, there is a generational gap, and Assmann argues that the generational memory gap makes understanding between the generations limited, which can cause frictions between the generations and their social memory and how the past is understood and experienced. Every individual in a particular age group has its key historical experiences and one will share certain "convictions, attitudes, world perspectives, social values, and interpretative models" with their peers.²⁶⁹ An individual might not agree with these shared instances, but they will shape the generations way of seeing society.²⁷⁰ There is friction, at least among those who commented, the importance of studying and questioning the previous arguments and their priorities are different from the older generation. While it is impossible to study the generational gap from opinions and articles in the newspapers and journals by private people, the academic discussion gives an example that there is, at least in the academic world, a different way of seeing Finland's role in WWII due to the generational gap. Non-academics also commented on the importance of history writing dealing with painful parts of the past arguing that coming to terms with the difficult topics are meaningful for the entire society. The healing effect of accepting the possibility of Finnish volunteers being part of the atrocities will be positive for the society and acceptance will lead to growth. Healing and learning from the past is also one way of using history as a moral guideline for society.

Moreover, the findings support the arguments made by Kivimäki, Silvennoinen and Holmila when a decade ago they argued that the separation of Finnish volunteers still exists in the memory production.²⁷¹ From the opinion pieces and reports in the newspapers and journals, the arguments of private people are coming to light, and it shows that the kind of historical consciousness around the topic is alive. It would be easy to argue that there are two sides of the discussion, those who are strongly defending the honour and reputation of the volunteers against those who believe that volunteers most likely participated atrocities like the other soldiers in the Waffen-SS. What was interesting when searching the data was that

²⁶⁹ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 14.

²⁷⁰ Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 14-15.

²⁷¹ See chapter: Research Overview

comments from politicians, historians and other public figures were missing. This could be either due to the topic being controversial, and people not wanting to look like they are disrespecting war veterans, or it was not regarded as important to take part in the conversation. The main parts of the conversation were held between the National Archives general-director Jussi Nuorteva and the family members of Finnish volunteers. The debate in public indeed lacked diverse opinions from academia and having the same historians debating over the topic made it look like it was supportive of the beliefs of this group. Indeed, even the National Archives survey made by Lars Westerlund was separate from Swanström's *Hakaristin ritarit*, they were believed to have connections and the reason for the survey was because of the study. It was argued that there was no connection with the studies and their results, but suspicions were alive.²⁷² On a side note, I would like to mention that the discussion was gendered. The comments, journalist and other commentators both public and academic, were all male voices.

When looking at the discussion around the topic, the victims are overlooked completely, and the core of the debate is about the war criminal label volunteers were stamped with and the need to clear them from it. Furthermore, what does this mean in the bigger picture of remembering WWII and the Finnish memory in the European context? Assmann argues that in Germany the next generation had to deal with the guilt left by their parents who did not process their role in the Holocaust. In Finnish memory, there are no so-called father writings, and as seen, the family members are the ones who were the loudest supporters of saving their fathers from the shame of being guilty of atrocities. The Finnish volunteers themselves have published memoirs²⁷³ by themselves but there is there yet to be literature by family members or historians critically investigating the past. In Germany, where the generation after the war started to question and figure out their parents' role in the war, this did not happen in Finland in regard to the SS-volunteers. The *HS* interview of Kihlström got a lot of attention²⁷⁴ since he went to the National Archives to read his father's diaries to find out by himself what his father had written during his years in the Waffen-SS. His approach was to find something that would prove his father disapproved of Nazism and the actions he witnessed during his service. One can only guess, does the debate lead to these so-called father writings in Finland too.

When it comes to the connection to the European memory of WWII, the Finnish memory has been argued as looking at the war from the outside, through the national experience. It is

²⁷² Purola, "Kansallisarkisto on valmis oikeuteen".

²⁷³ See For example Sakari Lappi-Seppälä (1945), Unto Parvilahti (1958), Niilo Lappalainen (1998).

²⁷⁴ *Helsingin Sanomat* told the article was one of their top articles of the year.

no different from the debate on Finnish SS-volunteers and their roles in the atrocities. The Holocaust was hardly mentioned in the discussion and the words atrocities and war crimes were used when discussing the volunteers' time in Waffen-SS. True, the Finnish volunteers were in the areas of Caucasus and Ukraine, and not in the areas where one considers the Holocaust to have happened. Besides distancing the war crimes from the Holocaust, there is some mixed memory of East Europe and West Europe. There are feelings of being victims of communism or the threat of it which led to the cooperation with Germany. Being a victim of the Soviet Union and the fear of the Soviet Union, especially after the years of WWII, caused distancing from Germany and the brothers-in-arms alliance. In the debate, the victimhood becomes evident from the comments of volunteers being important for saving Finland from communism, which connects the Finnish memory to the Eastern European memory of WWII. The memories of the allies of Nazi Germany had argued over being victims of Germans, instead of being active participators in WWII. From the discussion, being the victims of Germany is not strongly argued since their help is acknowledged as being meaningful to maintaining independence. What is made clear though is, the separation from the Holocaust and separation from the Nazis does not mention the Holocaust in the discussion and the opinions. From the debate, it can be seen that there is a certain tone-deafness when it comes to comprehending why the Waffen-SS and the SS-soldiers were not seen in a positive light and as something to be proud of. The Finnish memory of WWII is still partially seen in a vacuum where the European memory of the Holocaust is recognised, but it is still looked at from outside in a passive way rather than having an active role.

Lastly, I want to mention what the situation about the topic is like a year later after the timeframe I analysed. Essentially the discussion about the Finnish SS-volunteers was short but active. Indeed, when following the newspapers and journals from January 2020 to June 2020 the discussion around the topic was almost completely over. When in January, a new historical study of the Finnish SS-volunteer's diary and his experiences in the Waffen-SS was published there were hardly any comments about it.²⁷⁵ Not even when co-writer of the study, historian Markku Jokisipilä argued in an interview that there was no smoking gun in the war crime accusation, supporting the notion that the results of the Nationals Archives were unfounded, still the discussion did not pick up again in newspapers. Some newspapers

²⁷⁵ Markku Jokisipilä & Jari Vilén, *Kiitoskortti Hitleriltä — SS-mies Jorma Laitisen päiväkirjat 1941-43* (Minerva, 2020).

reviewed it and for example, *TS* commented on how the study does not politicize the topic.²⁷⁶ Besides the few book reviews, no strong debate started again, maybe due to the neutrality and apolitical attitude of the study.

Conclusions

This master's thesis looked at the discussion that took place in the newspapers, tabloids, and both academic and non-academic journals about the Finnish volunteers and their role in the atrocities while serving the Waffen-SS between 1941–1943. The debate began when docent André Swanström argued several smoking guns proved that the volunteers played a part in atrocities and killings of Jews and other civilians as well as prisoners of war. The National Archives' survey by Lars Westerlund supported the arguments that while the volunteers were not aware of the atrocities before enlisting Waffen-SS they witnessed and *most likely* participated in the atrocities and the killings themselves.

The main research question was: how in the public discussion the memory of Finnish SS-volunteers and them having a possible role in the Holocaust and atrocities is dealt with, and the supportive questions were a) what does the discussion and reactions reveal about the memory of the volunteers in society and how this image is upheld, b) how the history writing was responded, and c) what reasons there were that this discussion was delayed. Mainly the attitudes and comments were suspicious and protective. As it has been argued, politics have a role in memory and memory production. The memory of SS-volunteers has been politicised by supporting the national story of Finland. Not questioning the volunteers' role in the Holocaust and the Finnish volunteers were separated from Nazis in Waffen-SS. The political memory of the Finnish wars has taken the main role in the memory production of WWII, which has led to the image of volunteers being connected to the great national story of small Finland maintaining its independence. Part of political memory was myth creations and simplifying history and, in the discussion,, one can see that the myth of special Finnish volunteers is strong. The arguments of the studies are weak without any proper evidence due to the mythification of the volunteers, which has been supported by academia. The myth of the volunteers then was challenged which led to demands for an official apology by the family members and living SS-volunteers, for disrespecting their honour and actions towards maintaining the independence of Finland. The reporting of the survey's results led the focus

²⁷⁶ Kari Salminen, "Hitlerin joukoissa" review of *Kiitoskortti Hitleriltä* by Markku Jokisipilä & Jari Vilén, *Turun Sanomat*, February 8, 2020. ePress.

to the labelling of the volunteers as war criminals even though there was no accusation of war crimes or intention to charge anyone of war crimes. Support for new studies argued over the need to look at the hurtful past with fresh eyes and the need to come to terms with the past to deal with it. The discussion rotated around the Finnish memory of SS-volunteers being tainted and the need to separate the Finnish volunteers from the actions of other soldiers in the Waffen-SS says that there is a complex and hurtful spot in the past that has not been dealt with.

From the comments and opinions, there is a strong sentiment of distancing and silencing, and it is wished this topic should be left alone, especially since there is no condemning evidence to support the claims of Finns participating in atrocities and killings. Indeed, without proper proof suspicions also turn towards the motives of the authors, and the “real” reasons why these studies were made. Deflecting from the uncomfortable topic will not make them go away but rather transfer them to the next generations. The discussion went circles around the war criminality accusations, ruined reputations and meaningful history writing. Some arguments reflected ideas of avoiding what the possibility of Finnish SS-volunteers participating in the atrocities means for their memory and the memory of the Holocaust in society. As one journalist argued, it seems unbelievable that there would be this wide a gap in the historical knowledge, summarising the disbelief some felt. Finnish volunteers have been studied a lot and it has been reassured that they never saw or heard anything. They were separated from Nazi Germany and history has been made to fit political and national goals after WWII. Now, when slowly the separation war arguments are regarded as irrelevant in academic circles at least, it is only natural that the other narratives are studied with fresh eyes.

While this thesis is a microstudy focusing on the marginal discussion in the field of the memory studies of the Holocaust it contributes to the study of how divided the memory of the Holocaust and WWII is in different countries. While searching and reading the academic studies of the memory of the Holocaust in Finland the literature was difficult to come by. Especially, when looking for studies focusing on Finnish memory compared to the other European countries. Finland’s position was indeed special in WWII and the memory of the Holocaust does not fit in categories of Western European versus Eastern European memory, neither the memory of persecutors nor memory of occupied countries. Mälksoo among the others argued the divination of the WWII memory in Europe and this can be seen in Finland too, where European memory of the war has been put aside and WWII is looked from a national perspective. The memory of volunteers was left one-dimensional due to the sensitive political connection after the war, but later there were no events which could have led on

more critical studies and a questioning of the role of the Finns in the Waffen-SS. Neither the fall of the Soviet Union nor the Stockholm forum and the declaration brought about any soul-searching in Finnish society or academia about the topic of Finnish SS-volunteers before 2018.

While the discussion was active and brought comments in the newspapers and journals, it was also the conversation of certain groups, who were connected to the topic for personal or professional reasons. Whether the studies and the discussion have affected historical consciousness and whether there will be a change about the memory of the Finnish volunteers are questions that will be answered in the future. Indeed, it is way too early to say whether the new study and the archived survey changed the historical consciousness and it will be a meaningful topic to study in the future. For those who were strongly supporting their family members, it seems unlikely that their attitudes will change in future, even if new sources and studies emerge. Only time will tell how history writing and consciousness will change regarding the SS-volunteers. Another meaningful question is will the discussion about the volunteers challenge even more the old interpretation of Finland being a separate actor during WWII and reinforce the movement from national thinking towards more international and inclusive. What the discussion revealed was the problematic and one-sided attitude in the narratives around the topic. The Finnish SS-volunteers' possible participation in atrocities against Jews, civilians and prisoners of war is a much more meaningful topic than how it was dealt with. Indeed, rather than finding out about what some individual volunteers did in Waffen-SS, it is much more meaningful to look at how Finland deals with the hurtful and uncomfortable parts of past and how the memory of the volunteers is discussed in Finnish society.

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Appendix

Newspapers, Tablois, and Magazines	The Number of the Articles
Aamulehti (AL)	2
Aamuset	2
Etelä-Suomen Sanomat (ESS)	5
Helsingin Sanomat (HS)	18
Hämeen Sanomat	3
Ilkka-Pohjalainen	9 – 7
Iltalehti (IL)	3
Ilta-Sanomat (IS)	8
Kainuun Sanomat (KS)	1
Kaleva	2
Karjalainen	4
Keskisuomalainen (KSML)	4
Keskipohjanmaa	2
Lapin Kansa (LK)	7
Satakunnan Kansa	3
Savon Sanomat	3
Suomen Kuvalehti (SK)	2
Turun Sanomat (TS)	4
Uusimaa	5
Uudenkaupungin Sanomat	1
Journals	The Number of the Articles
Historiallinen Aikakauskirja	1
niin & näin	1
Sotaveteraani	1
Sotilasaikakauslehti	1
Vapaussodanperintö	1
Vartija	2