Representations of Victims and Guilty in Public History. The Case of the Finnish Civil War in 1918

SIRKKA AHONEN

History as an ethical project

During the last two decades history has commonly appeared as an ethical project in the public field. Historical guilt and victimization have been manifested through official apologies by heads of states and, moreover, through claims of financial reparations to those who became wronged in the past. Controversial issues of guilt have been dealt with by the international community in war crime tribunals, as in the case of former Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Rwanda, and by Truth and Reconciliation commissions, as in South Africa and Argentina.

The participation of historians in legitimizing apologies and reparations through their membership in truth commissions has puzzled some other historians, who regard history as an impartial science (Ash 1998). Whereas earlier, since the 19th century, recognition of history as a science, academic and public histories were seen as different fields, historians today widely regard themselves theoretically justified to ask broader questions than in the objectivist tradition of historiography. A. R. Marrus explains the revival of the interest in the Holocaust not only in public history but also in academic research with a change that allows moral perspectives, including questions of guilt, in research (Kalela 2000: 85–6; Marrus 1987).

Unlike the academic science of history, the social use of history has always been characterized by ethical overtones. The interest in the past among ordinary people is to a great extent founded on the questions of

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guilt (Barkan 2000: XV-XXI). Historical communities identify themselves as victims or as guilty. Representation of victimization and guilt appear in public history, also called the culture of history, which includes collective memories, ritual commemorations, monuments, cultural products and schoolbook texts. The representations may be positively assuring for the members of a community but provocative to others. They may even ignite history wars, as, for example, the heated debates about the schoolbook representations of the Second World War between China and Japan as well as Russia and Poland. In this article, representations of victims and guilt are first studied in theory and then illustrated through an example from Finnish 20th century. The analysis reveals a Finnish way of relating to the past, which may explain Finnish responses to internationally sensitive issues, among them the Holocaust.

"Guilt" and "victimization" as the key terms of this article are derived from the metaphor "history as a courtroom". In a judicial courtroom, the guilty party and the victims are default adversary parties. In the courtroom of history, guilt and victimization are not suggested by a prosecutor, but by fellow members of a community – thus we can speak of an ethics of recognition in relation to the subjects' sense of history – or to their historical consciousness. "Guilt" and "victimization" then are here used as cultural representations and studied in regard to their social meaning and use.[1]

Victimization and guilt as tenets of historical identity

Collective memory is the foundation of the historical identity of a community. Especially in cases of authoritarian and totalitarian rule, a double-faced situation emerges with people using official rhetoric in public and home-fostered history in private. The former communist countries provide examples of such double-talk. In Estonia the Soviet period was called "invitation to the happy family of the Soviet peoples" at school and "occupation" at home (Ahonen 1992: 52, 121).

Collective memory appears as spontaneous vernacular history talk. However, it is inevitably manipulated through hegemonic representations authorized and mediated by those in power. The power-related

1 See also Karlsson in this volume and the understanding of the existential use of history: "The existential use of history is triggered off by the experienced need, felt by all individuals to remember, alternatively to forget, in order to uphold or intensify feelings of orientation, anchorage and identity in a society in a state of insecurity, pressure or sudden change."

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public history consists of official rhetoric, monuments, rites, artifacts and schoolbooks, and its ethos is most often founded on pride in the common past. Most politicians are well aware of the effect of the representations of historical guilt or victimization on the identity of a people. Therefore they often urge educators to emphasize memories that evoke pride rather than guilt among the people. In the 1980s, Helmut Kohl was concerned that the German youth was too frequently exposed to the German guilt for the Second World War; Margaret Thatcher wanted the glorious moments and great men of the British nation to be introduced in the class-rooms; and Ronald Reagan did not like to see his people indulging in national self-bashing instead of bolstering their pride in the past.

Political concern for collective identity tends to trigger history politics by governments and parliaments. In 2005, the French parliament passed a law which ordered teachers to tell their students about the positive achievements of the French colonial rule. Historians reacted by insisting on the freedom of research and education, but also by demanding recognition of historical guilt: " […] in calling to mind only the positive role of colonization, [the law] enforces an official falsehood about past crimes, about massacres and even genocides, about slavery and about racism".[2] In 2009 the Russian President Dmitri Medvedev appointed a special commission charged with investigating falsifications of history. Lurking in the background of this decision was the denial of the Soviet victory in the Second World War by some liberal publicists, expressed in the context of the celebrations of May 9, "the Victory Day". The commission was asked to defend the history of the Great Patriotic War, as it was taught in schoolbooks.[3]

Vernacular history talk is morally and emotionally loaded. Memories are rather about victimization than guilt. In *The Guilt of Nations*, Elizar Barkan points out the significance of victimization for the construction of a morally positive identity. Unlike guilt, victimization ennobles people in their own self-understanding. It empowers a community that is in the course of asserting itself as an equal partner of other communities. Minorities within a nation may cherish stories of victimization as means of obtaining recognition (Barkan 2001: 317).

Victimization in collective memory tends to appear as mythical archetypes that are common across different communities. The contents vary but the mode follows archetypes. George Schöpflin has categorized

2 Le Monde, 25 March 2005, quoted in Cajani 2009: 46-7.
3 Helsingin Sanomat, 13 June 2009.

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internationally existing myths of victimization into archetypes of biblical origin. The most powerful types are as follows:

- *Myths of redemption and suffering*: A community is led to make sacrifices in order to fulfill a God-given destiny and will eventually be redeemed. Various ante-mural myths of fighting for religion belong to this category.
- *Myths of unjust treatment*. They help a community claim recognition of a special moral worth. The Holocaust tradition is an example of an outstanding success in gaining universal recognition.
- *Myths of military valor*. Military valor is used to denounce political compromises and justify expansionist politics (Schöpflin 1997: 28–34).

Myths mediate both victimization and heroism. The mythical form is convincing, as it implies an ethical solution: good is rewarded and evil punished. Both guilt and victimization acquire meaning as they lead to a righteous result. Myths are about doing the right thing. For a community, popular myths work as collective lessons.

In a political transition, a popular quest for recognition of past wrongs and glories tends to arise and a redesigning of history takes place. To what degree such a quest turns into an ethical or judicial process, depends on the different contexts. According to Timothy Garton Ash, the popular quest is normally restricted to the recognition of the past wrongs, but in many cases straightforward claims of judicial sanctions or even economic reparations are raised. Removals of monuments and revision of schoolbooks are "soft" examples of redesigning history, while truth commissions and special criminal courts are stronger modes of recognition policies (Ash 1998; Evans 2003; Thompson 2002: 26–7, 47, 50–6).

In the course of acknowledging moral claims regarding the past, guilt and praise are attributed to persons and groups. Some are labeled rogues, others heroes. Such attributes redefine the relationships not only between groups within a society but also between a country and the international community. In such a process of reconsidering the past, history wars arise. Recent examples of such wars are the Bronze Warrior war between Estonia and Russia. The Warrior, represented in the monument, was seen as a hero of liberation by Russians and as an evil occupant by Estonians (Torsti 2008: 19–36). China and Japan engaged in a cultural war over schoolbooks, with the Chinese calling for a representation of Japanese as war criminals, while the Japanese chose to leave issues like the Nanking massacre as blank spots in their collective memory.

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Guilt and victimization can be incorporated in collective identities in different modes. Only rarely does a community adhere unanimously to a self-image as guilty. A community rather regards itself victimized, in some cases as a perpetual victim of history. Victimization is felt to ennoble a community, besides often being politically purposeful. Some nations are more inclined than others to regard themselves as perpetual victims. In the following, examples of representations of guilty and victim by a few different communities are suggested.

In "Heavenly Serbia" (1999), Branimir Anzulovic maintains that *the Serbs* throughout their past have regarded and presented themselves as victims. Serbian folklore is dominated by melancholic themes of victimization. Loss, suffering and martyrdom prevail in stories and songs. Slovenian psychoanalyst V. D. Volkan has studied the subtle ways in which the very private identity of *Serbs* was manipulated by Slobodan Milosevic at the end of the 1980s. Volkan analyzed the effect of the prince Lazar cult, revived by Milosevic, on Serbian males. According to folk tradition, the prince fell as a martyr of the Orthodox faith in a battle against the Muslims. A martyr is a victim and a hero at the same time. Milosevic let an inscription to be hammered in the pedestal of Lazar's statue, which urged the Serbs to fight the Muslims, adding the curse that those who refused would never be able to conceive male heirs (Volkan 1995).

Another small nation with a dominant victim identity are the *Estonians*. Ever since they started recording their history in the medieval period, they have portrayed themselves as perpetual victims. In the course of history, German knights, Danes, Swedes and Russians invaded Estonian territory and brought hardships and suffering upon the Estonian people. In their public history, the Estonians lament the victimization. In comparison, the Finns who were likewise invaded and annexed by Swedes and Russians, have found historical pride in their participation in the Swedish 17th century wars and later in their resistance to Russia (Ahonen 2006). The difference in historical identification might depend on reality – Estonia's geopolitical position is awkward – but it also reveals something about the ethos of collective memory. Especially since the 1980s Estonian public history has been characterized by victimization (Ahonen 1992: 101–126).

Among the guilt-stricken nations, *Germans* are a rare example of a community that has adopted an identity of guilt. For several decades after the Second World War Germans fostered an identity of guilty in their public history. They worked on their Holocaust-guilt actively through drama, film, literature, museums and school education. However, political transitions may alter identities of victim or guilty. In Germany, in the

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atmosphere of the reunification around and since 1990, a revision of history has taken place. In fiction, like in Günter Grass's *Krebsgang,* the Germans were portrayed as victims. The reconstruction and solemn reopening of the *Frauenkirche* in Dresden was a sign of Germany's resumption of pride in their history. In 1992, the Germans felt self-confident enough to criticize the raising of the statue of "Bomber" Harris in London. For Londoners the statue meant recognition of heroism in beating Germany, while for the Germans "Bomber" Harris personified the historical guilt of the British. Since the unification, Germans have emphatically represented themselves not only as guilty but also as victims of the Second World War

The modes of adoption of an identity of guilt or victimhood in the examples above included heroic victimization, resignation in perpetual victimization and the combination of guilt and victimization. As identities are constructions, the modes may vary in the course of time. Variation depends rather on historical context than on national disposition.

In the following, representations of victimization and guilt are analyzed in the case of the Finnish Civil War of 1918. After four generations, the war is still being used in the identity struggles among the Finns. Victimization and guilt are contested over the borderline between the political left and right, even if in the present politics the borderline is becoming more and more blurred.

The Civil War as the most tragic chapter of Finnish history

In order to suggest how far the Finns, in their public history, represent themselves as victims or guilty, I will first identify the most sensitive topics of the 20th century and then focus on the most difficult of them. I define a topic as sensitive, if it divides people into adverse communities of historical interpretation. If a topic is sensitive, there are at least two stories of it, one of victimization and one of guilt. If one story was silenced in public for a period it is most likely to indicate guilt.

According to the testimony of Finnish public history, the most sensitive topics are constituted by the Civil War of 1918 and its aftermath, the Second World War alliance with Nazi Germany and the Finnish contribution to the Holocaust, and, finally, by the Finlandization of the 1970s, meaning an opportunistic appeasement of Moscow by the Finns. The guilt and victimization due to the civil war is the most complex of these topics. I will focus on the civil war, while the Finnish Holocaust is treated in the chapter written by Tom Gullberg in this book. For many dec-

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ades, the Finns indulged in the identity of a community that defied the Germans and protected the Jews, but as late as 2000 they had to admit that the Finnish war cabinet took part in the Holocaust, even if indirectly and in small numbers. Finlandization is a very recent painful element of Finnish historical identity. Apart from feeling shame for having kept silent about the dark side of the Soviet system, Finns admit to the guilt of having adopted a bystander attitude in regard to the plight of Soviet dissidents.

Compared to the sensitive topics of the Second World War and Finlandization, the Civil War of 1918 is a deeply divisive episode in the Finnish social memory. Even in the first decade of the 21st century, old people in some parts of the country still feel hatred towards their neighbors on account of having been on different sides in 1918.

Finland had declared itself independent in December 1917, but not on a unanimous basis, as a part of the people preferred a socialist revolution. The Civil War between socialist Red Guards and bourgeois White Guards started in January 1918, lasted three and a half months and resulted in the victory of the Whites. The death toll was around 30 000, including deaths due to civil terror and postwar concentration camp atrocities. Acts of terror were committed by both sides. At an early stage of the war, the country was divided into White and Red territories, and both the White Army and the Red Army wanted to secure their territories against enemy infiltration. The hostile elements in the local population were controlled, detained and cleansed. As the military strategic purpose on its own does not suffice to explain the extreme cruelty and the excessive killings of civilians, the social attribution of victimization and guilt deserves a critical study.

The contradictions in the Red and White history are evident in the disagreement over how the war of 1918 should be called. The disagreement has prevailed until today. In the working class tradition, the war is called a civil war, a class war or a war between brethren, while among the bourgeoisie it is referred to as a fight for freedom, which indicates a war in the defense of independence.

Attribution of victimization by the parties of the Civil War

The *Red victimization* was emphasized by the far larger numbers of casualties sustained by the Reds in the conflict in comparison to those of the Whites. The Reds suffered massively, especially due to the revenge after the war, known as the White terror. The victims of the White terror

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amount to 10 000, compared to the 1600 victims of Red terror. No wonder then that the social memory of the working class became characterized by victimization.

Due to the mass killings of civilians and prisoners of war, Reds called the White guards "slaughterers". Rhetorically, many terms used by Reds were derived from the Communist Manifesto and Marxist theory. The theory was translated into powerful vernacular expressions, many of which were familiar to people from the archaic biblical language. The workers represented themselves as victims of "exploiters", "bloodsuckers", "robbers" and "oppressors". The morally charged terms indicated an antagonism between capitalist owners and socialist workers (Hyvönen 1977: 96–106; Manninen 1982: 169; Tikka 2008:71).

Apart from being victims of the owners' class, the Finnish working class regarded itself as victims of a political betrayal by the bourgeoisie. The parliament with a socialist majority was dissolved in July 1917 through a joint decision by the Russian Provisional government and the Finnish bourgeois parties. The socialist voters, empowered by the successful Bolshevik revolution in Russia, considered themselves betrayed and justified to refuse loyalty to the new, bourgeois-dominated Parliament (Hyvönen 1977: 30–34).

Another betrayal, according to the socialists, took place when the bourgeois government promoted the White paramilitaries, the Civil Guards, to the status of the official Finnish army. The socialist leadership interpreted this as an attack against the working class and proclaimed a Red revolution (Hyvönen 1977: 97). In the consequently divided country the workers became victims of the White Army's military cleansing policy. When the White Army progressed to the Red areas, the Reds were hunted down, punished and executed by the White Guards. Every workers' union member and supporter became a suspect and an enemy to be eliminated.

After the war ended in May, the cleansing policy was intensified. Altogether 80 000 Reds were locked up in concentration camps, which were portrayed as death camps by the inmates. The deaths were mostly due to the inhuman conditions in the camps. Reds died of hunger and epidemic diseases.

For long after the war, members of the working class were suspected of rebellious intentions. The witch hunt against Reds continued for years. Acts of terror continued and were reinforced by the rightwing extremism of the 1930s. In social memory, the Finnish working class regards itself a victim of extended White terror.

The *White victimization* was based on the Red terror, reinforced by an ideological Red scare. White Finns regarded themselves as victims of

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a primitive Red rage. The rhetoric of the "monstrous" lower class spread universally in Europe as a by-product of a political fear of socialism. The rhetoric was articulated by Gustave Le Bon in his popular *La psychologie des foules*, which was translated into Finnish and widely disseminated among the bourgeoisie in the 1910s. In the emerging White rhetoric, workers were portrayed as rogues who had no sense of law and order and a tendency for cruel violence. The actual Red terror included breaking into manor houses, killing the owners in front of their family, sit-ins in factories and distributing leaflets containing death threats against bureaucrats and big capitalists. The 19th century paternalist picture of rural poor as dependents who had to be both protected and disciplined, gave way to a picture of workers as alien and hostile masses against whom the civilized people had to defend themselves.

The White victimization appeared as grim austere torture stories. Especially if the victim was a clergyman, the Red perpetrator was demonized. The number of stories about tortured priests increased after the war and indicated a great fear and deep disgust of Reds among the bourgeoisie. The presence of women among the Red Guards was regarded by the bourgeoisie as particularly offensive to their sense of decency (Manninen 1982:121, 160).

The Whites considered themselves victims of a betrayal by fellow countrymen. Finland had finally gained independence. For Whites, the Red attack against the young nation-state was an incomprehensible blow against the civil code, according to which people should be able to trust their compatriots. The socialists had betrayed the nation by resorting to revolution and accepting support from Russian Bolsheviks. According to the White propaganda, the Reds were fighting their fellow countrymen with Russian bayonets (Manninen 1982). According to the White view, the countless death sentences pronounced by White military tribunals at the end of the war were an act of self-defense by the victims of anarchy (Tikka 2006: 154).

Attribution of guilt to the parties in the Civil War

Guilt was attributed to the Reds by the adversary party, the Whites. In the aftermath of a war the defeated tend to be treated as guilty and the victors as innocent. In the case of the Finnish Civil War, the White military and special tribunals charged, tried, and sentenced Reds, while investigations into the White terror were few and mainly nominal. In ver-

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nacular discussion the issue of guilt was handled more symmetrically. Both parties memorized and mythologized each other's evil deeds.

Attribution of guilt as a way of making sense of past events evades structural explanations. Instead of accounts of institutional evil, guilt is attributed to persons or groups. In the case of the guilt of Finnish Reds in the Civil War of 1918, the guilt was attributed to barbaric masses, bloodthirsty leaders and ruthless local Red Guards.

The accusation of low-class masses being barbaric was elaborated by a popular contemporary author Eino Leino as follows:

> "[The rebellion] released all passions, lifted guns against legal government and parliament, felled all courts of justice and civil institutions, spread blood and death, deadly horror and red destruction (hävitys) into the most far-away forest settlements. It was like letting the devil free." (Kunnas 1976: 102)

Accusations of barbaric bloodthirstiness and bestiality were presented in the media, in military tribunals, in public registers and in the official declarations by the Commander-in-chief C. G. E. Mannerheim. According to the communion register held by the church in the parish of Akaa, an unemployed worker, Juho Viktor Vuori, was executed "as one of the biggest monsters of the Red terror" (Tikka 2006: 148). In his address to the Finnish people at the triumph parade on 16 May 1918, Mannerheim praised the White Guards for having defended what was most dear to the Finnish people and had been threatened by the Reds, namely their religion, their fatherland and the home inherited from their ancestors (Manninen 1982: 117).

The adversary party, the defeated Reds, attributed guilt to the Whites. The issue of White guilt was raised immediately after the war; the accusations were triggered by the massive numbers of executions ordered by the White military tribunals, but the outcry was soon stifled and the accusations against the Whites silenced or left to underground socialist publishing and vernacular history.

In the socialist rhetoric, the owners' class, supported by the state bureaucracy, bore the guilt for the exploitation and oppression of the working class in general. In the Civil War, the White guilt was, according to socialist publications, shared by the oppressive White senate, "slaughterer-general" Mannerheim, terrorizing White Guards and unjust military tribunals (Hyvönen 1977: 83–128). After a month's fighting, with the White army having advanced into Red Finland, the White headquarters issued the order to shoot dangerous suspects "at sight". The killing was executed by military tribunals and specially appointed war police contingents consisting of White Guards. Moreover, individual White

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Guards shot unarmed Reds after taking them prisoner (Tikka 2006: 36, 121-2). "White terror" and "slaughterers" became the core of Red accusations.

The concentration camps finally became the most illustrative part of the White guilt. Already after the first victories of the White army the attitude of the Senate towards the Reds hardened. As no detainees were set free, the camps swelled. The biggest camps were Suomenlinna (13 300 prisoners), Hämeenlinna (11 5000), Lahti (10 900), Viipuri (10 350), Tammisaari (8700) and Tampere (8 700). The camp barracks had not been designed for the growing numbers of prisoners, which led to prisoners being accommodated in animal shelters, floorless cellars and earth holes. The administration of the camps was left to the White Army, namely to the Department of the Protection of the Conquered Territories. The White Guards functioned as commanders and subjected the inmates to harsh military discipline. The camp wards, judges, and bureaucrats in general were regarded by socialists as bearers of class hatred. The judges were guilty of executing bourgeois justice and the bureaucrats of harassing the poor (Tikka 2006).

The concentration camps were criticized by foreign Western governments as an insult to the rule of law. The Finnish government responded by maintaining that the camps were a Finnish internal affair (Pietiäinen 1992: 353).

The memory of the concentration camps became a divisive element in the Finnish historical identity. Tens of thousands of Red families adopted the identity of victims, while the Whites took a pride in the righteous victory and repelled accusations of guilt.

As a whole, Red and White representations of history support Schöpflin's view of the use of mythical archetypes for the claims of guilt and victimization. The "myth of redemption" is present in the argument invoked by the Whites, according to which their victory saved Finland from chaos and barbarity. The "myth of unjust treatment" was used by the Reds when referring to the bourgeois exploitation in the past and to their snatching away political power from them by dissolving Parliament in 1917. The "myth of military valor" was utilized by the Whites in stressing the purity of their struggle for freedom and in justifying their postwar terror with their right to secure their righteous victory.

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The aftermath of the Civil War

In the politically divided Finnish society of the 1920s and 1930s the attribution of guilt and victimization was diagonally adversative. The victorious bourgeois state idolized the White victims. During 1920s more than 300 monuments were raised in their honor. A monumental memorial publication from 1927 was financed by the Parliament and presented the life stories of the 5000 fallen White Guards (Boström 1927). In schoolbooks the war was portrayed as a freedom fight, implying that the aim of the Reds was to make Finland a part of the Soviet Union. Memory of the war was used to fuel the Red Scare of the time (Rouhiainen 1974). The public history was dominated by manifestations of the White victory. Monuments for the white "freedom fighters" were raised in the local cemeteries, while red victims were left buried unnamed in mass graves. In the mainstream culture, doubts about the White truth were expressed only by a few authors like Frans Emil Sillanpää, Joel Lehtonen and Jarl Hemmer.

Even though a few reconciliatory political gestures were attempted by the centrist governments just after the war, the plight of the Reds was perpetuated by the discriminatory social atmosphere of the 1920s and 1930s. Only 11 monuments for the Red victims were raised during that time. In most cases they were dumped in the outskirts of towns and villages (Peltonen 2003: 222–3). When in 1923 a local workers' union in Hämeenlinna raised a monument to the Red victims in a churchyard, the ones responsible were charged with subversive activities. The church denied the right to commemoration, and the monument was destroyed by the police.[4] However, in socialist publications and vernacular working class tradition, the memories of the Red sacrifices in the Civil War were cherished, often as half-mythical stories of Red heroism and White evilness.

After the Second World War, under the auspices of a short leftist wave in politics, public commemoration of the Red victims gathered momentum. Parliament urged the government to care for the neglected graves of the Reds. However, a true public recognition of the plight of the Reds only came as late as the 1960s. In big public burials, with clergymen speaking of guilt and reconciliation, the exhumed remains of the Reds were reburied in churchyards. Monuments were raised for those who had "died for their ideological conviction" (Peltonen 2003: 226–8). Moreover, in the 1960s the public was ready to accept schoolbooks, where a balance was pursued, with authors accounting for the Red upris-

4 Helsingin Sanomat 14.5.2006.

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ing in terms of social distress, and editors making sure that equal numbers of Reds and Whites appeared in illustrations.

In the mainstream culture a change took place thanks to the novelist Väinö Linna. His monumental novel *Täällä Pohjantähden alla* (Under the North Star) opened the issue of guilt. The Reds were portrayed as victims, not as guilty, and the Whites as perpetrators. Following Väinö Linna, theatres and film studios adopted the Red perspective. The productions were attended by massive audiences and greatly affected Finnish collective memory.

Apart from an attempt to deal with a collective guilt, the Finns of the 1960s and 1970s used history to fuel political antagonisms. In many municipalities, the raising of a monument for the Red triggered an equivalent quest among the political Right. As a result, equal numbers of monuments were built for the White and Red Guards in the period. As the political contest between socialists and non-socialists was fierce, historical guilt was used to bolster political identities.

At the turn of the new millennium, the Civil War is nearly five generations back in time, but facing up to the disaster is still a regular need at the war's anniversary. The ethos of the commemoration is today less political than in the 1960s. People seem to think more in terms of transgenerational ethics. The generation of 1918 deserves to be done justice to. A comprehensive survey was conducted by the state at the turn of the new millennium in order to establish the true numbers of the victims on both sides. The numbers were not radically different from those already confirmed by research in the 1960s, but they helped many Finns to escape inertia about the collective historical identity and forced the establishment to acknowledge a historical wrong. Since the turn of the new millennium, the leadership of the church has officially expressed remorse for taking the White side in 1918. Already in five dioceses the bishops have organized solemn burials for the Red victims exhumed from hidden mass graves in the forests. As late as in 2006, in the middle-sized city of Hämeenlinna, in the center of the region worst stricken by the war, a burial of 3500 exhumed Reds took place under the auspices of a public recognition of guilt by the church, personified by a bishop who held the service and gave a sermon on reconciliation. A suggestion was made – even if not yet materialized – that an annual day of reconciliation should be included in the calendar of commemorations.

In 1997 I conducted a research into the historical identity of young Finns. When asked about the Civil War, they did not express any feeling of transgenerational guilt. According to them, it was necessary to remember and recognize the tragedy but not to attempt reparation (Ahonen 1998: 67–73). However, the testimony of public history is different. Vic-

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timization and guilt continue to be reified in fiction, monuments and rituals. The past is not dead; it is not even past.

Conclusion

In this article I have explored the use of history as an ethical project in the sense of addressing the question of moral recognition.[5] The concepts of guilt and victimization can be seen as constitutive of such a process of recognition, not least in the sense of construction of a sustainable collective identity.

Finns do not belong to the communities that would strongly identify with historical victimization. They rather tell their history as a story of tough survival. Nevertheless, Finns are burdened by some difficult episodes of history, above all by the tragedy of a civil war, which, together with its aftermath, kept people divided for decades. Public history, including monuments, commemoration rituals, literature and art as well as school books seem to keep the history alive for new generations.

There was no attempt at reconciliation after the Civil War. Therefore the horrors were left as an open wound in the collective memory. Even though the Finns have felt ready to face up to the difficult past since the 1960s, the interpretations have fluctuated from pro-Red to Pro-White, sustaining mutually exclusive group identities, and an open dialogue of healing between the two memory-communities has only slowly been established. In a deliberative dialogue, mutual accusations would be accommodated and victimization acknowledged. Collective identity would become inclusive instead of consisting of mutually exclusive sub-identities.

What does a redesigning of collective identity depend on? Having looked at the representations of guilt and victimization in the context of the Civil War, I suggest two factors: popular political will and a trickle-down of academic research.

Collective recognition of the guilt of the atrocities of the Civil War was triggered by the leftist turn in politics in the late 1960s. Apologetic rhetoric and demonstrative burials of Red victims spread after the socialist parties won the majority in the parliamentary election in 1966. Since a rightist turn in the 1980s, some rehabilitation of White perpetrators has taken place. However, the political will to bring the descendants of Reds and Whites together at a common round table is still missing.

5 Ethical should here be understood in the Hegelian sense where "one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject" (Fraser 2003: 10).

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Academic research was long divided along the lines of the war, but during the last two generations a genuine contribution has been made by historians to help Finns confront the events of 1918. The works of Jaakko Paavolainen in the 1960s sorted out the numbers of victims on both sides and put an end to the game of inflated numbers concerning the amount of victims and suffering. The numbers were counted again in the course of state-supported extensive research in the 1990s. The hard facts are there for a mutual acknowledgement of victimization and guilt, as soon as the Finnish community wants to redesign its identity in terms of inclusiveness.

The case of the Civil War shows how the "awkward" or conflictive past was dealt with by means of a long silence, based on pragmatism. And when the history of the Civil War was addressed, it happened within the fixed terms of heroism and of victims and guilty. This way of dealing with the past may be compared to the way in which the legacy of the Holocaust was dealt with within the national history culture of Finland. Up until the 1980s, a self-righteous – or heroic – image of Finland as protector of the Jews during the Second World War dominated public perception. Only when the question of guilt in relation to the Holocaust reappeared in an international context, did a Finnish discussion arise on the role played by the Finnish state. As an outcome of this discussion, the Finnish national identity as a victim of great power aggression was modified by the acknowledgement of how the Finnish state carried out decisions and actions which, at the very least, failed to avert further persecutions of Jews, both before and after the outbreak of war (see the contribution by Tom Gullberg for an elaboration on this issue). In that sense the themes of victims and guilty were played out once again within national history culture, but this time with a shift within the position of the Finnish state.

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