
Restless Post-War Period

Kivimäki, Ville & Hytönen, Kirsi-Maria (eds.) *Rauhaton rauha. Suomalaiset ja sodan päättyminen 1944–1950*. Tampere: Vastapaino, 394 pp. ISBN-13: 9789517685344, ISBN-10: 9517685343.

War and wartime activities are an important theme in current cultural and historical studies. During the past years, descriptions and studies on wartime from different angles and perspectives have become more common. For example in the case of the Second World War in Finland, people were first interested in the different phases of the war periods such as the Karelian evacuees, and it took quite many decades before researchers started to study how the war affected women and children or the everyday life during wartime. New methods, such as oral history, different documents, such as patient documents and letters to and from the front, and fieldwork are now used as part of methodology. Physical traumas and other previously untouched issues such as war prisoners and displaced people have become objects of study. In her book *Jänkääkäreitä ja parakkipiikojä*, historian Maria Lähteenmäki was among the first Finnish researchers, if not the first one, who studied how the war affected those who were

not at the front, women and children, how the post-war period left its mark on people and how people in Lapland experienced the war in 1939–1945 (Lähteenmäki, Maria 1999. *Jänkääkäreitä ja parakkipiikojä*. *Lappilaisten sotakokemuksia 1939–1945*. Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society.).

The book *Rauhaton rauha*, already published in 2015, is a collection on a very interesting and important period, namely the time after the Second World War until 1950. In southern parts of Finland, people were already living a post-war period, but Lapland was still suffering from the consequences of the Lapland War, and its inhabitants were evacuated to Sweden (60,000) and Ostrobothnia. People had different and deep experiences from the wartime, and we can read about these different destinies and mental landscapes in this book, which is a collection written mostly by historians, but also by a couple of ethnologists and cultural historians. The authors have studied war and war-related issues also in other publications. Some have already defended their dissertations or published studies on topics concerning wars. The book is edited by Ville Kivimäki, whose study *Murtuneet mielet* (2013) received an important non-fiction literature award in Finland (*Tieto-Finlandia*), and Kirsi-Maria Hytönen, whose study *Ei elämäni lomina mahtunut* discussed war

from a different perspective, namely that of oral history of women during the Second World War and the reconstruction period.

The book is divided into four parts. The first part, “between war and peace” (*Sodan ja rauhan välissä*), includes two articles. It begins with an introduction written by Ville Kivimäki, Kirsi-Maria Hytönen and Petri Karonen. It is a good and thorough investigation on the Second World War both in Finland and in Europe. It sheds light on the development and different events of the war and how different countries could return to peace again. Was Finland part of Europe in the war, or was it represented as separate from Europe? What part did the collective narratives on the war play in post-war Finland, or could individual narratives also be told? In the end of this article, the authors discuss new research directions, which are presented in the following articles of the publication. One purpose of the book is to grasp the liminal time between the war and the 1950s. It was also a time when people tried to start to reclaim their everyday lives and solve different practical problems.

One of the best articles in this publication is evidently Marja Tuominen’s long article on the consequences of the Lapland War, which has remained rather unknown in other parts of Finland. It describes the Lapland War, during which people were evacuated and practically the whole of Lapland vanished in flames, and the reconstruction period. Not only were buildings and other infrastructure rebuilt, but also mental reconstruction took place in Lapland. The end of the war looked totally different from the perspectives of other parts of Finland compared to that of Lapland, which was so easily forgotten also in public speeches. The war experiences of people in Lapland were also very different from the experiences in other parts of Finland, and this is so often forgotten even today when speaking about Finland’s current refugee politics.

The second part of the book is named “homecomings” (*Kotiinpaluut*). It begins with Ville Kivimäki’s good article on Finnish soldiers coming home from the war. He describes their emotional landscape in the autumn 1944, after the Continuation War was over. He focuses on how

the soldiers’ emotions developed, and what kinds of feelings, fears and anticipations they had in this new situation when everybody in Finland had to reorient themselves mentally. The summer 1944 meant trauma for so many people, but how did they survive this trauma? They had to understand the changes in world politics and see how former enemies became friends or comrades and vice versa; especially in Lapland. Homecoming meant exhaustion and fear, but gradually new politics also emerged. In spite of everything – or national questions – there was hope, which was focused on the peace and everyday life.

The other articles of this part include Heli Kananen’s article on the encounters between local inhabitants and Orthodox evacuees. It is delightful that Orthodox evacuees are the subject of the article, but once again the focus is on Border Karelia and its Orthodox population. The Orthodox Skolt Sami and other people from the Pechenga area, who also had to leave their home areas, are not included in this article. The role of the Orthodox religion and the requirement to change one’s religion from Orthodox to Lutheran among them still needs to be studied. According to Kananen, understandings and conceptions of the other group – both among local people and newcomers – were narrow and simplified. Encounters are described as cold, and adaption was a lengthy process.

Antti Malinen describes the living conditions in towns; homelessness and regulation. Did people find a peaceful atmosphere and home after the wartime and how? – it was not so easy. He also focuses on the housing situation of adolescents and children. These groups suffered in different ways from the housing problems.

Seija-Leena Nevala and Kirsi-Maria Hytönen are concentrating on the family-life in the countryside after the war. They focus on the women’s role, first during the war and then during the reconstruction period, when the situation of women changed a lot. The changes caused by the peace were not always welcomed by the women, because they had to give space for men returning from the war. This article is based on oral history material and, it – told by women, it – gives an interesting picture of the period.

The third part of the book is named “the peace crisis” (*Rauhankriisi*). It contains three articles, which discuss the situation after the war; how problematic, insecure or sensitive the situation in Finland was, for example for politicians, media or trade unions. Petri Karonen focuses on the atmosphere in Finland after the war. This article is mainly based on official documents of the government and parliament. It gives a good, full and unglamorous picture of this important but new period. Timo Auvinen, Antero Holmila and Niina Lehtimäki concentrate on how insecure Finland’s independence was when the war ended. It describes e.g. how history was used in constructing Finland after the war and how Finland also became part of the Nordic countries. Keijo Rantanen’s article focuses on the role of the labor movement and communists. He examines the case of the fabric community in Nokia.

The last part of the book is named “after the violence” (*Väkivallan jälkeen*), and it includes two articles. First, Jenny Kirves studies how people survived the trauma caused by the war. People had to find meaning, take their lives in their own hands and gradually find different solutions to coping with their lives. They strived to achieve a better future and especially offer one to their children. The last and concluding article, about “the new Finland”, is written by Ville Kivimäki, and in it he summarizes the post-war experiences of the generation of the war. This conclusion provides a suitable ending to the book. He concentrates on what resistant and strength was left from the war and post-war years in Finnish society.

There are a couple of issues which, in my opinion, would enrich the interesting publication. Firstly, the difficult concept of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* is a good and interesting theme, which has not yet been used much in Finnish studies. On the other hand, the whole book with its perspectives can be understood as dealing with the past. Some of the articles combine interesting but difficult themes on the methods of history or ethnology. All in all, difficult or different, themes that depart from the usual are discussed in the book. Still, Lapland with its Finnish and Saami populations is left somewhat aside in the publication.

In Lapland, one theme which has been important in people’s minds concerns those deserters who did not participate in the Continuation War but escaped to the woods or to Sweden (*metsäkaartilaiset* in Finnish). There are a couple of books (Myllymäki, Arvo 2016: *Korpikommunisti. Kolarilainen Eemeli Lakkala vainotusta valankäyttäjäksi*. Helsinki: Into; Tasala, Markku 2000: *Metsäkaarti. Kolarin metsäkaartin jatkosotoa ja rauha*. Oulu: Kustannus Pohjoinen.) which have touched this statistically marginal but regionally and politically important phenomenon. According to the study of Arvo Myllymäki, for example, the meaning of these people has been visible even in the regional and political atmosphere until the 1970s. For example from the perspective of oral history this would be an interesting issue, which is very briefly referred to in e.g. Kivimäki’s concluding article.

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