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Outer Borders, Inner Boundaries in Finland. The Reconstructed Russian Border and the Changing Geography of Memory

Abstract

In the aftermath of the Cold War, Finland has been involved in a geopolitical transition from the Soviet sphere of influence towards the core of the European integration process. The Finnish-Russian border has consequently transformed: primarily a segment of the Iron Curtain, it has thereafter turned into an external border, a frontier, of the European Union. As a result, a whole set of EU policies have been implemented, with the aim of converting this line of exclusion into an area of cross border cooperation. Due to the intensifying cross-border flows, the stress is often put on ongoing identity hybridization. Nonetheless, the impact of EU public policies should not be overestimated, nor should the national dimension of cross-bordering be omitted¹. Instead of relying on the hegemony of geopolitics, this paper will focus on the consequences of border's restructuring in regard to national memories and historiographies.

Introduction

This paper presents the first results of a PhD research about the Politics of Memory in Finland after the Cold War. At the core of the study stands the double-process of appropriation/objectivation of the notions related to collective memory (as, for example, the duty to remember). A conceptual tool originally used by researchers, collective memory has recently been turned into a political object.

¹ There is a large bibliography on the topic of the Finnish-Russian border. Two of the most remarkable works are Paasi A., 1996, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness. The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons; and Eskelinen H., Oksa J., Liikanen I. (eds.), 1999, *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

According to Halbwachs' pioneer works², memory is not to be approached as an individual capacity, but as a social phenomenon³. Wherever there is a social group, there is a collective memory, a shared knowledge of past events experienced by the group. During half a century, however, Halbwachs' masterpieces were left quite unnoticed. It was not until the middle of the seventies that the notion of collective memory became widespread.

The large success of the notion is called "the upsurge in memory" by Pierre Nora. It is due to "a profound change in the relationship traditionally enjoyed with the past". The manifestations of the upsurge in memory are manifold: "criticism of official versions of history and recovery of areas of history previously repressed; demands for signs of a past that had been [...] suppressed; growing interest in "roots" and genealogical research; all kinds of commemorative events and new museums; renewed sensitivity to the holding and opening of archives for public consultation; and growing attachment to what [...] is called "heritage" [...]"⁴. This phenomenon is also visible in post-Cold War Finland. Commissions of historians are being established; a historiographic consciousness is emerging; commemorative activities are generalizing.

As presented by Nora, the French upsurge in memory is the causal effect of the weakening of the Nation-State model. What is at stake in Finland is a convergent phenomenon generated by divergent dynamics, however. The relationship to the past is not ruled by a universal mechanism that could apply the same way to every society⁵. The

² Halbwachs M., 1997, *La mémoire collective*, Paris: Albin Michel ; 1925, *Les cadres sociaux de la mémoire*, Paris: Félix Alcan. See also Lavabre M-C., 2000, "Usages et mésusages de la mémoire", *Critique internationale*, 7, pp.48-57; 1998, "Maurice Halbwachs et la sociologie de la mémoire", *Raison présente*, 128, pp.47-56.

³ Prior to durkheimian Halbwachs' works, the concept of collective memory was subject only to an extremely marginal use: Olick J. K., Robbins J., 1998, "Social Memory Studies: From 'Collective Memory' to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24, pp.105-140 (pp.104-106).

⁴ Nora P., 2002, "The Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory", *Transit – Europäische Revue*, 22, on internet http://www.iwm.at/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=285&Itemid=463 (16/04/2007). Also Nora P., 1992, "L'ère de la commémoration", in Nora P. (ed.), *Les lieux de mémoire: III. Les France, 3. De l'archive à l'emblème*, Paris: Gallimard, pp.977-1012 ; and Nora P., 1984, "Entre mémoire et histoire", in Nora P. (ed.), *Les Lieux de mémoire: I. La République*, Paris: Gallimard.

⁵ This theme has already been surveyed in Hartog F., 2003, *Régimes d'historicité. Présentisme et expériences du temps*, Paris: Le Seuil.

emergence of the problematic related to collective memory is generated by peculiar historical and social conditions. Therefore the reasons for the French upsurge of memory are not automatically relevant in other contexts. As for Finland, we are to explain the striking synchrony between the evolving symbolism of its Russian border and a nation-wide upsurge in memory.

The Soviet-Finnish border has become a border between the EU and Post-Soviet Russia. The consequences are twofold: first, the border is not closed any more; then, the border has been turned into a frontier of the EU. Two corresponding geographical levels of study have been chosen: a regional level and a national level. First, the openness of the border has an impact on a regional scale. During the last fifteen years, there has been a rush of Finnish commemorative activities at the Russian border. Starting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Finnish monuments have been erected in the border area, on the territory of the former Finnish Karelia. The first part of this text presents a case study of this Finnish memorial activism in North-Western Russia.

The perspective is then enlarged to more far-reaching consequences in the second part. Indeed, the border is not only a social living space. It is also, as a symbol, playing a major role in the identity building process. The meaning of the border has passed from a prominent referral determining both the inner and outer boundaries of the national polity, to an EU frontier, that is to say, a test zone of cross-border cooperation programs. This change has generated deep history and memory restructuring effects at the national level.

A Case Study: the Finnish Sites of Memory beyond the Russian Border

There are dozens of Finnish monuments, mainly war related memorials, on the Russian side of the border. Thus, conflicting historiographies encounter at the Finnish-Russian Border.

Scrutinizing the Finnish memorials is a prerequisite for a qualitative analysis of this historiographic confrontation.

Genesis and Semiotics: from Heroization to Victimization

The first Finnish memorial actions in North-Western Russia developed right after the Collapse of the Soviet Union. All along the nineties, teams of volunteers coordinated by the Finnish Ministry of Education have been mapping common graves containing the remains of Finnish soldiers killed at war in 1939-1944. Few years later, in 1998, an association named *Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War* was founded, in order to complete the process. The aim of the association is twofold⁶: it is an organization, whose central task consists in restoring and building memorials honouring the memory of the Finnish soldiers who died on the battlefield or in detention during the Winter and the Continuation wars. Since the collapse of Soviet Union, graves and memorials have been erected in North-Western Russia⁷. The association is also concerned with mapping, finding, and bringing back to the homeland the remains of soldiers who fell outside Finland.

Of course, the association seems to be a marginal and extreme example for its limited number of volunteers. It is worth noticing, though, that all Finnish Veterans' leagues are part of its administrative council. Even more, the association's activities are conducted under the umbrella of the Finnish Ministry of Education and with the support of the Finnish state. The focus is on the Finnish Second World War hero: his corpse is placed at the centre of the association's activities. It is searched for, dug up, identified, and transported. It is then honoured, blessed, and buried one more time, either in the so-called heroes' graveyards or side by side with his nearest and dearest. Public funerals are regularly held for the unknown soldiers that have been brought back to the homeland. These burial ceremonies are usually

⁶ The legal basis for these operations consists of a bilateral agreement concluded in 1992 between the Russian Federation and the Finnish State. Juutilainen A., Hakala H., 1999, *Rajantakaiset kenttä- ja sankarihautausmaat* (Field- and Heroes' Cemeteries Beyond the Border), Helsinki: Sotavainajien muiston vaalimisyhdistys.

⁷ Blinikka A. (ed.), 2004, *Sotavainajiamme rajan takaa. Suomen sodissa 1939–45 kentälle jääneiden etsinnät ja muiston vaaliminen* (Our Deaths at War Beyond the Border. Researching and remembering those who remained on the ground during the Second World War), Helsinki: Sotavainajien muiston vaalimisyhdistys, pp.43-54.

huge patriotic celebrations where hundreds of people, the Prime Minister included, are present. Dozens of soldiers carry the coffins, salutes are fired⁸.

Most of the speeches given by the state and association representatives during the official ceremonies⁹ have been collected. At first sight, it appears that a patriotic tune, with references to heroes and to the defence of the fatherland, is dominating these speeches¹⁰. However, the language of the monuments might not be limited to the words uttered by their builders. Thus, it raises the question: "how to interpret a monument, how to read it?" Rheinhardt Koselleck has proposed a new iconology of memorials. First of all, he pointed at the major dynamics that led from the nobles' individual graves to our modern unknown soldier's monuments. Koselleck's first discovery is that the Unknown Soldier is a modern age invention that cannot be left apart from an overwhelming process of war democratization¹¹.

More crucially, Koselleck has also scrutinized the differences between memorials built after the First World War and those erected after the Second World War. In Western Europe, the monuments built after the First World War represent heroes, warriors, soldiers. Their task is to transmit a thought, to give sense to the death. After the Second World War, there has been inflation in the number of monuments representing the nonsense of war. The Western European monuments from 1945 onwards are not depicting heroes any more, but victims¹². Their function is sense asking and not any more sense making.

⁸ *Etelä-Saimaa*, 17/05/2004, pp.1-2.

⁹ What are called official ceremonies are both the funerals in honour of the dead soldiers found on the Russian soil and transported back to Finland, and the opening ceremonies for the newly built or rebuilt monuments.

¹⁰ See for example the speeches given by the Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen and the head of the Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War, Pekka Pitkänen, at Lappeenranta, 16/05/2004.

¹¹ Koselleck R., Jeismann M. (eds.), 1994, *Der politische Totenkult. Kriegerdenkmäler in der Moderne*, München: Fink (Bild und Text), pp.11-13.

¹² Kuittinen L., 2005, "Muistin poliittisuus ja Berliinin Holocaust-muistomerkki" (Politics of Memory and the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin), *Politiikka*, 2, pp.129-141 (p.135); Koselleck R. translated by Hooek J, Hooek M.-C, 1990, *Le futur passé. Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques* (orig. "Vergangene Zukunft: zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten"), Paris: Editions de l'EHESS.

The same evolution is visible with the Finnish memorials in North-Western Russia. Let's focus on the 77 Finnish war related monuments built in this area. Some of them are in fact connected to the so-called *Liberation War*, the white name for the Civil War of 1918. They have been built during the 1920s and the 1930s, while Ceded Karelia was still part of Finland. Whereas these monuments are mostly statues, I have not found any presenting a recognizable outline among the memorials built after 1991. Indeed, the recently erected monuments are most often bare memorial stones, the shape of which reminds of a traumatic experience. A part of these two-meter-high granite stones are artistically destroyed: the stone is half rectangular, half torn up. The original idea was supposedly to bind together the individual dimension of the young soldiers' interrupted lives and the collective dimension of the loss of Karelia: symbolically, a whole piece has been hollowed out of the national block.

In any case, these signs suggesting a rupture, a breaking up, are hard to combine with the patriotic believes in the Nation's stability. In a similar way, the epitaphs are in sharp contrast with the patriotic speeches. Here is an example of what could be called a patriotic message: *"Äyräpää's heroes' grave. Within this area rest dead heroes from Äyräpää as well as unknown soldiers that fell in the 1939-1944 wars and for the Fatherland. Honour to their sacrifice"*. This is an exception. Most of the epitaphs read as follows: *"Tuulos's field cemetery. In memory of the 57 Finnish soldiers who fell during the Second World War and who are resting here"*. Neither the former enemy, nor the ideal of defence of the fatherland are mentioned. The message of these monuments is by no means patriotic. Therefore, what is at stake regarding the memorials is a process that can be held as a transition from heroization to victimization¹³.

¹³ Note that this view is not so clearly stated nor completely shared by the volunteers involved in the activities of the Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War. On the one hand, on the basis of participative observation and qualitative interviews, it can be asserted that they mostly reject not only the Soviet monuments but also the Liberation War-related Finnish monuments (from the Interwar Period) as *"exaggerated"*, *"too ideological"*, *"representing only the war things"*. The Winter War and Continuation War-connected newly built monuments are considered as fitting well to their purpose, which is assumed to be mourning. On the other hand, the Finnish soldiers killed during the Second World War are often ambivalently presented by the volunteers: they are both heroes who stopped the invading Red Army, and victims of the aggression of a totalitarian country. Moreover, the Finns involved in the building process of these monuments have often a strong social link to the military sphere, and refer to the patriotic feelings as their main motivation for being association's

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Memorials or Sites of Memory?

Any research on memorials should also aim at determining whether the monument considered is no more than a sign, or if it is still a site. What is its social meaning?

At this point, I would like to introduce the concept of *sites of memory*. This concept was coined in the French context by the historian Pierre Nora. According to the original definition, a site of memory is a material or immaterial symbol, which has been included in the historical memory of a given community, as a result of human activities. *Sites*, and not *places*, because the French word *lieux* was to be understood not only in its topographical dimension, but also as an object or a tool subject to everyday social transactions¹⁴. It is essential to distinguish the sites of memory from the memorials. The Finnish language helps understand this split: the word *memorial* can be translated as *muistomerkki*, which means literally "sign, mark of memories", whereas the expression *site of memory* has already been successfully translated as *muistin paikka*¹⁵. The dichotomy reflected by these words is even deeper, since they are based on two different words meaning *memory*: *muisti* and *muisto*. *Muisti* means either the ability to remember, or the mental organ performing the action of remembering. *Muisto* is subject to this action. It is precisely the lively memory that has been kept in the mental system¹⁶.

The memorials can either be only signs of memories that have lost their original meanings, traces somehow left dead. But they can also be considered as sites of memory, if they are still full of meaning, subjects to rituals, and destinations for travel tours. As long as they achieve the function of enjoining somebody to remember, they are sites of memory.

volunteers. In any case, the neutrality of the Finnish monuments gives way to different interpretations, especially to those expressed by the local Russian populations.

¹⁴ Despite the fact that *Les Lieux de mémoire* have been published in an English version entitled *The Realms of Memory*, the translation *sites of memory* is more commonly used. The latter and more popular translation has been chosen here, for practical reasons of understanding. Nora P. (ed.), 1984, *op. cit.* and Nora P. (ed.), 1992, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ Ulla-Maija Peltonen has translated the word into Finnish. The concept of *muistin paikka* has then been abundantly used by Outi Fingerroos in her thesis. Peltonen U-M., 2003, *Muistin paikat. Vuoden 1918 sisällissodan muistamisesta ja unohtamisesta* (Sites of Memory. On Remembering and Forgetting the 1918 Civil War in Finland), Helsinki: SKS, p.188; Fingerroos O., 2004, *Haudatut muistot. Rituaalisen kuoleman merkitykset Kannaksen muistitiedossa* (Buried memories: a study of the meanings of death rituals in oral tradition from the Karelian Isthmus 1917-1939), Helsinki: SKS, 985, p.112.

In the present, most of the memorials are already dead, even if just created: they are standing outside the cities, hidden far from the dwellings. Visitors passing by are quite rare. But others are still alive. Some are actually even living a double-life, as they are charged with a double-meaning: one proceeding from their Finnish origin, the other produced by their Russian environment.

Finnish tourism to North-Western Russia is threefold: the main part consists of the *ostosmatkat*, shopping tours, to take advantage of the low-cost alcohol sold in Russia; then there are the veterans tours heading to the former battlegrounds; finally the *kotiseutumatkat*, trips organised for the refugees who fled from Karelia when the region was ceded to the USSR at the end of the Second World war. These *kotiseutumatkat*, "travels to the home region", are heading for people's former houses and villages. The recently built memorials are also an important stop on their trip¹⁷.

As a conclusion of his work about the associations of veterans, the historian Antoine Prost writes down his feelings while visiting a First World War memorial. Disappointed, he notices that only tourists are visiting the memorial, whereas he would, on the contrary, prefer observing only pilgrims¹⁸. The dichotomy between pilgrimage and tourism can be applied to the context of the Finnish memorials in North-Western Russia as well. In this case, Finnish tourism can be seen as a kind of pilgrimage, or at least as memory tourism: since the Evacuation in 1944, displaced Karelians and their families have been gathering regularly (sometimes weekly). Through the process of sharing memories about Karelia, on the basis of the associative network's historical productions, a community identity has taken shape. There is a collective memory of the Displaced Karelians¹⁹. It is providing the fuel for Finnish cross-

¹⁶ Nyssönen H., 2001, "Muiston ja muistuttamisen politiikka" (Politics of Memories and Remembering), *Politiikka*, 1, p.27.

¹⁷ This seems to be the case not only for the *kotiseutumatkat*, but for the other types of Finnish tourism as well. In Finnish guidebooks about Karelia, the Finnish memorials are exhaustively listed. For example: Lehtipuu M., 2002, *Karjala*, Helsinki: Suomalainen Matkaopas.

¹⁸ Prost A., 1977, *Les Anciens combattants et la société française 1914-1939*, Paris: Presses de la FNSP, II, p.237.

¹⁹ Karjalan Liitto, 2002, *Murroksen kynnyksellä. Järjestökuvaselvitys Karjalan Liitosta* (At the Edge of Change. A description of the Union of Karelia), Helsinki: Kehityspiikki (Ajankohtaista karjalaista asiaa); Raninen-Siiskonen T., 1999, *Vieraana omalla maalla. Tutkimus karjalaisen siirtoväen*
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border tourism in North-Western Russia. For these cross-bordering actors, the new Finnish monuments are part of a family and community pilgrimage and, as such, subject to specific rituals.

Meanwhile, these memorials have sometimes a double-meaning, as they can also be extremely significant to the local populations. They are in sharp and direct contrast with the spectacular expressions of the Soviet historiography. In the cities, they are located in the very centre. Most of them are even bilingual, with inscriptions both in Finnish and in Russian.

A former Finnish city, Vyborg, nowadays a town of 80.000 inhabitants, is an interesting case. The Finnish monuments are constantly filled with waste, covered with insulting writings, sometimes, though quite exceptionally, even destroyed. Nonetheless, a part of the local population is trying to protect them as a symbol of the pre-soviet past of the city. Those who are party to promoting a civil society are also eager to turn down the classical soviet interpretation of history, of the Second World War in particular. They are willing to denounce, in their own words, the Stalinist aggression against Finland and disagree with the official interpretation of the Great Patriotic War. The existence of a local and tightly bounded debate on this subject is already an influence of the Finnish monuments. There is still a need for a more complete study however²⁰.

What can be concluded at the current level is that the memorials erected in North-Western Russia, ordered by the Finnish State, are probably not the consequence of the veterans' activity, but rather of a wider Finnish memory phenomenon.

Redrawing the Boundaries of the National Community

A similar, though much larger, evolution is indeed occurring in Finland. Let's take the Finnish Civil War (1918) as an example: monuments are still being built, names are being engraved into the older memorials, and graves are just now being blessed. This effort is

muistelukerronnasta (Stranger on His Own Land. A Study On the Memorial Narratives of the Displaced Carelians), Helsinki: Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden Seura.

²⁰ These observations are made on the basis of a study of the local press articles and a series of interviews led in June 2004 and May 2006.

especially focusing on the defeated side, the Reds, nowadays considered as the victims of the war. On the one hand, the Red memory is being fully integrated into the national memory; on the other hand, the Civil War is being assigned a new status as a national trauma. The first evolution is related to the disappearance of the Soviet threat, which changed the border's meaning. The second is generated by the new Finnish position at the Frontier of the European Union. Thus, there are two major elements which have more or less directly generated the Finnish memory phenomenon: the End of the Cold War and the European Integration.

The Changing Meaning of the Border and the Full Integration of the Red Memory into the National Memory

The memorialism surrounding the memory of the Civil War can best be described through the nation-wide project called the Finnish deaths at war 1914-1922, which has been carried out from 1998 to the early 2000s. This project has been established by the Prime Ministry's Office. It consisted of a full staff of about 20 professional historians. Its aim was to give back their full identity to the 40.000 dead from the Civil War. This illustrates most clearly the sudden need for a compulsory preservation of the national heritage. Every deceased, be he red or white, is considered as belonging to the national heritage. His identity should be recovered and preserved²¹.

Moreover, the project has often been presented as a model of a national reconciliation commission²². Interestingly, the project did not officially focus on the Civil War, which lasted only few months, in 1918, but formally considered the whole First World War period, and even the Kindred Nations Wars (1918-1922). Similarly, the official denomination for the

²¹ The material basis for this project was provided by the local archives of the 623 Finnish parishes, and by the private archives of about 1.300 individuals. On May the 19th 2004, about 39.550 victims had been identified, 36.943 of which had been killed during the Civil War. The most impressive result of the project is probably the possibility offered by a search engine: the complete identity of each deceased can be found online, on the following website: <http://vesta.narc.fi/cgi-bin/db2www/sotasurmaetusivu/main?lang=fi> (01/06/2006).

²² Speech given by the President of the Republic of Finland, Tarja Halonen, on the Remembering Day for the Victims of Mass Murders, 27/01/2004. Tuija Brax, 13/01/2003, 4.30pm (PTK 186/2002 vp, about STK 239/2002 vp) [from the archives of the Finnish Parliament].

Civil War was, at least at the beginning, simply the Events of the year 1918. This latter denomination was held as the most neutral one²³.

However, even the demarcation line between Reds and Whites, which rose to the status of a boundary limiting the national community, is now vanishing. Indeed, after the Civil War, the winning side (the so-called Whites) reorganised the political landscape according to their interests: the exclusion of the defeated side was constantly justified whilst considering the so-called Reds as non-nationals, as *ryssät* (Russkies). According to this prevailing vision, the Civil War had to be understood as a Liberation War, implying that the defeated side was to be driven out of the national body, sent beyond the border.

In practice, this has been done during the 1920s and 1930s: Reds, especially communists, have either fled on their own or been forced to flee to the other side of the Soviet border. During the 70s still, the border had a strong symbolic value for the communist student movement. Among the *taistoists*, the obedience to the Soviet Union was not to be contested, as the border symbolised the division of the world between communism and capitalism.

Briefly said, Finnish Reds and the Soviet Union were assumed to be organically connected to each other, the Red inner menace being held as dependent on the neighbouring communist system. This meant that once the border would at least partly lose its conflict meaning, the national polity's boundaries drawn after 1918 would vanish. The excluded "Red memory" of the Civil War could subsequently emerge as part of the national heritage²⁴.

In post-Cold War Finland, there is a whole range of scientific works and political speeches regarding the collection and publication of all possible data about Civil War crimes as a necessity for the public mental health²⁵. According to this dominating viewpoint, the

²³ It should be noted that there have been at least eight different names for the Finnish Civil War, few of them being still used to describe a particular approach to the war.

²⁴ This evolution is not the first turn in the history of the Civil War. As early as in the 1960s, a crucial evolution already occurred when Väinö Linna published his novel *Here under the Northern Star*. A Finnish sociologist Risto Alapuro described how this piece of literature has partly reintroduced the Red side into the public sphere. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1990s that the national institutions would accept the idea of a national trauma, that had to be healed through state's public policies, and that had to be totally disconnected from the neighbouring Russia.

²⁵ A recent thesis considers quite critically this sacralized interpretation of the Civil War as a trauma: Tikka M., 2004, *Kenttäoikeudet. Välittömät rankaisutoimet Suomen sisällissodassa 1918* (Court-Parot Jocelyn

Civil War has caused a trauma, which will not be healed for long, though the whole Finnish political sphere has step by step been involved in the curing process. The Civil War should be the object of an everlasting remembering effort.

To summarize, the Russian Border is not any longer a Cold War front nor the prominent referral determining both the inner and the outer borders in Finland. Consequently, the inner boundaries set after the Civil War are disappearing. The Finnish national past is being reinterpreted.

Becoming an EU Frontier, Overtaking the European Norm on Memory

The end of the Cold War and the alteration of the Russian Border as a source of divisions may be sufficient to explain the obliteration of the internal boundaries. At the same time, the European integration process gave the impulse for the adoption of a European norm of self-awareness towards the past. *Norm* here should not be understood as a juridical rule decreed by a law, but as a diffuse set of values and conventions.

Philosopher Jean-Marc Ferry defines European identity as one's ability to recognize and even feel the sufferings of those who have been victims of the actions committed by one's own nation. This would be a kind of post-national feeling, the most spectacular expression of which would be the attitude towards the Shoah shared by all Europeans. The case of Finland tends to confirm this theory.

Since the end of the Cold War and the geopolitical transition towards the European Union, the Finnish national institutions have been overtaking this European norm of historical consciousness. An argument in favour of this theory is the creation of a commission of historians investigating deportations to the Gestapo. The first step was an investigation

Martial without Law. Punitive Measures in the Finnish Civil War of 1918), Helsinki: SKS (Bibliotheca Historica 90).

published by a journalist three years ago²⁶. Her works questioned the official counting of 8 foreign Jews sent to a Gestapo unit based in Tallinn. On the contrary, Elina Sana stressed that dozens of non-Finnish Jews²⁷ were actually ceded to the Gestapo, as well as thousands of Red Army officers.

Immediately, a discussion was sparked about the attitude of some elements of the Finnish Army and of the Finnish police during the war²⁸. The debate extended so wide that the Vienna based Simon Wiesenthal Center asked the Finnish Presidency to supply precise explanations about the state's policy towards foreign Jews and Prisoners of War during the Second World War. Consequently, Tarja Halonen named a large group of professional historians to work exclusively on the issue of deportations operated by the Finnish state both to the Gestapo during the war, and to the USSR just after the war. The large scale of the presidential response is symptomatic of a renewed relationship to the national past.

The creation of such a commission has been justified with references to an international model, to a European norm, to the necessity of a Finnish *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*²⁹.

²⁶ Sana E., 2003, *Luovutetut. Suomen ihmislouvuutuksesta Gestapolle* (The Extradited. About Finland's Deportations to the Gestapo), Porvoo: WSOY.

²⁷ The Jews of Finland remained unendangered throughout the war. As Max Jakobson reminds us, the Finnish Jews enjoyed uncontested citizenship. That is why some of them fought in the Finnish Army, itself allied to the German power.

²⁸ The official version is still that Finland engaged in three different wars: first, a defensive Winter War, alone against the USSR, then a counter-offensive Continuation War, with the help of Nazi Germany, to take back the lands lost as a result of the previous war, and third, the War of Lapland, against the Germans. However, some new researches tend to shed a new light on pro-Nazi activity in some segments of the Finnish Army and Police.

²⁹ The working papers of the commission, as well as the founding documents (as for example the report by Ylikangas H., 2004, *Heikki Ylikankaan selvitys valtioneuvoston kanslialle*, Helsinki: Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja) can easily be found on the web. During the debates about the formation of so-called Truth Commissions at the Finnish parliament, references have often been made to reports published by the Council of Europe, where the duty to remember and related themes are discussed. For example, Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, 2006, *Establishment of a European remembrance centre for victims of forced population movements and ethnic cleansing*, Strasbourg: document 10925 rev.2 (Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population), 03/10/2006; 2005, *Need for international condemnation of crimes of totalitarian communist regimes*, Strasbourg: document 10765 (Political Affairs Committee), 15/12/2005; 1996, *Resolution 1096 on measures to dismantle the heritage of former communist totalitarian systems*, Strasbourg: resolution 1096, 27/06/1996.

Another concrete example is the current Finnish debate about Finlandization. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Finns are accusing themselves of having self-finlandized³⁰. In the Finnish language, the word *Finlandization*, *suomettuminen*, is derived from a reflexive verb, *suomettua*, which can be translated as ‘to self-finlandize’³¹. The idea is that because of a real or supposed threat, the Finns would have failed to resist the totalitarian Soviet Union. They would even have taken part in the communist system. Some individuals are particularly active in accusing (or self-accusing) of self-finlandizing. They are requiring the culprits to repent. One of their propositions is that the self-finlandized should read an exhaustive list of the victims of communism. They also obtained from the public TV Yle a special self-critical presentation of TV and radio series from the period of Finlandization³². This has been required in the name of the European institutions’ condemnations of totalitarian regimes. In a way, the soviet Border is being rebuilt *a posteriori* as a personal moral boundary. The Self-Finlandized Finns would have failed in their moral duty of stopping the mental intrusion of Soviet propaganda³³.

³⁰ This concept has two previous meanings. First, it was coined in the West-German context of the 1970s, when some right-wing politicians refused the *Ostpolitik* proposed by Willy Brandt. The idea was that trying to cope normally with the communist countries could lead to an important loss of sovereignty. According to this vision, Finland, a Western European country, had decided on its own, for economic and political reasons, to cede an important part of its say in foreign policy to the Soviet Union. During the *Perestroika* however, Finlandization became a positive concept. In the Eastern European societies, Finland turned out to be an example of a successful compromise between an internal democratic system and a strong dependence towards the Soviet Union in the field of Foreign Policy.

³¹ Kolehmainen T., 2005, "Suomettumisen "käännösvirhe" ("The mistaken translation" of Finlandization)", *Kanava*, 7, pp.477-478.

³² See the speeches given at the Parliament by Ben Zyskowitz, 07/09/ 2004, at 2pm (PTK 84/2004 vp, "Yleisradio Oy:n hallintoneuvoston kertomus yhtiön toiminnasta vuodelta 2003"), 03/06/2005, at 1pm (PTK 66/2005 vp, "Yleisradio Oy:n hallintoneuvoston kertomus yhtiön toiminnasta vuodelta 2004"), and 08/02/2006, at 3pm (PTK 4/2006 vp, about the [HE 232/2005 vp](#)) [from the archives of the Finnish Parliament].

³³ The many different meanings of the word Finlandization are reviewed in Bäckman J., 2001, *Entäs kun tulee se yhdestoista? Suomettumisen uusi historia* (And what about the eleventh? A new history of Finlandisation), Helsinki: WSOY.

Conclusion

The need for taking emotions into account in border studies has for long been emphasized in Maruska Svasek's works about the Bohemian-Moravian border zone³⁴. Quite similarly, Eeva Berglund stresses the importance of cultural heritage in cross border activities in the case of the Finnish-Russian border³⁵. This paper is heading towards the same research direction. Its main statement is that border issues should also be addressed through the prism of collective memory. Two interrelated arguments have been deployed.

One relies on a physical understanding of cross bordering. Ricoeur's term *anamnesis* opens an interesting angle. Borrowed from Ancient Greek, *anamnesis* was originally conceived as opposing the word *mnene*. While *mnene* depicts passive memory, memory as *pathos*, an affect, consisting of already present memories, *anamnesis* depicts the recalling effort, the act of remembering³⁶. My interest is precisely in these *anamnesis oriented collectives* that are involved in cross border activities at the Finnish-Russian Border. The Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War is a prominent example of these collectives.

The word *collective* is to be understood in the way Latour defines it. It refers to the French verb *collecter*, which means "to collect, to accumulate and to gather"³⁷. A collective consists of humans and non-humans, things, whose gathering underlies an array of basic associations. It is a moving relations' network, which forms around multiple combination of

³⁴ Svasek M., 2000, "Borders and Emotions. Hope and Fear in the Bohemian-Moravian Frontier Zone", *Ethnologia Europaea*, 30, 2, pp.111-126.

³⁵ Berglund E., 2000, "From Iron Curtain to Timber-Belt. Territory and Materiality at the Finnish-Russian Border", *Ethnologia Europaea*, 30, 2, pp.23-34.

³⁶ Ricoeur P., 2000, *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*, Paris: Le Seuil, pp.32-33. There is a second, medical, meaning of the word. Before uttering a diagnosis, the doctor has to collect information what the patient is able to remember about the chronology of his illness. The remembering effort performed by the patient is also called *anamnesis*. The latter meaning helps us to understand the reinterpretation of the Finnish Civil War.

³⁷ Lehtonen T-K., "Yhteiskunta välityksinä ja koetuksina: Bruno Latour ja kollektiivin kokoonpaneminen" (Society as Agencies and Experiments: Bruno Latour and the Reassembling of the Collective), in Rahkonen K. (ed.), 2004, *Sosiologia nykikeskusteluja*, Helsinki: Gaudeamus, p.166.

small things. Not only humans should be counted among the collective, but also objects and artefacts, which are not to be left aside. Assmann's *material memory* and Nora's *Realms of memory* both underline the significance of objects, especially memorials, in the remembering process. Memorials are not to be considered as places, where reified memory is transferred from individual psyches. They are preferably essential linking elements of the collectives. These artefacts are essential constituent part of cross bordering. As such, they should not be omitted when considering Finnish cross bordering activities. Thus, in our case, memory can be considered as a collective cross bordering action.

The second argument is based on the assumption that borders always retain strong symbolic dimensions. As such, their changing meaning can become a central element generating new fields of discussion. Quite interestingly, the debate on Finlandization testifies to the deep impact of questions related to the Eastern border on the Finnish political sphere. Finland is a borderland. During the Cold War, the position of Finland was assumed to be somewhere between East and West. In Post-Cold War Finland, the question is often asked: "Where was Finland? Was it actually in the Soviet sphere of influence?"³⁸ As Cold War Finland is being re-evaluated, a commitment is emerging among the political deciders to escape periphery position. The politics of memory are one of the many fields where the desire for European integration is showing through.

The emergence of the collective memory concept can be traced back and contextualised. The relationship to the past is not ruled by a universal mechanism that could apply in the same way to every society. The emergence of the problematic related to collective memory is generated by peculiar historical and social conditions. What is at stake in Finland is a convergent phenomenon, the birth of the politics as well as the policy of memory, although it is generated by divergent dynamics. The need for working through and for mastering the past, the desire to integrate the painful events into a common national memory, first appeared in the commemorative ceremonies related to the Civil War. Second, a new tool for the policy of memory was invented when the first commissions of historians were established

³⁸ The book entitled "Where is Finland?" (Harle V., Moisio S., 2000, *Missä on Suomi. Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka* (Where is Finland? History and Geopolitics of the National Identity Politics), Tampere: Vastapaino) demonstrates how deeply the definition of Finnish national identity is dependent on geopolitics.

As demonstrated in the paper, the vocabulary connected to traumatism is widely used in official speeches. This is to show that Finland shares the experience of mastering the national past. According to this view, Finland is a fully integrated European state: it is able to stand critically towards its own past. When reinterpreting history, the reference to the European norm has replaced the reference to the Soviet border.

Primary sources

Studying the emergence of collective memory as a concept in the political sphere implies an observation of the commissions of historians formed in Finland during the last decade. Furthermore, there is also a need for studies about the commemorative events through the press documents and archives. Moreover, I am trying to be physically as present as possible at these official ceremonies. Here are just the few sources used in the process of writing this paper. The interviews were led in Finnish on a semi-free conversation model.

Interviews

NB: Only (false) first names have been given in order to protect each interviewee's identity.

Alla, Viipuri-Center (Finnish-Russian Cultural and Civil Society Centre), Vyborg, 03/06/2004.

Jukka, Architect working on restoration projects in Vyborg, Espoo, 26/05/2004.

Ljudmila, Secretary of the Viipuri-Centre (Finnish-Russian Cultural and Civil Society Centre), Vyborg, 03/06/2004.

Marko, Technical Expert, Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War, Helsinki, 05/09/2005.

Mikhail, Finnish speaking Russian guide, specializing in the Kotiseutumatkat, Vyborg, 11/05/2006.

Markku, Author of a guidebook series about Karelia, Helsinki, 27/05/2004.

Jyrki, Historian, Member of the Commission of Historians about Finland's Deportations to the Gestapo, Helsinki, 13/09/2005.

Tuula, In Charge of the Project "The Memorials of the Finnish Reds", Central Labour Museum, Tampere, 01/11/2005.

Ulla, Researcher at the SKS, Member of the Project Suomen Sotasurmat 1914-1922, Helsinki, 03/11/2005.

Pertti, Administrative Adviser, Association for Cherishing the Memory of the Dead at War, Helsinki, 05/09/2005.

Petri, Director of a Travel Agency, Helsinki, 20/05/2004.

Archives

The Archives of the Finnish Parliament, Helsinki.

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