



Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS in 1941–1943 and Related Finnish studies

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Abstract: Roughly 1,400 Finnish volunteers served in the German *Schutzstaffel* (SS) organisation and its *Wiking* division between 1941 and 1943. This article discusses reasons for sending Finnish volunteers, the stages of recruitment and the military operations of the volunteers and analyses Finnish research of military history on Finnish SS volunteers after the Second World War. The initiative to recruit Finnish SS volunteers did not come from Finland. It originally came from the SS, not from Germany or its armed forces. According to Finland's political and military leaders, a better option would have been for the volunteers to join the *Wehrmacht*, but this did not present any obstacle to giving consent. They clutched at straws offered by Germany. Volunteers consequently acquired an important role as a pawn for the Germany's support. The debate over research in Finland in the 2017–2019 period shows that there is still a place for further studies into the Finnish SS volunteers. It is apparent that the last word has not been said on this research theme.

1. Introduction

Finnish volunteers served in the German *Schutzstaffel* (SS) organisation and its *Wiking* division between 1941 and 1943. The roots of the SS organisation date back to 1923 when *Stabswache*, Adolf Hitler's small personal bodyguard, was established. At first, it was a separate unit within

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the *Sturmabteilung* (SA). The three pillars of the SS that were formed later were the general *Allgemeine SS*, the security service *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD) and the police forces, which were merged into the *SS Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA), the Reich Main Security Office, in 1939, as well as the military section which first consisted of bodyguard troops. At the end of the 1930s, the armed wing of the SS were divided into combat troops, bodyguard troops and Totenkopf troops. The name *Waffen SS* was originally introduced on 2 March 1940. The Finnish SS battalion was part of the *Waffen SS* and its combat troops, *SS-Verfügungstruppe*. When writing this text in February 2019, only eight of the approximately 1,400 Finnish volunteers are still alive.¹

During the Second World War, Finland was engaged in three separate, albeit highly interlinked, wars. The Winter War from 30 November, 1939, to 13 March, 1940, was a defensive struggle over life and death against the superior force of the Soviet Union which attacked Finland. Following the brief Interim Peace and three days after Germany attacked the Soviet Union on 22 June, 1941, Finland joined the war against the Soviet Union. In the Continuation War, Finland's ultimate goal was to take back the territories it lost in the Winter War. The Continuation War ended with a ceasefire called on 4–5 September, 1944, after heavy defensive battles. Finland signed a separate peace pact with the Soviet Union, including conditions imposed on Finland. One of the many conditions was that Finland needed to drive any German troops out of the country. In the middle of September 1944, the Lapland War broke out between Finland and Germany. It ended on 27 April, 1945, after the final German troops withdrew from Finnish Lapland to Norway.

In the decades following the Second World War, the war years of 1939–1945 have been studied extensively in Finnish research into military history. The war years have been the most significant research topic, but

¹ Read more about the development stages of the SS, for example Stein, Georg. H.: *Waffen-SS – Hitlerin eliittikaarti sodassa 1939–1945*, Translated into Finnish by Jouni Suistola, Ajatus kirjat, Jyväskylä, 2004, pp. 20–27, 30–55, 61–61 and 75–76; Williamson, Gordon: *Waffen-SS – Saksan eliittijoukot 1933–1945*, Translated into Finnish by Juha Väänänen, Koala-kustannus, Hämeenlinna, 2006, pp. 9–13 and 37; Jokipii, Mauno: *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoisliikkeet – Waffen-SS:n suomalaispataljoona vertailtavana*, Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, Jyväskylä, 2002a, pp. 107–108; Jokipii, Mauno: *Panttipataljoona – suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan historia*, WSOY, Jyväskylä, 2000, Fourth Edition (1. Edition 1968), pp. 129–151.

also a fruitful theme for memoirs and literature. The role of the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS in fights against the Soviet Union in 1941–1943 is no exception, as many memoirs, books and studies have been published on the theme.

This article discusses reasons for sending Finnish volunteers, the stages of recruitment and the military operations of the volunteers and analyses Finnish research of military history on Finnish SS volunteers after the Second World War.

2. Recruitment – reasons and background

According to certain interpretations, the first ideas of the Finnish SS battalion were presented in the winter of 1940 when the Winter War was closing, when Erkki Räikkönen wrote a letter to *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler regarding the provision of leadership training for Finnish soldiers in Germany. The aim was to make Finland more favourable towards National Socialism. Räikkönen was the editor-in-chief of the National Socialist paper *Gustav Vasa* and the private secretary of President Pehr Evind Svinhufvud. This cannot actually be regarded as the starting point for the recruitment of Finnish SS volunteers, as Räikkönen's intentions were purely political: his letter was only a proposal to start military training, to which the SS gave a negative response. Lieutenant General Leonard Grandell, who served as the Chief of Military Economy, is known to have been in talks with Joseph Veltjens, a German arms dealer and a liaison for the transit of German troops through Finland, regarding the establishment of a jaeger battalion in the *Wehrmacht* in August 1940. Grandell and Major General Paavo Talvela talked about this on many occasions in the autumn of 1940, both in Finland and in Germany, for example, with Veltjens and Albrecht Ochs, a Major in the *Luftwaffe*, but not about the recruitment of SS soldiers.²

² Jokipii, Mauno: *Jatkosodan synty – Tutkimuksia Saksan ja Suomen sotilaallisesta yhteistyöstä 1940–41*, Otava, Keuruu, 1987, p. 190; Westerlund, Lars: *Cirkus Collani – De finländska SS-frivilliga 1941–43: En sedeskildring baserad på de frivilligas egna berättelser*, Book on Demand, Helsinki, 2017, pp. 118–120; Jokisipilä, Markku–Könönen, Janne: *Kolmannen valtakunnan vieraat – Suomi Hitlerin Saksan vaikutuspiirissä 1933–1944*, Otava, Keuruu, 2013, p. 274; Jokipii (2000), pp. 23–24; Airio, Pentti: *Walter Horn – ensimmäinen jääkäri ja kylmän sodan pohjola-aktivisti*, Docendo, Saarijärvi, 2013, p. 115; Mikola, K. J.: *Vuosien 1940–1941 suomalaissaksalaisen yhteistoiminnan tarkoituksien ja muotojen*

Regarding these events in the early autumn of 1940, it should be noted that Finland was facing the second crisis of the Interim Peace in August and September 1940. The first crisis was in June 1940 when the Soviet Baltic Fleet operated actively in the Baltic Sea and a Finnish passenger plane, the Kaleva, was shot down over the Gulf of Finland. The Soviet actions were not a direct threat against Finland, but the finalisation of the bolshevisation of the Baltic countries. On the basis of several domestic and foreign diplomatic sources, it is clear that Finland was afraid of a surprise attack on Finland by the Soviet Union in August and September 1940. According to the intelligence gathered, the Red Army had increased its manpower on the Finnish border from 15 to 22 divisions.³

The Soviet threat did not materialise in the early autumn of 1940, apparently due to the Germans transferring more troops to their eastern border and showing signs of their increasing interest towards the Nordic countries. Germany's foothold in the Nordic countries increased when it conquered Finnmark in response to the Soviet Union's pressure on Finland and signed an agreement on the transit of German troops through Finland, extending the trade agreement signed with Finland in the summer of 1940 and the agreement on the transit of German troops through Sweden. Support for Germany increased when Adolf Hitler told the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov in negotiations held in Berlin on 12–13 November, 1940, that Germany would not accept any plans the Soviet Union has against Finland and that Finland would enjoy German protection in this respect. However, this support was not made public.⁴

The initiative to recruit Finnish SS volunteers did not come from Finland, but from Germany. This initiative was related to the start of recruitment in Denmark and Norway. On 20 April, 1940, the Germans decided to establish *Nordland*, a Nordic SS division. This decision was made only 11 days after the operation to conquer Denmark and Norway started. The purpose was to establish the first SS volunteer division

tarkastelua. *Tiede ja ase* No. 25, Mikkeli, 1967, pp. 124–129; Terä, Martti V.: Kohtalokas syksy 1950. *Tiede ja ase* No. 22, Mikkeli, 1964, pp. 276–312; Manninen, Ohto: Ajatuksena uusi Jääkäripataljoona 27 – Suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan syntyvaiheet, *Parole 2/2011*, Jääkäripataljoonan 27 perinne-yhdistys, Helsinki, 2011, p. 3.

³ Jokipii (2000), p. 19–20; Jokipii, Mauno: Suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan perustamiseen johtaneet syyt. Tieke, Wilhelm (ed.): *Suomalainen SS-pataljoona*, Wiking-divisioona Oy, Jyväskylä 2002b, pp. 7–8.

⁴ Jokipii (2000), pp. 19–21; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 7–8; Jokipii (1987), pp. 143–147.

outside Germany. The Germans needed more than 2,000 Nordic volunteers. However, the recruitment proceeded more slowly than expected in the summer of 1940. By the end of June, some 200 volunteers from Norway, 110 volunteers from Denmark and a few from Sweden had enlisted. In Western Europe, recruitment was quicker than in the Nordics, as more than 1,000 men were recruited for *Westland*, an SS regiment of Dutch and Flemish volunteers, in the first two months. New recruitment offices in Copenhagen and Oslo aimed to match this pace.⁵

*Brigadeführer*⁶ Gottlob Berger, Chief of *SS-Hauptamt*, started preparations for expanding recruitment for *Nordland* to Finland in November 1940. As interpreted by Mauno Jokipii, the first ideas for recruiting volunteers in Finland were based on the attempt to include as many Nordic countries as possible at the same time, not on the slow progress made in Denmark and Norway, even though these types of interpretations have also been made. It should be noted that at this time Finland and Sweden were planning to form a union starting from August 1940. However, these plans were cancelled by January 1941 due to opposition from both the Soviet Union and Germany.⁷

Before any recruitment started, Berger wanted to be certain of the possibilities of success. A trip to Finland was made in secret from the *Auswärtiges Amt*, the German Federal Foreign Office, and from the Germany Embassy in Helsinki. It was the rule rather than the exception that the SS did not use official diplomatic channels. In January 1941, Ola Vinberg, Berger's number one man and a Swedish businessman who lived in Berlin, travelled to Finland. Vinberg talked with activists in Helsinki and wanted to know how willing the Finns were to join the recently established SS Division *Wiking*. Its regiments were *Germania*, *Westland* and *Nordland*. The purpose was to establish the first of the regiments as the backbone of the division, mainly consisting of German troops. Dutch and Flemish volunteers would make up the *Westland* regiment, and

⁵ Trigg, Jonathan: *Hitlerin viikingit – Waffen-SS:n pohjoismaalaiset vapaaehtoiset*, Koala-kustannus, EU, 2013, pp. 47–48; Jokipii (2000), pp. 21–27 and 915–921.

⁶ *Brigadeführer* matched the rank of a Major General in the *Wehrmacht*.

⁷ Jokipii (2000), pp. 22–35 and 143; Jokipii (2002b), p. 8; Jokipii (1987), pp. 125–130 and 190.

volunteers recruited from Denmark and Norway would mainly form the *Nordland* regiment.⁸

According to information reported by Vinberg, which was most likely exaggerated, some 700 Finns were willing to join the SS. Pentti Airio's interpretation of the Finnish Government giving its consent to recruiting Finnish volunteers as early as in January in 1941 does not seem credible, as Vinberg's unofficial trip was dangerous in terms of Finland's foreign policy: in January and February, the relationship between Finland and the Soviet Union was tense due to the crisis involving the Petsamo nickel mine. As Jokipii interpreted it, Finland's political leaders would most likely have put a stop to Vinberg's secret inquiries if they had known about them, as the threat of a war between Finland and the Soviet Union was once again very real. From the German point of view, the inquiries paid off, as Himmler gave his consent to recruitment on 30 January, 1941. The next day, Colonel Horst Rössing, a German military attaché in Helsinki, inquired about Germany's attitudes from *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), the High Command of the *Wehrmacht*, towards the recruitment of Finnish volunteers for the *Nordland* regiment. On 20 February, 1941, Hitler gave his permission to recruit Finnish volunteers.⁹

Brigadeführer Berger presented an official request for the recruitment of a Finnish volunteer SS battalion to Toivo Mikael Kivimäki, Finland's ambassador in Berlin, on 1 March, 1941. Following the diplomatic code, Kivimäki sent information about the request to Finland and Germany's ministries for foreign affairs. On 9 March, 1941, the *Auswärtiges Amt* assigned Wipert von Blücher, Germany's ambassador in Helsinki, to obtain the consent of the Finnish Government to the recruitment of a Finnish volunteer SS battalion. The first round of negotiations between Blücher and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland was held on 11 March, 1941. Finland's political and military leaders unanimously accepted the German proposal by 12 March, 1941. This was accepted by President Risto Ryti, Prime Minister Jukka Rangell, Minister for Foreign Affairs Rolf Witting, Minister of Defence Rudolf Walden, and Minister of

⁸ Jokipii (2000), pp. 25–34; Jokipii (2002b), p. 8; Jokipii (1987), p. 190; Trigg (2013), p. 60.

⁹ Manninen (2011), p. 4; Jokipii (2000), pp. 22–29; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 9; Jokipii (1987), p. 190. Cf. Airio (2013), pp. 119–121. Airio's interpretation most likely confuses the date on which Jukka Rangell's government stepped into office and the date on which Germany made inquiries into the possibility of recruitment.

the Interior Ernst von Born, as well as Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Defence Forces Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim. It should be noted that Ryti and Mannerheim, who were well-known anglophiles, were in favour of the project. Despite the consent, Finland's political and military leaders had doubts about Finnish soldiers joining groups of soldiers from conquered lands. According to them, a better option would have been for the volunteers to join the *Wehrmacht*, but this did not present any obstacle to giving consent, as long as the Finnish volunteers would make up a separate unit. Finland's political and military leaders clutched at straws offered by Germany.¹⁰

The Soviet Union withdrew its ultimatum regarding Petsamo as late as on 15 March, 1941, although it was apparent ten days earlier than the Nickel crisis would come to a positive conclusion. Withdrawing the ultimatum only in the middle of March was a crucial factor in accepting the recruitment of Finnish SS volunteers. After all, until the withdrawal, the Soviet threat caused restlessness in the Finnish Government.¹¹

3. Recruitment of Finnish SS volunteers

The promise made by Finland's political leaders to recruit Finnish SS volunteers was not made public, and this consent did not mean that Finland would make a political turn towards National Socialism. It should be noted that the recruitment of SS volunteers was not covered in the war-responsibility trials after the wars. Practical arrangements for recruitment were not made through official channels, and a private committee was set up for this purpose. Recruitment was not even discussed at official diplomatic meetings, given the explosiveness of the issue. Similarly, the Finnish Defence Forces were officially kept out, and the few active officers who signed up as volunteers were forced to resign from their duties. Recruitment processes were carried out in complete silence. *Standartenführer*¹² Paul Dahm represented the SS in Finland in terms of recruitment. At first, Jaeger Lieutenant Colonel Ragnar Nordström, a shipowner from Loviisa, was planned to head the committee but, after he refused, *Hallitusneuvos* (a Finnish honorary title) Esko Riekkö was

¹⁰ Manninen (2011), p. 4; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 9–10 and 12–13; Jokipii (2000), pp. 35–36.

¹¹ Jokipii (2002b), p. 9; Jokipii (1987), p. 190; Jokipii (2000), p. 28.

selected. He had formerly worked as the chief of the state police. He also had experience in the Jaeger Battalion 27.¹³

Riekki's committee started on 25 March, 1941, by setting conditions related to recruitment. The committee wanted to prevent the use of Finnish volunteers in actions against countries other than the Soviet Union. In addition, Finnish volunteers were not to swear a military oath to Hitler like other SS troops. The committee also found it important that the recruitment would cover all parts of the nation, including the social democrats. At first, the committee also required that Finnish volunteers should not join any regiment together with SS volunteers from conquered countries. In other words, Finnish volunteers should not serve in the *Nordland* regiment of the *Wiking* division. According to the fourth condition, Finnish volunteers would be exempt from their commitments if Finland were to be war with the Soviet Union without any German involvement.¹⁴

These conditions postponed the start of recruitment by three weeks, and the recruitment process started only in the middle of April 1941. The start of recruitment was possible after the conditions set by Riekki's committee were changed to proposals on 16 April, 1941. In its response given on 28 April, 1941, Germany accepted some of the proposals. During training, Finnish volunteers would be kept separate from volunteers from conquered countries. Recruitment would cover large parts of the nation so that volunteers would not only be recruited from the right wing, but from all groups. Germany also accepted that Finnish volunteers would be able to return to Finland if Finland was at war with the Soviet Union on its own.¹⁵

Even though the start of recruitment extended over the middle of April 1941, a recruitment office was established in Helsinki on 7 April, 1941. Its code name was Engineering Agency Ratas. After the recruitment process started, the recruitment office ensured that the volunteers represented all parts of the nation as required by Riekki's committee. The state police checked the backgrounds of the volunteers, and a separately appointed

¹² Standartenführer equalled the rank of a Colonel in the Wehrmacht.

¹³ Jokipii (2000), pp. 35–45; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 10 and 13; Jokipii (1987), pp. 192–195.

¹⁴ Jokipii (2000), pp. 35–45; Jokipii (2002b), p. 10.

¹⁵ Jokipii (2000), pp. 42–48, 50–53 and 88–96; Jokipii (2002b), p. 10; Ratas, Unnumbered document "kiertokirje värväjille", 17.4.1941. Kansallisarkisto, The

police officer worked in the recruitment office. The primary aim of the background checks was to prevent communists from infiltrating the group of volunteers. Another goal was to exclude any volunteers from the far-right. The rejection of many volunteers from the far-right caused agitation in Finland's far-right circles. However, selections were made on the basis of pre-defined criteria under Rieikki's leadership. As a result, it can be stated that the purpose was not to send volunteers to Germany for political training, but to form an elite military group and to send Finnish volunteers to join German troops on the front. However, it should be noted that the recruiters under Rieikki's committee sent roughly one third of all volunteers, while the remaining two thirds were sent by circles of volunteers. Far-right groups played an important part in the recruitment process, as expected.¹⁶

Some 2,000 volunteers signed up, of which 1,197 were selected for the Finnish SS battalion and sent to Germany. Of these, 76 were officers, one of whom was sent as a non-commissioned officer (NCO), and four of whom were active officers. Mauno Jokipii has estimated that some 20 per cent of the recruited volunteers were from the far-right on the basis of the member archive of the SS Brothers-in-Arms Association. André Swanström has estimated that the far-right represented some 47 per cent of all volunteers on the basis of the party information provided by the volunteers in their service agreements. The far-right included 60 per cent of the volunteers who provided information about their political views. The right wing was over-represented, which should be considered to be expected rather than surprising. Some 36 per cent of all volunteers did not express their political views.¹⁷

National Archives of Finland (KA) Pk 1141/49.

¹⁶ Manninen (2011), pp. 7–9; Jokipii (2000), pp. 45–47 and 77; Swanström, André: *Hakaristin ritarit – Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset*, Atena, EU, 2018, pp. 45–57; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 10–11; Jokipii (1999), p. 15. See also Kyösti, Jukka–From, Synnöve: *Suomalaisena SS-miehenä itärintamalla – Herkko Koskinen aseveljineen itärintamalla*, Minerva, Porvoo, 2016, pp. 12–13; Unnumbered and undated conditions of service for Finnish SS-volunteers. KA Valpo II IX A4 3190 46; Unnumbered and undated commitment to service for Finnish SS-volunteers. KA Valpo II IX A4 3189 45; Ratas, Unnumbered document "kiertokirje värvääjille", 17.4.1941. KA Pk 1141/49; Ratas, Unnumbered document "kiertokirje värvääjille", 24.4.1941. KA Valpo II IX A4 3189 45.

¹⁷ Jokipii (2000), pp. 96–103; Elo, Veikko: *Pantin lunastajat*, Apali, Hämeenlinna, 2006, pp. 14–16 and 219; Swanström (2018), pp. 45–57; Jokipii, Mauno: Suomen SS-pataljoona toisessa maailmansodassa. Leskinen, Jari–Juutilainen, Antti (eds.):

Ever since the end of March 1941, Germany had wanted to expand the Finnish SS battalion into an SS regiment. Partly for this reason, it was decided to recruit more officers and NCOs than required for a battalion. Berger wanted to increase the number of Finnish volunteers to 2,000 or even to 2,400 men. The Finnish Government rejected the German proposal to establish an SS regiment in late May 1941, and the recruitment process ended at the beginning of June 1941. Germany and Finland had highly differing goals from the start: Germany wanted to recruit the ranks, while Finland wanted to have access to high-quality military training and service in modern military organisations.¹⁸ These conflicting views caused a structural flaw in the composition of the SS battalion.

As already stated, many Finnish circles were in favour of allowing Finnish troops to join the *Wehrmacht* instead of the SS as proposed by Lieutenant General Grandell in the late summer and autumn of 1940. Ohto Manninen sees that the aim of a few Finnish volunteers joining the *Wehrmacht* was to stop the recruitment process before it even started. It is understandable that the SS was not ready to assent, considering the limitations set for replacements – only two per cent from each German age group eligible for military service – and the reasons for starting the recruitment. The will of Finland's military leaders for Finnish volunteers to join the *Wehrmacht* was the most apparent in military negotiations between Germany and Finland in early summer 1941. During the negotiations, Finland wanted to repatriate Finnish SS volunteers, or at least volunteer officers, to Finland, because Finland's military and political position had changed considerably during the spring of 1941.¹⁹

Jatkosodan pikkujättiläinen, WSOY, 2005, p. 58; Westerlund, Lars: *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, Suomalaisen Kirjallisuuden seura ja Kansallisarkisto, Helsinki, 2019, pp. 17, 26–28 ja 43; Ratas, Unnumbered and undated lists of rejected and skipped volunteers. KA Pk 1141/55. As listed by Ratas, 295 registered volunteers did not show up for examinations, and 397 volunteers were rejected. Lars Westerlund holds the view that Finland's military leaders kept a close eye on the recruitment and gave their permission for the different recruitment stages.

¹⁸ Jokipii, Mauno: Suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan vaiheet 1941–1943. *Suomalaisten Waffen-SS vapaaehtoisten matrikkeli 1941–1943*, Wiking, Jyväskylä, 1999, p. 14; Jokipii (2000), pp. 60–64; Swanström (2018), p. 305.

¹⁹ Manninen (2011), pp. 6–9; Manninen, Ohto: Suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan syntyvaiheet, *Sotilasaikakauslehti 10/1981*, Upseeriliitto, Helsinki, 1981, pp. 697–698; Jokipii (1987), pp. 190–207; Jokipii (2002b), pp. 10–12; Jokipii (2000),

Germany did not consent and kept the Finnish volunteers as part of the SS troops. In reality, no changes were possible at the beginning of June 1941, as preparations were already well underway. Another major obstacle was that the initiative originally came from the SS, not from Germany or its armed forces. Furthermore, the proposals presented by Riekki's committee in June 1941 for the Finnish troops to be called a jaeger battalion were unproductive. Even though Finnish military circles wanted to work more closely with the *Wehrmacht*, it must be stated that, at the same time, Finland's far-right radicals continued to maintain contact with the SS in the autumn of 1940 and spring of 1941.²⁰ Germany, as the first party to act and as the provider of protection, was able to dictate terms and deviate from pre-defined conditions, as is shown by the events of the summer and autumn of 1941.

4. Transportation of Finnish SS volunteers to Germany

Even though the Finnish Government did not officially take any part in the recruitment or transportation of the volunteers, its role was seen, for example, in that the volunteers were allowed to travel from Finland to German-occupied territories without a passport.²¹ The volunteers started their journey, in the spirit of jaeger traditions, from Ostrobothnia, a building owned by three Ostrobothnian student nations of Helsinki University. The volunteers were transported to German-occupied territories in five batches between 6 May and 5 June, 1941, on vessels under the agreement on the transit of German troops through Finland. Four of these vessels sailed from Turku to Danzig and one from Vaasa to Stettin. A total of 1,197 Finnish volunteers were sent in this first wave, one third of whom were considered experienced and the remaining two thirds inexperienced. The first 429 volunteers were later called division men and the next volunteers battalion boys. In total, 768 battalion boys were transported. All experienced division men were shipped in the first three groups. After arriving in Germany, all groups were first sent to SS garrisons in Stralsund for a few days.²²

pp. 57–59 and 139–147; Westerlund (2019), pp. 16–17.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Jokipii (1999), pp. 14–15.

²² *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuudet juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, p. 5, Summary in

When sent to German-occupied territories, the Finnish volunteers were divided into two groups. More experienced volunteers were first sent rapidly via the Heuberg military training centre to Silesia where the *Wiking* division had its staging area. Even though the volunteers were generally divided on the basis of their past military experience and their military training, not all the division men had military experience. Roughly two thirds of them had served on the front during the Winter War, while nearly eight per cent had no experience. Approximately half of the experienced Finnish volunteers were placed in the *Nordland* regiment, whereas the division men who were sent first were mainly placed in the *Westland* regiment. The *Nordland* regiment had 230 and the *Westland* regiment had 81 Finnish volunteers.²³

Officers were placed in the division on the basis of their military branches. A small group of Finnish volunteers also served in independent detachments of the division. Young volunteers from the first three batches were transported from the Heuberg military training centre to the Vienna-Schönbrunn training centre. Volunteers from the fourth and fifth batches were all sent via Stralsund to the Vienna region for training. Riekki only obtained information about the division of the Finnish volunteers into two groups on 9 June, 1941, when he arrived in Berlin. On that date, the division men were already in the *Wiking* division's staging area in Silesia, due to which it was no longer possible to change the SS decision. Germany made this decision as it wanted to have the whole of Europe join its crusade against bolshevism. In this way, Germany ensured that it would later be able to report that Finland was involved in the fights with Germany and its SS troops against the Soviet Union from the very beginning.²⁴

Finnish, Westerlund, Lars: The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Jokipii (2000), pp. 109–122, 168, 427 and 674; Jokipii (1999), pp. 14–16; Y. P. I. Kaila's letter to Ratas, 26.5.1941. KA Pk 1141/53. The numbers of people presented by Mauno Jokipii differ slightly. According to Jokipii, 1,208 volunteers were transported to Germany on five different occasions. However, after these are divided into 421 division men and 786 battalion boys, the total number is only 1,207. In addition to minor differences in the figures presented by Jokipii, they differ slightly from Veikko Elo's figures used in this article.

²³ Jokipii (2000), pp. 104–105, 109–126 and 166–174; Jokipii (2002b), p. 12; Elo (2006), pp. 22–25.

²⁴ Jokipii (2002b), p. 12; Elo (2006), pp. 22–25; Jokipii (2000), pp. 104–105, 109–

In addition to the Finnish division men, the *SS Division Wiking* consisted of 631 Dutch, 294 Norwegian and 216 Danish volunteers plus one Swedish volunteer in June 1941. This demonstrates that most of the *Wiking* division's soldiers were German. After all the division consisted of more than 19,300 soldiers when *Operation Barbarossa* started. As with the Finnish volunteers, the total number of recruited SS volunteers was higher in the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark and Sweden than the number of volunteers registered in the division. The total number of foreign volunteers and their proportion of the total strength of the *Wiking* division increased slightly during the first year of the war, and Flemish volunteers also joined its ranks, but the total number of volunteers, and soldiers altogether in the division, soon started to decrease due to heavy losses.²⁵

The recruitment of Finnish SS volunteers only became public after 5 June, 1941, when it was in the news of the *Times* and the BBC. Finland only released information about the existence of a volunteer SS battalion to the press on 11 August, 1941, but this information was placed under censorship four days later. In Finland, the volunteer SS battalion was under the administration of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as the Ministry of Defence or the Finnish Defence Forces were not to be involved in its management. After all, the aim was to prevent the Finnish Defence Forces from making any compromises over the foreign policy from the recruitment stage by forcing active officers to resign from active duty. In terms of administration, the position of the Finnish SS volunteers differed from that of other SS volunteers in that they were not under the direct leadership of SS headquarters, as the battalion served under Finland's ambassador in Berlin, the military attaché stationed in Berlin and the military attaché's assistant appointed for this purpose. Finland was allowed to send a liaison officer to the *Wiking* division, and later also a military doctor.²⁶

126 and 166–174; Jokisipilä, Markku: *Aseveljiä vai liittolaisia? Suomi, Hitlerin Saksan liittosopimusvaatimus ja Rytin-Ribbentropin sopimus*, Suomalaisen kirjallisuuden seura, Helsinki, 2004, pp. 27–60.

²⁵ Westerlund (2019), pp. 22–24; Jokipii (1987), p. 188; Jokipii (2000), pp. 155–170 and 433; Manninen (1981), p. 697.

²⁶ Jokipii (2002b), p. 10; Jokipii (2005), pp. 58–60; Jokipii (2000), pp. 56 and 65; Lackman, Matti: *SS-miehet ja jääkärit – yhtymäkohtia ja vertailua. Sotahistoriallinen aikakauskirja 31*, Sotamuseo ja Suomen Sotahistoriallinen Seura, Tallinna, 2001, pp. 176–177.

5. Finnish Volunteer Battalion – military operations, losses and replacements

In the summer and autumn of 1941, the division men participated in operations of *Heeresgruppe Süd*, Germany's Army Group South, with the *Wiking* division. The division faced its hardest battles of the summer when attempting to break the Stalin Line in Tarnopol on the Soviet border at the beginning of July as it participated in different phases of the encirclement battles around Kiev and when trying to clear the banks and bends of the river Dnieper. In the autumn, the *Wiking* division fought its most intense battles crossing the Dnieper and at the bridgehead fight at the beginning of September, in fast-paced operations north of the Sea of Azov in October and in the supporting attack which aimed to take over Rostov-on-Don north of the city at the beginning of November. The rapid recruitment of the Finnish SS volunteers and their transportation to German-occupied territories presented challenges, particularly during the first phase of *Operation Barbarossa*, as the insufficient linguistic skills of the division men, combined with their lack of training regarding German weapons and their unfamiliarity with German leadership principles, caused problems. In addition, Finnish officers and NCOs were mainly not assigned to positions matching their military rank, which caused additional problems.²⁷

Since experienced officers and NCOs fought as part of *Operation Barbarossa*, German trainers had to be used in the training centre located close to Vienna – or rather were used at Germany's request – even though the original idea was that Finnish soldiers would train other Finnish soldiers. It was marked that the training battalion – *SS-Freiwilligen Bataillon Nord Ost* – was established on 15 June, 1941, and its name was changed to *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the *Waffen-SS*, on 13 September, 1941. Following Vienna, other training locations included Stralsund and Gross-Born, where the battalion swore its military oath and pledged its allegiance to Adolf Hitler on 15 October, 1941. According to the original training plan, the Finnish battalion was to be trained until 26 October, 1941, but in August, SS leaders demanded that the training period be halved and that the

²⁷ Tieke, Wilhelm: *Suomalainen SS-pataljoona, Wiking-divisioona Oy*, Jyväskylä, 2002, pp. 18–20; Jokipii (2002b), p. 12; Jokipii (2005), p. 61; Jokipii (2000), pp. 185–301; Westerlund (2019), p. 25.

battalion be ready for combat by 22 September, 1941. Finland's insisted on maintaining a sufficient training period due to its life-saving nature and the training was continued until 10 October, 1941. This explains why the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS took part in the flag presentation and took its military oath in the middle of October. After this, the battalion was meant to transfer to the German eastern front as part of the *Nordland* regiment but, due to defects found in its officers' tactical competence, the training period was extended by two weeks.²⁸

At the beginning of November, an SS replacement battalion was set up in Graz, Austria, from which Finnish volunteers in hospitals, on leave and on duty would be sent to the *SS Division Wiking* through a Finnish replacement company. The Finnish replacement company was originally set up on 21 September, 1941, in Gross-Born, from where it was sent to Graz via Radom in Poland. After offensive operations and a brief retreat at the end of November, the *Wiking* division dug into position for the winter in November and December 1941 by the Mius River, located in the southern part of the German eastern front. The defensive and retreat battles north of Rostov-on-Don at the end of November were so fierce in the *Wiking* division's section that Soviet and British propaganda claimed that the entire division had been destroyed. Colonel Walter Horn, Finland's military attaché in Berlin, tried to calm Finnish minds at the end of the year by refuting these claims of complete destruction, even though any exact numbers of losses were still unknown in Berlin. However, the total losses were so high that the motorised division, which was originally much stronger than a typical German division, had become an infantry division, and was no longer fit for combat as a motorised unit.²⁹

²⁸ Jokipii (2000), pp. 311–377; Tieke (2002), pp. 18–20; Jokipii (2002b), p. 12; Jokipii (2005), p. 61; Airio (2013), pp.119–121; Finland's Military Attaché in Berlin, Document No. 830/13c/sal./29.10.1941. KA T 5635/2.

²⁹ Finland's Military Attaché in Berlin, Document No. 1094/13c/sal./29.12.1941. KA T 5635/2; Jokipii (2000), pp. 155–161, 295–328, 377–379 and 387–389; Westerlund (2019), p. 25. The progress of the German Army Group South slowed starting from mid-October 1941 due to mud and problems with supplies and fuel. These decelerated the attack and interrupted its continuous development. The slower attack by the Germans and temporary stops enabled the Red Army to seal up its defences and organise countermeasures. The German Army Group South and its southernmost III Army Corps took over Rostov-on-Don on 20 November, 1941. This remained the culmination of the attack carried out in the summer and autumn of 1941, as on 1 December, 1941, Germany had to retreat from Rostov-on-Don, to which it was planned that the Finnish battalion would be hurriedly

Of the Finnish division men, 63 had died, 11 were missing and 180 were wounded at the end of 1941. By early 1942 when the Finnish battalion was united, the number of the deceased increased to 78 division men, as there were more losses before and after the start of the year and as most of those missing were actually dead. By the end of January, there were 81 fallen division men. The total losses of more than 60 per cent of the division men were more than double the total losses of the *Wiking* division and German troops, and nearly four times higher than losses on the Finnish front in 1941.³⁰ Overall, the losses were enormous.

After an additional training period, the Finnish battalion was due to transfer from Gross-Born to Ukraine in early November 1941. However, its transfer was postponed by a month as a result of high winter transportation volumes on the German eastern front. The reason Colonel Horn reported to Finland seems to be the most credible and natural, even though Jokipii interpreted that the transfer was postponed due to other reasons. Transportation after the training period in Gross-Born started on 3–4 December, 1941. After its concentration, the battalion was assigned to the *Wiking* division on 8 January, 1942. The battalion's first commander was Hans Collani who already commanded the Finnish group during training and was promoted to the rank of *Sturmbannführer*³¹ after the concentration on 9 January, 1942. The Finnish battalion became part of the *Nordland* regiment, although it was temporarily assigned to the *Westland* regiment when it assumed its combat duties on 22 January, 1942. The Finnish volunteers who were previously part of the *SS Division Wiking* – the remaining division men – were slowly assigned to the Finnish SS battalion starting from January 1942. The Finnish battalion re-joined the *Nordland* regiment on 14 February, 1942, when the defence on the Mius River was reorganised.³²

transported by air in late November.

³⁰ Jokipii (2000), pp. 427–430; Elo (2006), pp. 30 and 40–41.

³¹ *Sturmbannführer* matched the rank of a Major in the *Wehrmacht*.

³² Finland's Military Attaché in Berlin, Document No. 1094/13c/sal./29.12.1941. KA T 5635/2; *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, War diary 1.11.1941–3.12.1942. KA Pk 1141/44; *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, Document No. Ib/10.41/Re./Di./27.10.1941; *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, War diary's appendices 1941–1942. KA Pk 1141/45; *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, Document No. Ia/1.42/Hi./Hu./11.1.1942. *Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS*, War diary's appendices 1941–1942. KA Pk 1141/45; Jokipii (2002b), p. 12; Jokipii (1999), p. 14; Jokipii (2000), pp. 327–328, 383–389, 404, 433–445, 463–464, 507, 548–563,

The Finnish SS battalion did not fully participate in the German offensive in the summer of 1942 as part of the *Wiking* division, as it was withdrawn for training between 14 July and 9 August, 1942. Reasons for this training period included the introduction of new heavy weapons, a recap on warfare manoeuvres following trench warfare, and delays in vehicle replacements; after all, the Finnish battalion had lost a significant number of its vehicles during the concentration in the previous winter. For Case Blue, the Army Group South was divided into Army Groups A and B, with the former operating in the southernmost part of the front and focusing on conquering the Caucasus oil fields. Army Group B operated in the Volga region. The *Wiking* division participated in the operation as part of Army Group A which started its attack on 9 July, 1942, and it participated in the attack starting from 21 July, 1942. In July and August 1942, the attack stretched from the Mius River to the Western Caucasus, and further to the Eastern Caucasus in September and October 1942. The Finnish battalion returned to the front lines in Maykop on 13 August, 1942. The Finnish SS battalion suffered its heaviest losses in September and October 1942 when Germany made its attack in Malgobek in an attempt to take over the oil fields in Grozny. The Germans were unable to capture the oil fields.³³

Since June and July 1942, the plan was to replace the casualties of the Finnish SS battalion. As requested by Germany, a second round of recruitment was held in Finland. The number of recruited volunteers was

573 and 607. On 21 January, 1942, the Finnish battalion formed the fourth battalion of the *Nordland* regiment: *IV/Nordland*. On 2 February, 1942, the name was changed to *IV (finn.)/Nordland*. In terms of numbers, the Finnish battalion was at first a separate or extra battalion of the regiment. In reality, one of the *Nordland* regiment's battalions had been broken up during the previous autumn due to losses, and the Finnish battalion inherited its name on 23 May, 1942, becoming *III (finn.)/SS-Regiment Nordland*. Later, the Finnish battalion also served briefly under the *Westland* and *Germania* regiments or as part of temporary combat groups and units.

³³ Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, War diary 1.11.1941–3.12.1942. KA Pk 1141/44; Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, Unnumbered document “Befehl für die ausbildung in der zeit vom 16.7–8.8.1942”, 13.7.1942. Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, War diary's appendices 1941–1942. KA Pk 1141/45; Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, Unnumbered document “Btl.-Befehl für den vormarsch sur division”, 9.8.1942. Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, War diary's appendices 1941–1942. KA Pk 1141/45; Jokipii (2000), pp. 404–405, 466–472 and 501–505; Jokipii (1999), p. 14; Jokipii (2005), p. 63.

limited to 200 men, even though Germany requested 300 volunteers. Finland's political and military leaders agreed to the additional recruitment process, as it was still possible in the summer of 1942 that Germany would win the war. Under the Finnish Army Headquarters, a replacement company of 200 volunteers to be sent to the SS battalion was selected from the Finnish Army. The Finnish Army Headquarters recruited soldiers from units of the Finnish Army between 3 and 27 July, 1942. The purpose was only to recruit regular soldiers, even though the original, quickly revised, announcement also included NCOs. Replacements were arranged not only to substitute casualties, but also to replace additional NCOs in the battalion. They could not be removed from their duties in the ranks before the arrival of replacements.³⁴

Around the same time on 3 August, 1942, Rolf Nevanlinna, Rector of Helsinki University, was appointed to head the SS volunteer committee, as Riekkö did not enjoy Germany's trust. In total, 239 volunteers signed up, of whom the 228 men who showed up were examined by a German committee in Kouvola on 17–20 August, 1942. Of these, 188 were accepted, but five refused to go. During subsequent examinations carried out on 29–31 August, 1942, based on personal applications, the remaining 18 volunteers and one substitute were selected. In total, 41 volunteers were rejected during the first examination and five during the second examination. The replacement company signed its service agreements until 30 June, 1943, when the agreements of other Finnish volunteers would end. The size of the replacement company and the duration of its service agreements were based on the requests by military leaders who did not want to increase the battalion's strength or the duration of service agreements.³⁵

³⁴ Verbindungstelle des Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, Document No. 18/155/4.7.1942. KA Valpo II IX A4 3189 45; Päämaja, Document No. 2054/Ulk.1.sal./3.8.1942. KA 2530/72; Jokipii (2000), pp. 482–493 and 576; Elo (2006), pp. 30–32 and 243; Jokipii (1999), p. 14; Jokipii (2005), p. 63. Replacements were recruited as evenly as possible from all parts of the field army and each battalion was able to provide at most two volunteers.

³⁵ Jokipii (2000), pp. 482–493 and 576; Elo (2006), pp. 30–32 and 243; Jokipii (1999), p. 14; Jokipii (2005), p. 63; Swanström (2018), pp. 192–196; SS-vapaaehtoistoimikunta, Document "kiertokirje No. 1", 31.10.1942. KA Valpo II IX A4 3189 45; Verbindungstelle des Finnisches Freiwilligen-Bataillon der Waffen-SS, Document No. 18/155/4.7.1942. KA Valpo II IX A4 3189 45. In his study, Swanström proposes that the SS volunteer committee had already met on 17 June, 1942. Jokipii interprets that the first examinations took place between 16 and 19

The replacement company started from Kouvola to Pietarsaari on 4 September, 1942, and sailed from Finland to Danzig on 8 September, 1942. It was equipped and rapidly trained in Graz from 16 September to 7 October, 1942. From there, the replacement company was transported to the Caucasus front where it arrived on 23 November, 1942. The strength of the replacement company was 201 soldiers, which means that 1,409 volunteers served as SS troops between 1941 and 1943 when individual Finnish volunteers sent to Germany and assigned to special duties, as well as replacements who served in Germany and on the front are included. The size of the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS was less than 500 soldiers smaller than the group of Finnish jaegers who fought in the First World War.³⁶

On 20 December, 1942, it was decided that the *Wiking* division should be detached from the Caucasus front by pulling the frontline back, as more troops were needed in Stalingrad. However, the Finnish battalion remained on the front until the beginning of 1943. In January 1943, the Finnish SS battalion was transferred from the Caucasus to Stalingrad as part of Army Group Don's operations to liberate the 6th Army which remained surrounded in Stalingrad. At best, the Finnish battalion was only 275 kilometres from Stalingrad, on the south-western side of the city. The operation was unsuccessful, but the attack and the subsequent defensive battles enabled the controlled retreat of the troops located in the Caucasus. The Finnish SS battalion was able to retreat west of the Don River on 5–7 February, 1943. The Finnish SS battalion participated in battles on the Ukrainian front until 10 April, 1943, when it was withdrawn from the front. Inquiries about the withdrawal of the Finnish SS battalion and its

August, 1942, when 186 volunteers were accepted.

³⁶ Jokipii (2000), pp. 109–122; 493–498, 575–584 and 674–675; Elo (2006), pp. 32–33, 40–41 and 62; Westerlund (2019), p. 12; *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuudet juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, p. 5, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Jokipii (1999), p. 14; Jokipii (2005), p. 63; Päämaja, Document No. 2054/Ulk.1.sal./3.8.1942. KA 2530/72. The replacement company underwent a brief supplementary training period after arriving at the front. It was officially attached to its battalion on 8 December, 1942. On the basis of Jokipii's study, the total number of volunteers can differ greatly. The archival survey prepared by Lars Westerlund for the National Archives of Finland ended up with 1,408 Finnish volunteers.

return to Finland were made in Berlin in February and March 1943, as Germany respected the original two-year service period. However, Germany wanted to replace the battalion with a new battalion or even by a regiment.³⁷

Of the Finnish volunteers, 256 fell or died of illness, and 14 were missing. In addition, 686 were wounded, raising the total casualties to 956 soldiers. The total losses of nearly 68 per cent were unusually high, considering that the total losses suffered by the Finnish Army over the same period were approximately 22 per cent. However, if the total losses of the Finnish SS battalion are compared to German losses on the eastern front, the figures were small. Germany suffered total losses of nearly 85 per cent.³⁸

6. Volunteers who returned to Finland during their service

Some Finnish volunteers returned to Finland before their two-year service was completed. The first volunteers returned to Vaasa on 30 July, 1941, including 16 unused officers and three NCOs who were detached from the training group and sent back due to inappropriate behaviour. In September 1941, Finland's military leaders repeated their attempt, made first in June, to get the Finnish volunteers back and join Finland's armed forces. Riekkö's committee had already presented similar requests in August 1941 because insufficient linguistic skills and the inability to adapt to the Central European terrain had caused problems particularly among the division men. The military leaders' attempt was based on the Soviet Union's requests to sign a separate peace pact, communicated via the United States. This information reached Finland on 19 August, 1941. However, this attempt was as unsuccessful as the aim to sign the separate

³⁷ *III.(Finn.)/SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt. "Nordland"*, War diary 4.12.1942–11.7.1943. KA Pk 1141/47; Jokipii (2000), pp. 586–676 and 689–700; Jokipii (2005), p. 63.

³⁸ *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuuudet juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, p. 5, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Jokipii (2000), pp. 674–675; Jokipii (2005), p. 63; Lackman (2001), p. 183; Elo (2006), pp. 129–131; Jokipii (2005), p. 68. Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 2575/Järj.1/1c.sal./14.9.1943. KA Sk 2530/84. One of the 256 casualties was a member of a tribal nation who had not yet obtained Finland's citizenship. A few of volunteers were members of tribal nations, as Ingrians or Karelians.

peace pact. Instead, it increased suspicions among Germans towards Finland.³⁹

During the autumn of 1941, Finland tried to accelerate the return of the unused officers and NCOs. They were not appointed to the promised vacancies, in particular in the *Wiking* division. Furthermore, as the Finnish Army was making attacks, new officers and NCOs were in dire need in Finland. In addition, these officers and NCOs were willing to return as, besides the promised vacancies, they were not given SS ranks matching their Finnish military ranks. They were dissatisfied not only with their ranks and their frustration with having nothing to do, but also with the amount of the German military pay. Germany and Finland eventually reach a consensus. Mannerheim underlined that Finland would not expand on its demands to cover the entire Finnish battalion. The return of the 20 unneeded officers from the *Wiking* division started on 5 January, 1942. In the end, 19 of them returned a month later, while one remained in Germany. In addition to these 19 officers, five other officers returned to Finland in January 1942. By May 1942, 51 officers had been sent home.⁴⁰

A significant number of Finnish volunteers returned to Tornio via Oslo and Sweden on 17 May, 1942, when unneeded NCOs arrived in Finland. This batch consisted of 99 NCOs and 32 regular soldiers. These were unneeded NCOs and, according to Jokipii, the saddest cases of the Finnish battalion, such as the last living boys of families. Their return was ordered on 16 February, 1942. After laying wreathes at heroic soldiers' graves at the Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki, they returned home for approximately a month, after which they were to register at Infantry Training Centre 6 in Lempäälä on 16 June, 1942. It was possible to propose at most 20 volunteers for an officer school course starting from 1 August, 1942. The organisation unit of the Finnish Army Headquarters decided on the placement of SS volunteers in military groups. The

³⁹ Jokipii (2000), pp. 409–416 and 873; Elo (2006), pp. 25–28 and 246; Manninen (2011), pp. 10–11; Swanström (2018), pp. 305–306. Jokipii writes about 15 but also about 16 returned officers and four NCOs. Swanström mentions 15 officers and four NCOs. The figures presented by Veikko Elo can be regarded as the most reliable.

⁴⁰ Jokipii (2000), pp. 413–426; Swanström (2018), pp. 171–189, 206 and 398. Jokipii mainly defines 21 but also 20 returned Finnish officers. In 1942, 17 of the Finnish volunteers were sent to Northern Finland to carry out long-range reconnaissance missions, and a few Finnish volunteers were also assigned to other missions in the service of the SS in German-occupied territories.

volunteers who returned to Finland in the first batch were to be divided evenly between different parts of the front, but preparations for the establishment of the Finnish Armoured Division changed plans. On 22 June, 1942, the Finnish Army Headquarters ordered that the men who had served in the motorised infantry unit in Germany were to be sent to the 1st Jaeger Brigade of the Armoured Division at Äänislinna. Mannerheim approved the establishment of the Finnish Armoured Division on 10 June, 1942, after which the Armoured Division was formed on 30 June, 1942. This order concerned roughly hundred former SS volunteers, as men with special training, such as aircraft or communications training, were placed in positions matching their training level. It was necessary to send the men to Äänislinna as urgently as possible. This was a significant decision as this meant that the experience of the SS volunteers in motorised infantry could be put to as much use as possible.⁴¹

A separate SS course and other additional courses were held for the SS volunteers at Infantry Training Centre 6 between 17 and 24 June, 1942. When assessing the volunteers, Infantry Training Centre 6 stated that the participants were highly soldierly, active and willing to learn, and that the SS course was altogether a positive experience. However, some 15 soldiers had troubles adapting to peaceful conditions. These had already caused difficulties during their service in Germany. Their problems

⁴¹ Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 2845/Järj.3/2.sal./10.5.1942. KA T 7673/5; Länsi-Pohjan suojeluskuntapiirin esikunta, Document No. 299/III/4 sal./19.5.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 1933/Järj.1a/1c.sal./22.5.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Päämaja, Document No. 1168/Lkp.sal./29.5.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Päämaja, Document No. 3660/Viesti 1/1a/2.6.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 2106/Järj.1a/1c.sal./8.6.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Päämaja, Document No. 1421/Lkp.sal./10.6.1942. KA T 19142/3; Päämaja, Document No. 1859/Kom.2/37/sal./12.6.1942. KA T 2530/72; Päämaja, Document No. 107/LKP/22.6.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Panssaridivisioona, Document No. 861/III/307 sal./30.6.1943. Panssaridivisioona, War Diary's appendices 1942–1943. KA SPK 19032; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 3605/Järj.3/46/23.6.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Jalkaväen koulutuskeskuksen 6 esikunta, Document No. 1298/Kom/3.sal./18.9.1942. KA T 7673/7; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 1150/Järj.3/2.sal./31.3.1943. KA T 7673/7; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 3690/Järj.3/2.sal./23.10.1943. KA T 7673/9; Jokipii (2000), pp. 425–426; Käkelä, Erkki: *Laguksen miehet – Suomalainen panssariyhtymä 1941–1944*, Panssarikilta, Jyväskylä, 1992, pp. 209–218. The main mission of Infantry Training Centre 6, operating in the Lempäälä–Kuurila region, was to offer continuing training to the infantry. Its other battalion located in Kuurila trained juvenile delinquents

usually resulted from the excessive use of alcohol, but it was said that these soldiers had been excellent fighters on the front. According to personal assessments, 12 men used to drink too much, four were both unreliable and heavy drinkers, one was simply unreliable. The sergeant who was given the most crushing assessment out of this lot of 18 men was judged to be a complete drunk and untrustworthy in every respect. The men assigned to the Armoured Division started their journey towards Äänislinna fairly quickly after the order issued by the Finnish Army Headquarters.⁴²

Even though previous research emphasises that once the SS battalion had been discontinued, the volunteers were dispersed to all parts of the front, the SS volunteers who returned to Finland in the summer of 1942 were placed in the new Armoured Division. In the first phase, 111 SS volunteers were sent to the Armoured Division. However, one more man was sent at the beginning of July, as one NCO who was rated in a lower service category was sent to the supply unit of the division. The centralisation of the SS volunteers in the Armoured Division did not end after it was established, since Finnish volunteers who returned to Finland in autumn 1942 were still assigned to it. The process proceeded so that after their arrival in Finland, the SS volunteers were ordered to register in their civil guard districts, whose staffs gathered information about the volunteers for use by Home Troops and Infantry Training Centre 6. Having registered, the volunteers were able to enjoy two-weeks leave, after which they needed to register at Infantry Training Centre 6. The staff of the Home Troops requested placement orders for the volunteers from the Finnish Army Headquarters. After receiving the orders, the staff of the Home Troops sent them to Infantry Training Centre 6, from where the volunteers were sent to military groups via personnel replacement centres. Similarly in the winter, spring and early summer of 1943, the majority of the returned volunteers who were fit for service were sent to the Armoured Division. All in all, 14 former SS volunteers were assigned to the Armoured Division between September 1942 and June 1943.⁴³

pardoned by the President of Finland.

⁴² Jalkaväen koulutuskeskuksen 6 esikunta, Document No. 940/Kom/5.sal./29.6.1942. KA T 7673/5; Jalkaväen koulutuskeskuksen 6 esikunta, Document No. 950/Kom/5.sal./1.7.1942. KA T 7673/7.

⁴³ Päämaja, Document No. 3660/Viesti 1/1a/2.6.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 2281/Järj.1a/1c.sal./9.6.1942. KA Sk

7. The end of the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS

After taking leave in Ruhpolding, the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS returned via Tallinn to Hanko where a parade was held on 1 June, 1943. The next day, an unarmed celebration was held in Tampere, after which the battalion men enjoyed a one-month leave period at home. Until the summer of 1943, Germany and the SS, in particular, believed that the Finnish SS battalion would continue by signing new service agreements and by recruiting more men. At first, Finland seemed to concede to the SS. After all, at least a small group of the SS volunteers wanted to continue their service. However, Mannerheim proposed on 27 June, 1943, that the Finnish SS battalion should be discontinued. Finland's political leaders were in favour of this proposal, as Finland's position alongside Germany was no longer seen in a positive light. Hitler approved this proposal on 4 July, 1943. Even though willing SS men were able to renew their agreements for a new six-month period, they accepted the proposal of Finland's military leaders to stay in Finland.⁴⁴

The end of the SS battalion was celebrated in Hanko on 11 July, 1943, when the volunteers joined the Finnish Defence Forces. Battalion Commander, *Obersturmbannführer*⁴⁵ Hans Collani reported 12 officers, 221 NCOs and 585 members of the ranks – 818 soldiers in total. These figures are inaccurate and based on SS ranks. According to the Finnish organisation unit and following Finnish military ranks, there were 15 officers, 237 NCOs, 524 privates first class and seven soldiers – altogether

2530/72; Jalkaväen koulutuskeskuksen 6 esikunta, Document No. 939/Kom/5.sal./28.6.1942. KA T 7673/7; Panssaridivisioonan esikunta, Document No. 2141/I/9 sal./1.7.1942. KA T 7673/7; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 3607/Järj.1a/1c.sal./11.9.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 3718/Järj.1a/1c.sal./22.9.1942. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta's and Päämaja's orders of assignment. KA Sk 2530/72; Kotijoukkojen esikunta's and Päämaja's orders of assignment. KA Sk 2530/84; Jokipii (2000), p. 722; Swanström (2018), p. 368. The presented number of 111 volunteers most likely does not include the specially trained men assigned to radio missions within the communications unit of the Finnish Army Headquarters, four of whom were planned to join the Armoured Division.

⁴⁴ Jokipii (2005), pp. 65–67; Jokipii (2000), pp. 689–719; Swanström (2018), pp. 114, 324 and 367; *III.(Finn.)SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt."Nordland"*, War diary 4.12.1942–11.7.1943. KA Pk 1141/47; SS-vapaaehtoistoimisto, Unnumbered document "25 % matkalippualennus", 27.5.1943. KA Pk 1141/53.

⁴⁵ *Obersturmbannführer* matched the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel in the *Wehrmacht*. Collani was promoted to this rank on 29 April, 1943.

783 men. This is close to the specified figure reported by Collani. Collani's confirmed figures were 14 officers, 234 NCOs and 534 rank members, i.e., a total of 782 volunteers. According to Veikko Elo, 784 soldiers returned home. In addition, 21 volunteers were still under German care, three volunteers were already serving in the Finnish Air Force and one officer was in a Finnish military hospital.⁴⁶

Members of the main group were sent from Hanko to Niinisalo and further to the front, special missions or the officer school, where many volunteers were given officer training before being sent to the front. Since the summer of 1942, 21 new officers were trained in the SS course. In total, 282 new officers received officer training in Finland. The volunteers who were assigned to serve on the front were distributed fairly evenly between different parts of the front. According to original sources, only one officer, three volunteers assigned to artillery duties and one specially trained tank driver were transferred to the Armoured Division. This solution was most likely based on the large number of SS volunteers previously assigned to it. According to Jokipii, the role of the Armoured Division as the unit receiving the most replacements can be questioned when only the main group of the volunteers is examined. However, the Armoured Division did receive the most replacements, once the examination is expanded to cover all SS volunteers who returned to Finland.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 1989/Järj.1a/1c.sal./16.7.1943. KA Sk 2530/84; *III.(Finn.)/SS-Pz.Gr.Rgt."Nordland"*, War diary 4.12.1942–11.7.1943. KA Pk 1141/47; Päämaja, Document No. 2830/Kom.1/a sal./14.7.1943. 14.7.1943. KA Pk 1141/63; Jokipii (2005), p. 67; Jokipii (2000), pp. 422, 719–722 and 934; Elo (2006), pp. 29, 55 and 62.

⁴⁷ Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 1989/Järj.1a/1c.sal./16.7.1943. KA Sk 2530/84; Päämaja, Document No. 2830/Kom.1/a sal./14.7.1943. 14.7.1943. KA Pk 1141/63; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 2, War diary 16.7.–1.8.1944. KA SPK 7155; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 2, Numerous documents. KA T 5585/2; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 2, Notebooks. KA T 6911/4; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 3, Document No. 102/I/5 sal./25.7.1943. KA 6149/1; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 3, Document No. 109/I/5 sal./1.8.1943. KA 6149/1; Henkilötäydennyskeskus 6, Notebooks. KA T 7038/1; Päämaja, Document N:o 2950/Koul.1/9.sal./16.6.1943. KA T 9427/13; Kotijoukkojen esikunta, Document No. 3530/Järj.3/50.sal./16.10.1943. KA T 9427/13; Päämaja, Document No. 3230/Kom.2/42/sal./18.10.1943. KA T 9427/13; Päämaja, Document No. 5219/Koul.1/9.sal./21.10.1943. KA T 9427/13; Panssaridivisioonan esikunta, Document No. 2153/I/14 sal./12.11.1943. KA T 9427/13; Jokipii (2005), p. 67; Jokipii (2000), pp. 422, 719–722 and 934; Swanström (2018), p. 368; Elo (2006), pp. 29, 55 and 62.

8. Finnish SS volunteers in research

Finland survived the Second World War, maintaining its independence, even though Finland lost ten per cent of its land area, among other things, and was forced to pay notable financial reparations to the Soviet Union. During the decades after the Second World War, war veterans did not receive any significant public recognition in Finnish society. The SS volunteers formed an even smaller group. Apart from a few exceptions, they rarely raised their voice outside their own group during the decades of the Cold War.

The role of the Finnish SS volunteers during the decades following the Second World War in Finnish literature and military history will be discussed in the following. The first book on the Finnish SS battalion was already written in 1945 when Sakari Lappi-Seppälä, an SS volunteer himself, published *Haudat Dneprin varrella – SS-miehen päiväkirjan lehtiä* (*Graves by Dnieper – from the diary of an SS man*) based on his diary entries. Lappi-Seppälä, who was a division man and was sent to Finland in 1942 due to allegations of spying, had a critical attitude towards the *Wiking* division and reported on the atrocities committed by the Germans. Eric Nupnau published his Swedish-language novel *Farligt spel – Två års upplevelser i Tyskland under kriget* (*A dangerous game – experiences during two war years in Germany*) in 1946. Nupnau was not part of the Finnish SS battalion, and he is not included in the number of volunteers presented in this article. However, he served the SS in Berlin and later became a Finnish citizen. Niilo Lauttamus, one of the battalion boys, published his first novel *Vieraan kypärän alla* (*Under a foreign helmet*) on the Finnish SS battalion in 1957. The novel emphasises the

In the first phase, 66 SS volunteers were accepted for the 57th course of the officer school. The course started on 9 July, 1943. All 17 SS volunteers, who returned to Finland on 22 September, 1943, and who still attended the officer school (*SS-Junkerschule Bad Tölz*) at the time when the main group of the battalion returned to Finland, were assigned to the Finnish Armoured Division. However, they were assigned to a training course in the officer school, and it was planned that they be sent to the officer school when the next course starts. On the basis of notes made in the margin, only one of these men who had been promoted to the rank of Staff Sergeant did not arrive in the Armoured Division, as he had returned to Germany. However, their first service in the Armoured Division was a brief one, as the 58th course of the officer school started on 7 January, 1944.

apolitical attitudes of the Finnish SS volunteers. During the next two decades, Lauttamus released five more novels on the same theme.⁴⁸

The next texts were published in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. In 1958, Unto Parvilahti published *Terekille ja takaisin – Suomalaisen vaapaaehtoisjoukon vaiheita Saksan itärintamalla 1941–43 (To Terek and back – stages of the Finnish volunteers in German eastern front from 1941 to 1943)*. He first served as a division man but served most of his time as a volunteer in liaison duties in Berlin, taking care of the affairs of Finnish SS men. Parvilahti's book represents the memoir genre at its best in that it is no use looking for any criticism of the Finnish SS volunteers from its pages. However, Parvilahti only promises to present the memories of a soldier who participated in the war. Unto Parvilahti – or Unto Boman when serving the SS – was surrendered to the Allied Control Commission in April 1945 and sent to prison camps in the Soviet Union, from where he returned to Finland in December 1954. In 1960, Jukka Tyrkkö published *Suomalaisia suursodassa – SS-vapaaehtoisten vaiheita jääkäreiden jäljillä (Finns in the Second World War – stages of SS volunteers on the trails of jaegers)*. He served as a volunteer, mainly as a correspondent and in propaganda duties. The books by Parvilahti and Tyrkkö have generally been recognised as fairly polished depictions of the operations of the Finnish SS battalion.⁴⁹

The most significant study of the Finnish SS volunteers saw the light of day in 1968 when Mauno Jokipii published his *Panttipataljoona – Suomalaisen SS-pataljoonan historia (The pawn battalion – History of the Finnish SS battalion)*. Four editions of the book have been published, the most recent in 2000. When published in the late 1960s, Jokipii's

⁴⁸ *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuuDET juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, p. 5, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Jokipii (2000), pp. 911–936; Swanström (2018), p. 80; Elo (2006), p. 40.

⁴⁹ Swanström (2018), pp. 16–30, 43, 102–118, 169–170 and 179–191; Jokipii (2000), pp. 475 and 911–936; *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuuDET juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, p. 5, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Parvilahti, Unto: *Terekille ja takaisin – Suomalaisen vapaaehtoisjoukon vaiheita Saksan itärintamalla 1941–43*, Otava, Keuruu, passim.

monumental work was one of the most significant studies of Finland's role in the Second World War ever published.⁵⁰

Jokipii's study can be regarded, despite any recent allegations of brightening the picture and hushing things up, as an ambitious attempt to record the history of the Finnish SS battalion.⁵¹ It is based on a large group of original sources from Finnish and international archives. One of the study's weak points is its fragmented structure due to long diary extracts and its inaccuracies and conflicting minor details due to its ambitious goals. Mauno Jokipii led the way by publishing several supplementary books and articles on the Finnish SS battalion from the late 1960s until the beginning of the 2000s. He passed away in 2007.⁵² Jokipii's *Panttipataljoona* has been both the foundation stone, upon which later research has been built, and a gatekeeper whose interpretations were not challenged for decades.

Of course, individual articles and texts were released immediately after Jokipii's study, but the next larger studies of the volunteers had to wait until the 1990s. Veikko Elo's *Pantin lunastajat (Redemption of the Finnish SS battalion)* was published in 1993. It is more detailed than Jokipii's book, above all, in terms of lists of volunteers.⁵³ Elo's study also made Jokipii supplement the last two editions of his book with more detailed lists of names. Elo was also an SS volunteer, which was clearly reflected in his book. His book can be regarded as a turning point in the research of Finnish SS volunteers in the sense that a few academic theses and individual articles on Finnish SS volunteers were soon released after its publication. The most notable theses are Heikki Nilkku's *Suomalaisten vapaaehtoisten integroituminen Saksan poliittiseen joukko-osastoon Waffen-SS:ään (Integration of Finnish volunteers into the Waffen SS)* from 1994 and Anu Vertanen's *Rintamalta Ratakadulle – Suomalaiset SS-miehet kommunistisen Valpon kohteina 1945–1948 (From front to Ratakatu – Finnish SS men under the eye of the communistic state police in 1945–1948)* from 2005.

⁵⁰ Jokipii (2000), passim.

⁵¹ E.g. Swanström (2018), pp. 18–23 and 28–30.

⁵² Jokipii (2000), passim; Swanström (2018), pp. 150–151. See also Jokipii (1999), passim; Jokipii (2002a), passim; Jokipii (2002b), passim; Jokipii (2005), passim.

⁵³ Elo, Veikko: *Pantin lunastajat*, self-published, Saarijärvi, 1993, passim. Veikko Elo's *Pantin lunastajat* was published by Apali in 2006.

Mauno Jokipii's final summary of Finnish SS volunteers was *Hitlerin Saksa ja sen vapaaehtoisliikkeet – Waffen-SS:n suomalaispataljoona vertailtavana (Hitler's Germany and its volunteer movements – Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen SS under review)* published in 2002. In this book, Jokipii discusses the position of Finnish SS volunteers and compares it with other similar foreign troops. According to Jokipii, his goal was to study the Finnish SS battalion against a broader international background. Jokipii summarises the actions of the SS troops in the holocaust. However, he does not discuss or state anything about the role of the Finnish SS battalion as part of this inhuman event. In his book, consciously or unconsciously, Jokipii mainly holds to describing the development of the Waffen SS and the position of its volunteer members.⁵⁴

The range of studies of Finnish military history regarding the Second World War has diversified during the 2000s. For example, the range of experience has been studied more than before. However, the research of SS volunteers has travelled fairly conventional paths until the most recent years. Texts have been and are still published at a fairly regular pace.

One of the most notable recent Finnish studies is Lars Westerlund's 2017 study *Cirkus Collani – De finländska SS-frivilliga 1941–43: En sedesskildring baserad på de frivilligas egna berättelser (Circus Collani – Finnish SS volunteers in 1941–1943: An account based on the volunteers' own stories)*. Westerlund points out that, for many volunteers, their service in the Waffen SS was a professional disappointment. Then again, he notes that some of the volunteers reacted negatively to the humiliation of the Jews and Bolsheviks. However, the Finnish volunteers had to witness the execution of Jews and Soviet prisoners of war during 1941–1943.⁵⁵ The question of any active participation of the Finnish SS volunteers in the execution of Jews and Soviet prisoners of war (POWs) has, over the past few years, dominated the Finnish debate related to this theme and the opinions of Finnish researchers.

⁵⁴ Jokipii (2002a), passim.

⁵⁵ Westerlund (2017), passim.

9. Overview of research of Finnish SS volunteers in 2019

The publication by André Swanström of *Hakaristin ritarit – Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset* (*Knights of the swastika – Finnish SS men, politics, religion and war crimes*) in the autumn of 2018 added fuel to the questions raised by Westerlund. Swanström fiercely attacked Jokipii's interpretations. Above all, Swanström criticised that Jokipii had intentionally left out or at least polished over the events related to the execution of Jews, civilians and POWs.⁵⁶ After its publication, Swanström's book raised some considerable debate among researchers and, above all, amongst amateur military historians regarding whether the Finnish SS volunteers were in some way responsible for war crimes against the Jews and Soviet POWs. Swanström was able to credibly show that some individual Finnish volunteers witnessed killings of Jews, civilians or POWs, and participated in these killings in 1941 and 1942.⁵⁷

Swanström's book has been criticised for its way of making strong tendentious generalisations without sufficient sources. Often repeated statements of murders, mindless killings of civilians and crimes related to the holocaust experienced by the Finnish volunteers were presented without any solid evidence.⁵⁸ Swanström's book is idealistic rather than pragmatic, and it largely ignores the general atmosphere of the time and any changes in foreign and military policies. Therefore, Swanström's book remains just one account of the Finnish volunteers which, in the eyes of the authors of this article, raises discussion more than acts as a synthesis of any war crimes committed by the volunteers.

A response to, or rather a judgement of, any war crimes committed by Finnish volunteers, as presented by Swanström was obtained in February 2019, when the National Archives of Finland released an archival survey of the role of Finnish volunteers who served in the *Wiking* division between 1941 and 1943 in the killings of Jews, civilians and POWs. The archival survey is based on a request presented by Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, to Sauli Niinistö, the President of

⁵⁶ Swanström (2018), passim.

⁵⁷ Swanström (2018), passim; Karjalainen, Mikko: Uusia tulkintoja suomalaisten SS-vapaaehtoisten sotatiestä. Kirja-arvostelu Andre Swanströmin teoksesta *Hakaristin ritarit. Suomalaiset SS-miehet, politiikka, uskonto ja sotarikokset. Historiallinen Aikakauskirja 1/2019*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura ja Historian Ystävien liitto, Forssa, 2019, pp. 78–80.

Finland. The Prime Minister's Office authorised the National Archives to prepare the account in January 2018.⁵⁹ The results of the survey published in February 2019 were fairly obvious to researchers of the Finnish SS volunteers. It was not able to conclusively show that the Finnish SS volunteers participated in war crimes, but it is very likely that some of them did not comply with international law. It is hard to see that this differed significantly from past conceptions among Finnish researchers and amateur military historians specialised in the Second World War and Germany. It would be very naive to think that no deviations from international law would have taken place in the context in which the Finnish volunteers acted in 1941–1943. Furthermore, the archival survey does not change the overview of the general motives underlying the recruitment or of the activities of most volunteers, when the results are compared, for example, with Jokipii's interpretations.⁶⁰

The conclusions of the archival survey can be summarised in the following sentences: *It is apparent that the Finnish SS volunteers very probably participated in the killings and brutalities committed by different units of the SS Division Wiking against Jews, civilians and POWs in 1941 and 1942. However, it should be stated that the available source material does not offer sufficiently detailed information in order to assess individual events in detail.*⁶¹ Anyway, the National Archives archival survey *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943* offers a neutral base for any further studies on the theme without holding any tendentious passions.

⁵⁸ Swanström (2018), passim; Karjalainen (2019), pp. 78–80.

⁵⁹ Westerlund (2019), passim.

⁶⁰ Westerlund (2019), pp. 202–204; *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuuDET juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, passim, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019; Jokipii (2000), passim.

⁶¹ *Suomalaiset SS-vapaaehtoiset ja väkivaltaisuuDET juutalaisia, siviilejä ja sotavankeja kohtaan Ukrainassa ja Kaukasuksella 1941–1943*, passim, Summary in Finnish, Lars Westerlund, *The Finnish SS-volunteers and atrocities against Jews, Civilians and Prisoners of War in Ukraine and the Caucasus Region 1941–1943*, 8.2.2019. [<https://arkisto.fi/uploads/Arkisto/2.pdf>]. Accessed 9 February 2019. Lars Westerlund worked as a researcher in the survey project for the National Archives.

In March 2019, Antero Holmila, who has studied the Finnish SS volunteers, for example, in his 2013 article “*Soldaten wie andere auch*”: *Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers and Finland’s historical imagination*, summarised the current scope of Finnish research by saying that the study of history is like doing a jigsaw puzzle. According to him, the puzzle of Finnish SS volunteers is nearly ready, but the archival survey forms the edges of this puzzle. It is easy to agree with Holmila’s ideas that the Finnish volunteers and their actions in 1941–1943 should be understood in the light of the destructive atmosphere prevailing in Germany at the time.⁶²

The debate over research in Finland in the 2017–2019 period shows that there is still a place for further studies into the Finnish SS volunteers and that not all original material of the activities of the Finnish SS volunteers stored in the national archives of different countries has been covered. It is apparent that the last word has not been said on this extremely dark research theme.

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⁶² Holmila, Antero: Kiistanalainen SS-palapeli. *Historiallinen Aikauskirja 1/2019*, Suomen Historiallinen Seura ja Historian Ystävien liitto, Forssa, 2019, pp. 82; Holmila, Antero: "Soldaten wie andere auch": Finnish Waffen-SS volunteers and Finland's historical imagination. Muir, Simon–Worthen, Hana (eds.): *Finland's Holocaust – Silences of History*, Palgrave Mcmillan, Basingstoke, 2013, pp. 218–244.

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