



The musical legacy of the 1918 Finnish Civil War on YouTube: reconciliation and agitation

By

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Abstract

Conflicts such as wars, rebellions and revolutions often give rise to songs that pass on from one generation to another. This applies also to the bloody 1918 Finnish Civil War, which led to the death of nearly 37 000 people (about 1% of the population), of whom the majority 27 000 belonged to the defeated, the Reds, and affected Finnish society on every level and in long-lasting ways, some of which can still be acknowledged today. For decades after the war official and public commemoration of the war dead applied only to the winners, the Whites, whereas the Reds were forced to mourn and honour their dead in the private sphere. On both sides, songs were first a popular way of keeping up spirits and then after the war to commemorate the war. These songs were sung at funerals, parades as well as to mock the enemy. Today some of these songs as well as new ones on the topic are still popular and circulate in various versions on YouTube and other social media sites. These music videos are often remixes of original footage and photos used together with images from other sources. The most popular videos have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times. In this article, we explore the digital heritage of the 1918 Finnish Civil War by giving first an overview of the musical legacy of the war and then analyse how and why this musical legacy continues to flourish on YouTube.

Keywords: 1918 Finnish Civil War, musical legacy, YouTube, music videos, participatory culture, digital heritage

Heimo, Anne, Mustamo, Aila & Rantanen, Saijaleena: "The musical legacy of the 1918 Finnish Civil War on YouTube: reconciliation and agitation", *Culture Unbound*, Volume 14, Issue 2, 2022: 38-60. Published by Linköping University Electronic Press: <http://www.cultureunbound.ep.liu.se>



Introduction

The history of societies is strongly conveyed in music. Just as literature, poetry or other arts, music also allows us to follow and discover different phases of people and nations. (Rantanen 2020a: 111.) Conflicts such as wars, rebellions and revolutions often give rise to songs that pass on from one generation to another. These include, for example, Martin Luther's battle hymn *Ein fester Burg ist unser Gott* (Jumala ompi linnamme / A Mighty Fortress Is Our God), which Luther wrote during the Protestant rebellion in the late 1520s; *La Marseillaise*, the theme march of the French Revolution (1789); *The Internationale*, which united the international labour movement after the suppression of the Paris Commune in the 1870s; and *Warszawjanka* (The Song of Warsaw), which became the anthem of the workers during the Revolution of the Kingdom of Poland (1905–1907) when 30 workers were shot during the May Day demonstration in Warsaw in 1905. In Finland, *Maamme* (Our Country), which later became the national anthem of Finland, was written and composed for Finnish students by Johan Ludvig Runeberg and Fredrik Pacius, respectively, in the turbulent atmosphere of the Revolutions in 1848. The tone of the song was deliberately moderate in response to *La Marseillaise* and other revolutionary songs considered dangerous by the Finnish political and cultural elite at the time. All of the above-mentioned songs were also in use during the Finnish Civil War in 1918. (Kurkela 2009a: 425.)

The Finnish Civil War was a violent clash between the so-called Reds and Whites. The Reds were mainly socialists, industrial and farm workers and the Whites middle class conservatives, entrepreneurs, academics and independent farmers. Finland had declared independence from Russia in December 1917, but this had only strengthened the tensions that had begun to build up after the February and October Revolutions in 1917. The Civil War began on January 27, 1918, and divided the country in two. The Red Guard took over Helsinki and most of Southern Finland, while the Finnish government troops, the White Army, together with the voluntary White Civil Guards, established their headquarters in Vaasa and ruled Ostrobothnia. The situation escalated quickly and led to bloody battles between the Reds and the Whites. In mid-March Tampere and its surroundings became the stage of the largest battle in the history of the Nordic countries. In early April the Whites won the battle, and in the following weeks with the help of Finnish Jaegers and German and Swedish troops, seized the rest of Southern Finland. On May 16, the White Army organised a grand parade in Helsinki to celebrate their victory. (See e.g., Tepora & Roselius 2014; Alapuro 2015.)

The Finnish Civil War lasted less than four months but led to the death of over 37 000 people (about 1% of the population), of whom the majority 27 000 belonged to the defeated, the Reds. Over 7000 Reds were executed in the bloody aftermath of the war and 76 000 Reds prisoned. About 12 000 of the prisoners died during

the following summer and autumn at prisoner-of-war-camps of malnutrition and illnesses. (Tepora & Roselius 2014: 2; Alapuro 2015: 22, 37; see also War victims in Finland 1914–1922, The registry of names of the war dead between 1914–1922.) For decades after the official and public commemoration of the war dead applied only to the winners, the Whites (Roselius 2014), whereas the families of the Reds were forced to mourn and honour their dead in the private sphere of home and family and with fellow members of leftist political organisations, worker's unions and clubs. (Peltonen 2002; Heimo & Peltonen 2003: 43.)

The Civil War effected Finnish society on all levels and in long-lasting ways, some of which effect Finnish society even a century later. For instance, there are still disputes concerning the erecting of memorials and the dealing of mass graves. (See e.g., Seitsonen & al. 2019; Hautamäki & Laine 2020; Lintunen & Heimo 2021: 43–44.) The Civil War and the ruthless and unjust punishing of the defeated do not easily fit into the grand narrative of Finland, which emphasizes the idea of a united nation. Especially for the state, it is easier to commemorate The Winter War (1939–1940) and the Continuation War (1941–1944) than the Civil War. (Kivimäki 2012; Tepora & Roselius eds. 2014; Alapuro 2015; Hentilä 2018.)

In addition to songs, the historical culture of the Finnish Civil War includes an evolving number of novels, plays, films, museum exhibitions and games. The war is also an object of extensive study. (See e.g. Tepora & Roselius 2014; Tepora 2018; Lintunen & Heimo eds. 2018; Lintunen & Heimo 2021.) In particular, the memory of the Civil War lives in the context of local or family history. (Heimo 2010; Torsti 2012, 23–126.) Today this interest in family history can be easily observed on social media, for instance in Facebook groups dedicated to the Civil War. (Heimo 2014; Savolainen, Lukin & Heimo 2020: 66–70.)

The musical legacy of the Finnish Civil War consists of a repertoire of songs significant for the Whites and Reds during the Civil War, which are still sung or listened to as well as contemporary songs about the Civil War. In this article, we approach the musical legacy of the Civil War from the perspective of *uses of history* or *uses of the past*. On one hand, the concept refers to historical culture and its uses in society and on the other hand to historical culture as a source of historical consciousness and shared memories. In both cases, politics of history and memory are always at stake. (Aronsson 2005; Kalela 2012.)

In the first part of the article, we examine the music repertoire of the Civil War in order to present the context the songs were created in and to explain their popularity. After this, we present two cases of Civil War songs published on YouTube. The first case analyses why three so-called *popular comical songs* (kuplettilaulu) sung by the Whites during the Civil War continue to attract attention and circulate on YouTube. Comical songs were theatrical performances consisting of witty political or satirical verses sung at theatres, restaurants and

other public events including soirées (iltamat) organized by political or civic organizations. (Suodenjoki 2019: 231.) The second case focuses on one specific new song composed in 2018 to commemorate the centennial of the Civil War mainly from the point of view of the Red side. We are especially interested in the reception of these songs on YouTube. Why do they still circulate? What explains their popularity? What kind of meanings do these music videos convey today?

The mediation of war memories on social media is a growing field of study, but to a large degree these studies have focused on how memories of past wars frame our understanding of contemporary conflicts. Less attention has been paid to the impact of social media on how past wars are remembered and interpreted today and why. Can these lead as Mikaly Makhortykh (2020: 149–150, 157) has suggested to new aggressions, strengthen right-wing and nationalistic politics, and racism?

Music repertoire of the 1918 Finnish Civil War

The roots of the music repertoire used during the 1918 Finnish Civil War, and remembered long after, date back to the social movement that began after the mid-19th century, centred on the rise of the idea of nationality and the construction of the Finnish nation-state. From 1809 to 1917, Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy ruled by the Russian emperor. The development of musical life in Finland followed international models and was strongly tied to the political climate of the era. As the idea of nationality strengthened, a need for various national symbols emerged. Creating visual, verbal, and iconic representations of national values, goals and history was aimed at uniting people. One of the foremost symbols was music, which became a key tool in enhancing Finnish identity and national cohesion. The changing political circumstances inspired composers and poets to write works appropriate to the situation. As a result, at the turn of the 20th century, a “national music repertoire” became established in Finland, consisting of current national marches and anthems, hymns and folk songs. The same repertoire was repeated when singing was taught at elementary schools as well as in the soirées of increasing association activities and many other events. At the heart of the music activities were brass bands and choirs, actively set up within the associations. (See e.g., Rantanen 2013; Kurkela 2009b.)

These musical activities culminated in the national song festivals organized by the Association of Popular Education¹, whose aim was to bolster Finnish national identity through music – regardless of social class. During the culmination period in the 1890s, song festivals were held annually. The highlight was the singing and playing competition, which welcomed amateur choirs and orchestras from all over Finland. For each festival, the Association of Popular Education printed songbooks and score books for both choirs and orchestras. The repertoire was in accordance with

the national music repertoire, and with the help of printed music and songbooks, the music spread throughout Finland with music enthusiasts visiting the festivals. Books were also copied by hand. (Smeds & Mäkinen 1986. See also Kurkela 2009b, 69–74.)

The core of the national music repertoire consisted of the above-mentioned *Maamme* as well as *Porilaisten marssi* (March of the Pori Regiment), *Savolaisen laulu* (Song of the people of Savonia), *Vaasan marssi* (March of Vaasa), and *Suomen laulu* (Song of Finland). The songs shared a strong national ethos and praise of the brave people and beautiful nature of Finland. (See Kurkela 2009b; Rantanen 2013.) Of the religious songs, the most popular was *Jumala ompe linnamme* (A Mighty Fortress Is Our God) which, for its rebellious words, was well suited to elevating national sentiments. This “Battle Hymn of the Reformation” has been associated with many national, even revolutionary aspects and connections in history. In Grand Duchy of Finland of Finland, the hymn was particularly popular during the dramatic events of the first Russification period², when its importance as an anti-Russian battle song was highlighted. The hymn was also chosen for the core programme of the aforementioned song festivals. The most vigorous periods of Russification periods in 1899–1905 and 1908–1917 further raised the popularity of the patriotic singing repertoire in Finland. (Kurkela 2009b: 88; Rantanen 2013: 232; Saunio 1974, 5.) In the unstable political situation of the time, Jean Sibelius composed perhaps the most famous Finnish nationalist protest song, *Ateenalaisten laulu* (The Song of the Athenians, 1899). (Kurkela 2009a: 425–426.)

With the strengthening of the socialist labour movement especially after the Russian Revolution of 1905, the Finnish political field became fragmented. At the same time, the previously unified musical culture began to diverge, and the labour movement became more active in collecting and using its own musical repertoire appropriate to the political goals of the movement. In the beginning, the song repertoire consisted of well-known international labour marches, such as *The Internationale*, *La Marseillaise* and *Warshavjanka*. The lyrics were either translated into Finnish or rewritten in accordance with the goals of the working class. There was a very concrete reason behind the lack of domestic music repertoire among the Finnish labourers: in the early 20th century, unlike the bourgeoisie, the organized labour movement in Finland did not have its own reserve of educated composers. The only exception was Oskar Merikanto, an established Finnish composer, who composed his *Työväen marssi* (Workers’ March) in 1894. The words to the march were written by the poet Antti Törneröos. The message of the song was moderate. As the first widespread domestic labour march³, however, it was adopted by the Finnish labour movement as its anthem, and the song was widely used on various occasions from soirées to funerals and demonstrations. (See e.g. Rantanen 2016.) With the advent of the Civil War, the music repertoire of the workers became more politically explicit.

By the time the war broke out, both sides – the Reds and the Whites – had already adopted their own canon of political songs. The White side utilized well-known national tunes in its repertoire. Of these, the aforementioned *Maamme*, *Jumala ompe linnamme* and *Porilaisten marssi* represented the older strata. New White songs included *Karjalan jääkärien marssi* (Karelian Jaegers' March), the wistful *Jääkärin laulu* (Song of the Jaeger), and *Jääkärien marssi*, later known also by the name *Jääkärimarssi* (Jaegers' March), composed by Jean Sibelius, which became the most famous march among the Whites both during and after the war. The lyrics were written by a Finnish jaeger Heikki Nurmio. With the exception of the Finnish national anthem *Maamme*, all the songs mentioned were battle songs designed to inspire crowds to defend their cause. (Kurkela 2009b: 425–429.) After the Civil War, some of the White marches were merged into the tradition of Finnish military music and some of were adopted by certain brigades and are no longer associated with the Civil War. In addition to marching songs, comical songs were popular among the Whites, who sung these to mock Reds. (Kurkela 2009a: 430.)

During the pre-war and war periods, the Reds utilized familiar songs that raised the spirit of rebellion and victory, such as *Työväen marssi*, *Warshavjanka*, *The Internationale*, *La Marseillaise* and *Köyhälistön marssi* (March of the Proletariat). Few new songs were written during the war. On the Red side, newer songs were defiant and bloody battle songs such as *Laulu lahtarikaartista* (Song about the Butcher Guard), *Punakaartilaisten marssi* (March of the Red Guards), *Barrikaadimarssi* (Barricade March) and *Köyhälistön kurjuudesta* (Song of the Misery of the Proletariat), composed in 1917 and 1918. The songs also emphasized the will to win, named the treacherous enemy and glorified dying for the sake of the worker's identity and freedom. Newer songs were often adapted from Russian Bolsheviks. (Kurkela 2009b: 431–433.)

Brass bands were popular at different occasions during the Civil War, especially in connection with the mass funerals of the Red fighters killed in battle. These funerals were impressive events in which music played a central role. In Vyborg, for example, in February 1918, 28 Reds were buried together. According to the newspapers, the “multi-thousand-headed” audience first gathered in the town square, from where they set out towards the municipal hospital to the accompaniment of *La Marseillaise*. From there, the “fallen comrades” were carried to Papula, where they were buried, accompanied by the funeral march *Integer vitae*. During the ceremony, the brass band also performed *The Internationale* and *La Marseillaise* one more time. (Rantanen 2019: 237–238; *Työ* 25 March 1918.)

The aftermath of the war produced its own songs. The defiant and satirical songs of the Whites, such as *Vöyrin marssi* (March of Vöyri) and *Kuularuiskulaulu* (Machine Gun Song) as well as more serious marches and hymns in honour of

the “freedom fighters” who fell in the war, emphasizing the heroic feats of the Jaegers and were matched by “prisoner-of-war-camp songs” dealing with the enormous destruction and trauma caused by executions and mass deaths inflicted upon the Reds as the beaten side. These songs form a very interesting song type where the written culture of the songbooks and the dying tradition of oral culture song-making cross paths. They were modelled after 19th-century broadside songs and other folk songs. It has been argued that they actually represented the final heyday of this kind of traditional song writing in Finland. (Kurkela 2009b: 435–436; see also Suodenjoki 2019: 229–231.)

Many workers who fought on the side of the Reds managed to escape to North America during and after the Finnish Civil War. Thanks to these immigrants, prisoner-of-war-camp songs were printed in the songbooks of the Finnish-American labour movement. One of the most interesting collections is the set of Finnish-language song books of the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Especially in the books published in 1920 and 1925, a considerable amount of space was devoted to songs about the crushing defeat and following cruel treatment of the workers during and after the Civil War. Some of these songs were also found in handwritten songbooks. In the United States, in particular, prisoner-of-war-camp songs were also recorded. Publishing them in songbooks and on records was crucial for preserving the song type, since publishing them in Finland was difficult for obvious political reasons. (Rantanen 2020a; see also Tikka & Suodenjoki 2021: 144–147.)

Post-War Finland had a closer relationship with the Soviet Union than other Western European states and in Finnish politics led to what has been called “Finlandization”. Finlandization effected Finnish society and controlled public discussion on certain topics for decades. (Kivimäki 2012: 489.) Interestingly enough, though Finlandization was at its strongest in the 1970s, a LP-record collection of Whites songs was still published titled *Talonpoikaisarmeijan lauluja* (Independent farmers army songs) in 1969 as well as a collection of war time songs *Sota-ajan iskelmiä* in 1970. But it took another twenty years and the collapse of the Soviet Union until the next record collections of White songs were published: *Isänmaan lauluja: Songs of the Fatherland* (1992), *Muistoja Pohjolasta: Valkoisen Suomen lauluja* (Memories from the North: Songs of the Whites, 1997) and *Sininen ja valkoinen: isänmaan marsseja ja lauluja* (Blue and White: Marches and songs of the Fatherland, 2011). The latter consisted of recordings from 1958 to 1998. (Kauhanen 2021, 17.)

In recent decades, a so-called neo-patriotic turn has taken place in Finland. In the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union, patriotism and adoration for the veterans of the Winter War (1939–1940) and Continuation War (1941–1944) have become key elements of mainstream Finnish culture. (Kinnunen & Jokisipilä

2012; Kivimäki 2012.) For instance, *Jääkärimarssi* has been performed annually since 1998 at the Independence Day Reception held by the President of Finland on December 6.

Songs utilized by the Reds and the Whites are still present in today's music culture. In particular, familiar patriotic songs continue to be played on various occasions, regardless of the political position. Many of the labour songs from a hundred years ago have survived and received new interpretations. In connection with the centennial of the Civil War in 2018 some of the songs of the Reds, especially, re-emerged. For example, the women's choir Tellus used original songs and archival material to create a series of Civil War songs to commemorate the experiences of Red women. (Koski 2018.) In his song *Länkipohja 19* musician, V. A. Virtanen tells the story of his grandfather, who survived the bloody battle of Länkipohja. (Virtanen 2017.) In their project, *Punavalkoisia lauluja* (Red-White songs), folk musicians Helmi Camus, Minna Koskenlahti, Iida Savolainen and Tero Pajunen composed new mixed versions of original Red and White songs.

Methodological issues on studying YouTube videos

Alongside Facebook, YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms around the world. Since its' launch in 2005 it has grown into the worlds' largest online video platform with over two billion users. (Tankovska 2021.) Concurrently this makes YouTube one of the world largest digital archives and a significant preserver of cultural heritage. The large part of videos published on YouTube are user-generated and the curating of this immense collection of videos is in the hands of its users. As a result, the collection is dynamic and ever-changing with videos continuously being added and removed. These features distinguish it from a traditional archive with stable collections (Pietrobruno 2013: 1260–1261) and therefore it is more fruitful to approach YouTube as a *creative archive* (Garde-Hansen 2011: 83–84) or as a *spontaneous archive* (Heimo & Hänninen 2019: 122–126).

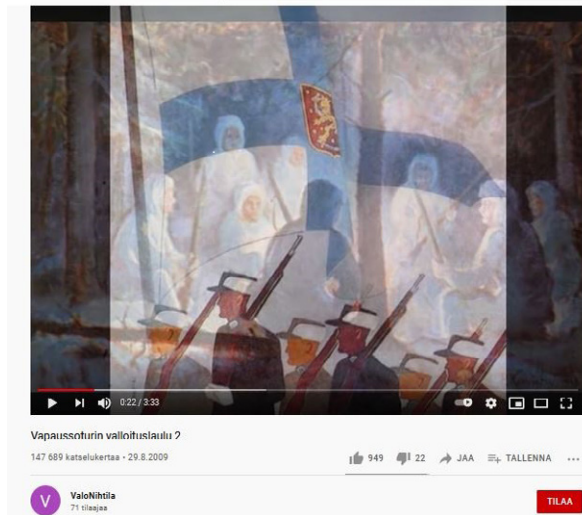


Figure 1: The video *Vapaussoturin valloituslaulu 2* (discussed in the next section) is a typical example of the remixing of images from the Finnish Civil War and Second World War. (ValoNihtilä, *Vapaussoturin valloituslaulu 2*, 29.8.2009, accessed 23.6.2021; Screenshot by Aila Mustamo 23.6.2021.)

Visuality is an increasingly important feature of social media (Gibbs & al. 2015), and on YouTube an essential one. In addition to accessing archival materials like original footage of historical events or performances, YouTube is used for publishing new videos using material originating from various sources. The combining of different kinds of visual and audio material to create new remix or mash-up videos is a typical trait of participatory culture. (Jenkins et al. 2013.) Though only a tiny portion of all viewers comment on YouTube videos, these comments offer insight to the reception of the videos. YouTube comments are public, reactive, asynchronous and differ in length. Comments can be reactions to the content or quality of the video, the publisher of the video, or the comments can address previous comments or have nothing to do with the particular video. Commenting can happen instantly, months, or years later, but even then, they can stir new discussions or debates. (de Smale 2020: 193-194; see also Reagle 2015: 2.)

YouTube videos related to the 1918 Finnish Civil War include original footage, photos and oral history interviews originating from archives, television and concert recordings, movie trailers, videos of historical re-enactments and visits to battle or memory sites and songs. The most popular videos have been viewed hundreds of thousands of times, some even over a million times like for example, the video *Vapaussoturin Valloituslaulu - Marching Song of the Finnish White Army*. (Mz_Zulle 2018.) In some cases, the materials used in these videos have little to none to do with the Civil War. For instance, the most often viewed version of *Vöyrin marssi* with over 700 000 views on YouTube by TheAlmightyPiePower

(2010) uses clips from Pekka Parikka's 1989 film *Talvisota* (Winter War). It seems that the only reason for using photos clips from Finnish war films about WWII (1939–1945) or from the Finnish Wartime Photograph Archive of the Finnish Defence Forces is that these portray war in general, or in the latter case link the video to a more honourable war than the Civil War.

Today most users realise that YouTube as well as other forms of social media are vulnerable sites for harvesting personal data or misuse, most users still see the use of social media worthwhile and beneficial. (See e.g. Paasonen 2021: 10–11.) Though YouTube is a commercial platform owned by Google, we regard the study of YouTube videos ethically less challenging than the study of most other forms of social media. YouTube videos are to a large degree intended for public viewing and may therefore be treated as a form of public media, which does not require informed consent from those studied. However, there are still issues that need to be taken into consideration. We are aware that our viewings of the videos increases the number of views each video has and effects their apparent popularity. We are also aware that though most commentators use nicknames, this does not mean full anonymity. Because our analysis includes analysing comments that contain political and ideological charged views, we do not cite individual comments. (See Markham & Buchanan 2012, Östman & Turtiainen 2016.)

White comical songs as vehicles of neo-patriotism, far-right ideology and anti-Semitism

Some of the marches of the Whites, for instance, *The Jaeger March*, are quite familiar to Finns from official state and military celebrations and parades. Many are also used as honour marches of army units. However, their historical background as songs of the Civil War are not commonly acknowledged or emphasized. Unlike these well-known marches, White comical songs are not performed at public events, but online audiences still recognize their significance as part of the musical heritage of the Whites.

The three White songs published on YouTube chosen for this case study, were selected for closer examination because their connection to the Civil War was more often recognized in the comments compared with the comments of other White songs of the same era, and thus the comments explicitly participate in the debates over the legacy of the Civil War. For instance, the marches of the Jaeger movement are often associated with the heroism of Finnish troops in WWII or other common neo-nationalist discourses. The first song *Vapaussoturin valloituslaulu* (Marching Song of the Finnish White Army) is an arrangement of an older march originating from the Russo-Turkish War in the 1870's. The lyrics were written by the Finnish author, Ilmari Kianto. The second *Vöyrin marssi* refers

to the non-commissioned officer's school located in Vöyri, Ostrobothnia and the third *Kuularuiskulaulu* describes the adventures of a Jaeger officer in the Civil War. All three comical songs published on YouTube are extremely popular. All together the 24 different versions of the songs, *Vapaussoturin valloituslaulu* (eleven versions), *Vöyrin marssi* (nine versions) and *Kuularuiskulaulu* (four versions), were viewed 1.4 million times and commented on over 3000 times when they were analysed in 2018 and 2020. Of the three, *Vapaussoturin valloituslaulu* seems to be the most popular of the songs, but it is important to take into notice that almost all the *Kuularuiskulaulu* videos were deleted from YouTube by the administrators during the fieldwork period because of the far-right and anti-Semitic tendencies of the comments. All three songs include violent metaphors and hatred towards the enemies, which are in the songs called "Russkies" and "Bolsheviks". (Mustamo 2022.)

The impact of the neo-patriotic turn to the national ethos are visible in the videos and comments related to the musical legacy of the Whites. However, there is very little discussion about the Civil War. On the contrary, quite many commentators are even in doubt which war they are actually discussing. The Civil War songs are confused with the more heroic stories of the WWII, which are also represented in videos and pictures used in these videos. (Mustamo 2022: 28-29.) This is understandable considering the role of WWII in Finnish neo-nationalism. Furthermore, it is easy to access and share WWII photos published online by the Finnish Wartime Photograph Archive of the Finnish Defence Forces. In social media, archived photos are an essential element for the construction of national identities online. (Matila 2020.)

Historian Tuomas Tepora (2018) sees that above all the legacy of the Civil War is a mirror for dividing lines in current society. Many of the commentators of the three most popular comical songs have searched for this kind of music to strengthen their ideas of political antagonism between their patriotic conservatism and modern, tolerant liberalism. In the comments, parallels are drawn between the two sides of the Civil War and topical debates in the Finnish society. Most often the view of the Whites dominates. Liberal leftists, or "cultural Marxists", the EU and immigrants are seen as fiends who are often blamed for unpatriotic actions, or restrictions on the freedom of speech. In the comments there are also claims that patriotism or listening to comical songs of the Civil War are "almost illegal". Some of the arguments resemble far-right conspiracy theories, which circulate in social media for political purposes. (E.g., Miller-Idriss 2020.)

Although anti-Semitism was not unknown in Finnish society in 1918, there are no references to anti-Semitism in the lyrics of the three comical songs. However, reincarnated accusations and conspiracy theories, usually written in English, are presented among the comments of these songs published on

YouTube. For instance, Jews are blamed for causing the Communist revolution in Russia, and therefore the Finnish Civil War, which was a consequence of the revolution. According to Hanebrink (2018), the old myth of Judeo-Boshevism has become an essential part of the ideology of the international far-right. It is also a way to integrate the old Civil War songs to current Finnish society. For instance, one commentator writes that instead of Russians, today “Zionists are against us”. Jews are claimed to be behind supposed restrictions on the freedom of speech, for example the removed far-right videos on YouTube. In the comments, multiculturalism and decay of traditional values are also linked to the theory of the global Jewish conspiracy.

Even though anti-Semitic comments are relatively rare on the comment field related to the Finnish Civil War songs, their existence is remarkable. Anti-Semitic speech has become more common among the far-right groups since the 1990’s. (Simonsen 2020.) Its appearance to the comments of Finnish war songs demonstrates the situation where the international far-right participates and affects the discussions on more national topics like the musical heritage of the Finnish Civil War. Far-right activists have attempted to appropriate the legacy of the Civil War for their more topical purposes both in Finland and in other countries. (E.g. Hentilä 2018; Seitsonen et al. 2019.)

In general, neo-nationalist ideas have replaced the actual commemorating of the Civil War in the videos and comments related to the comical songs of the White. This has opened the door for more topical political debates, and for the international far-right. The analysis of the comments reveals only what kinds of ideas are today associated with the legacy of the Civil War. More research is needed to find out what is the role of the songs in the construction process of these ideas. The sonic appeal of music creates social bonding also in online environments. Relatively many people listen to music composed by radical groups without previous attitudes related to their ideologies. For some people, this is a step towards political radicalization. Additionally, music and lyrics are used to justify emotionally violent actions. (Pieslak 2015.)

The comical songs from the Finnish Civil War 1918 definitely radicalized young people during and after the war. Decades later, they faded away from the memory of most citizens. They were recorded and printed in songbooks, but there was no place for them in the public sphere. For these songs, social media, especially YouTube, offers a chance for reincarnation. Society has changed enormously since the days of the Civil War, but there is still societal and political antagonism, which may escalate to radicalism. Based on analysis of the comment fields related to YouTube videos, the three analysed comical songs of the White Army are utilized to create and strengthen political identities. Even though there are discussions about the legacy of the Civil War, the debate on the current stand of the society

dominates the comment fields. Some participants are waiting for the next Civil War, and some even suggest that the war has already begun. A hundred years after the Finnish Civil War, there is no reconciliation in sight on the YouTube comment fields of these comical songs. On the contrary, the commentators seem to participate in the international cultural war fuelled by ultraconservative agitators. (See e.g., Teitelbaum 2020.)

The circulation of digital heritage of the 1918 Finnish Civil War

Despite all the numerous acts of reconciliation carried out during the centennial of the Finnish Civil War in 2018, the memory of the Civil War continues to be a difficult and sensitive topic. In 2017, when Finland celebrated the centennial of its independence, the Prime Minister's Office set up a project titled "Suomi 100 / Finland 100" to coordinate all the thousands of national, regional and local events organized around the country. Although a few seminars about the Civil War were arranged as part of the Finland 100 -program during the year, it was clear that the commemoration of the Civil War was difficult to fit into this frame.

The difficulty to deal with the Civil War was apparent in April 2017, when a series of coins commemorating the achievements of independent Finland were made public. Due to the tremendous public outburst concerning some of the images pictured on the coins⁴, Finland's Ministry of Finance, cancelled the release of them on the very same day they were published. One of the ill-fated coins pictured an execution from the Civil War. For some the problem with this specific coin was the topic itself, the continuous commemoration of the bloody Civil War, and for some, that the artist had chosen such a disturbing event to celebrate the independence of Finland. (Mähkä 2018: 192-196; Hentilä 2018: 15; Seitsonen et al.: 753.) As if the choice of topic was not enough, the designer had used a well-known photo of a fake Civil War execution staged by the Whites, which was condemned widely by historians and other academics. (See e.g., Koppinen 2017.) However, there were also those, who challenged these views and could not understand why the Civil War and other difficult events could not be commemorated in this way.

**Rahapaja julkaisi teloituksesta juhlarahan
– Orpo toivoo että raha vedetään pois:
"Mauton"**

Rahapajan juhlarahassa on kuvattu sisällissodan aikainen teloitus.
Rahapaja: Asiasta vielä keskustellaan valtiovarainministerin kanssa.



Figure 2: The photo "An execution in Tammisaari" pictured on the coin was declared staged already in the 1960s. (Finnish Heritage Agency, HK19730518:1; YLE news 28 April 2017, screenshot by Anne Heimo 18.5.2021.)

During the centennial, the Finnish broadcasting company YLE took an active part in commemorating the war and published many large reports on the war and its consequences. In addition to a survey about family memories of the Civil War, YLE published both new and archived oral history interviews of the war as well as old news clips. (E.g. Haapaniemi & al. 2018.) One of YLEs' major projects for the year was a three-part television-series, which followed the composing process of a new song about the Finnish Civil War. The well-known Finnish rap-artist Paleface, Karri Miettinen, was invited to compose the song. (YLE Areena, *Laulu sisällissodasta* 13.4.2018.)

In the program, Paleface reflects on his thoughts about the Civil War, and especially about the fact that as a human rights activist he knows much more about recent Civil Wars and conflicts than he does of what happened in Finland in 1918. He also ponders about the reasons for his lack of knowledge. To learn more about the Civil War and to find ideas for his song, he discusses the Civil War with historians and artists, talks with people about their family memories of the Civil War and goes through archival materials, and then uses all this material in his song *Laulu sisällissodasta* (A Song about the Civil War). (YLE Areena, *Laulu sisällissodasta* 13.4.2018.)

In the video Paleface performs *Sisällisodan laulu* with the male voice chorus Ylioppilaskunnan laulajat singing the chorus lines. The lyrics are a combination of oral history, memoirs and traditional broadsheet ballads. The song tells of the war events in first-person, but also refers to the situation afterwards, it mentions the prisoner-of-war camps and the fact that many of the Reds were buried in mass graves and that the Reds were not allowed to commemorate their losses in public. The original lyrics are by Paleface and the English translation by hurja. (hurja 2018.)

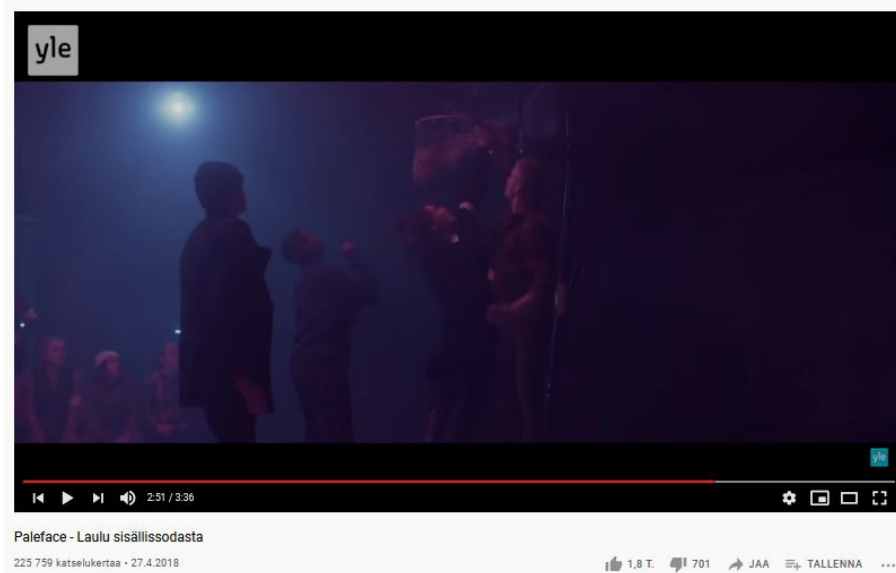


Figure 3. The original music video combines imagery from the Civil War and a basketball game. (Paleface: *Sisällissodan laulu*, YLE Areena, 27.4.2018, accessed 23.6.2021. Screenshot by Anne Heimo 23.6.2021.)

Overall, there are three versions of the song published on YouTube. The original version published by YLE on YouTube in April 2018 has to this day been viewed over 230 000 times and commented around 450 times. (Paleface 2018.) Many of the commentators praise the song itself or the topic, which they find touching, sad and still relevant. Some see the song only as “communist propaganda”. Another version of the song published on YouTube in May 2018, consists of only one image, but includes a brief insert of a woman talking about the Civil War in the beginning of the original performance by Paleface and Ylioppilaskunnan laulajat. (Daddy Pales 2018.) This video has been viewed over 50 000 times but has not been commented on. The third version is a live performance performed by Paleface and Ylioppilaskunnan laulajat as part of the Independence Day celebrations on December 6, 2018. This video has not attracted as many views (over 7000) as the other two versions. Two of the four comments are blunt and condemn Paleface and the song as “Marxist”. (C9 2018.)

The chorus of the song quotes a well-known labour-movement song *Kuolemaantuomitun hyvästijättö* (Farewell of a person condemned to death), which is known by many other names too such as *Äidin suru* (Mother’s sorrow), *Tuonelan ovella* (At the Door to the Underworld), *Tuonelan tie* (Road to the Underworld), *Kuolon kellot* (Bells of Death), *Elämän läki* (Law of Life), *Punavangin hyvästijättö* (Farewell of a Red prisoner) or *Kuolemaan tuomitun muistelmia 1918* (Memoirs of a person condemned to death). (Kataja 2002: 39.) The song is

commonly referred to as traditional and is said to originate from songs sung at prisoner-of-war camps after the Civil War, which as mentioned above circulated orally and by copying the lyrics into notebooks and printed as broadsheet type inexpensive popular pamphlets. The lyrics did not usually include melody notes or only referred to popular tunes, which people were supposed to know already. (Kurkela 2009b: 435–436; Suodenjoki 2019: 229–234.) This was also the case with this particular song, which was originally titled *Merimies se laivallansa seilailee* (A sailor on his ship at sea) and composed by Emil Kauppi for the joyful musical *Laivan kannelle* (On board) by Pasi Jääskeläinen in 1915. The play was performed for the first time two years later by the Temperance Society Taisto in December 1917 in Tampere. (Jääskeläinen & Kauppi 1915; see also Minkkinen.) It is not known who wrote the lyrics to *Kuolemaantuomitun hyvästijättö*, but it is widely believed to have been written by a Red prisoner a day before he was shot, while some memoirs mention that the song had been popular among the Reds already during the war. (See Saulo 2018.)

The one most well-known version of *Kuolemaantuomitun hyvästijättö* was recorded by Heli Keinonen in 1969. A very simple YouTube video consisting only of Keinonen's song and an image of an execution published by Teedriil (2008) has for long been one of the most viewed YouTube videos to commemorate the Reds and their losses. (Heimo 2014: 155–156.) Since its publication the video has been viewed over 380 000 times and commented on nearly 400 times. The commentators mainly side with the Red side, but not all. Interestingly enough, the image used in the video is actually the same photo of the staged execution pictured on the commemoration coin mentioned above, but in this case, the image has not caused controversy. Either the viewers do not know the background of the photo or in this particular context the authenticity of the photo is not as important as its symbolic value.

Conclusions

Songs and music have always played an important role in violent conflicts, wars, rebellions and revolutions. Songs have been sung to keep up spirits and hope as well as to defame the enemy. Afterwards these same songs have been used to celebrate victory and to honour and commemorate the memory of those who lost their lives. Today these songs continue to circulate in society, but sometimes for new reasons.

Over a hundred years after the 1918 Finnish Civil War the legacy of the war is still present in Finnish society. Especially at times of crisis, the war is brought up in public discussions and used as a parallel for current conflicts and people may still take sides according to their family background or political views. In this article,

we have looked at the century-long musical repertoire of the two sides of the Civil War, the winners, the Whites, and the defeated, the Reds. While songs from both sides are still sung at commemorative events, the songs of the winner side have become part of the musical repertoire of independent Finland and are performed also to celebrate the nation. On YouTube these same songs of the winners are used for even more ideological purposes. In some cases, the songs have lost their connection to the Civil War and have instead been connected to honor Finland's achievements and losses in WWII. The analysis of three popular White songs published on YouTube, reveal that these songs are used today to express and to promote radical and extreme views that can be categorised as neo-nationalistic, far-right ideological and anti-Semitic beyond Finland.

Though the winners of the war dominated the memory of the Finnish Civil War for decades, the memory of the Reds is today more apparent in public than ever. During the centennial of the Civil War in 2018 the experiences of the Reds were the object of dozens of novels, plays and other performances. The national broadcasting company YLE took actively part in remembering the Civil War and as part of these activities invited one of Finland's most well-known rap artists, Paleface, to compose a new song about the Civil War. The song *Sisällissodan laulu* is a combination of private and public memories of the war and gives tribute to the musical legacy of the Civil War by including a chorus line from one of the most popular prisoner-of-war camp songs – or what is assumed widely as a song composed by a Red sentenced to death. Though most of commentators of this song show sympathy towards the Reds and their harsh experiences, some clearly show opposite views. Though most of the commentators are Finnish, the videos have been commented by people from elsewhere too.

While most of the commemorative events of the centennial aimed at reconciliation and unity, our analysis of the musical legacy of the Finnish Civil War shows that there are still tensions and contradictions underlying Finnish society a hundred years later, which may come to the fore. An alarming finding is that especially White songs are now partially used in the international context to increase prejudices and hostilities between people and to fuel far-right conspiracy theories both. Our findings reveal that the memories of the Finnish Civil War are not anymore merely a national question. In the Internet Age, the borders of nation-states do not limit uses of history, and local historical conflicts like the 1918 Finnish Civil War can inspire international audiences to spread their extreme political ideas internationally.

Traditionally, the Red and White identifications have been based on shared memories of a family, or at least a societal class. The public debates have reflected tensions, which existed already during the early years of independency. The examination of online uses of the musical legacy of the Civil War raises a question

if the modern conflicts reveal new dividing lines which have more often their roots in national and international cultural battles than in the legacy of the Civil War itself.

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge that this research was conducted within the framework of the JPICH Digital Heritage research project “Digital Heritage in Cultural Conflicts (DigiCONFLICT)” (EU grant agreement number: JPICH 699523). Aila Mustamo’s work was supported by The Finnish Cultural Foundation.

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¹ Kansanvalistusseura is a politically and religiously non-affiliated organisation founded in 1874 and is today known as The Finnish Lifelong Learning Foundation, Kvs.

² The Russification project was a set of governmental policies applied by Russian officials to limit the special administrative status of the Grand Duchy of Finland and to contest nationalist movements in the Baltic States and other Western parts of the Russian Empire. In Finland, these processes aroused strong resistance among the political elite and were perceived as acts of oppression. (See Jussila, Hentilä & Nevakivi 2009: 67–100.)

³ Interestingly, the first Finnish labour song was released a year before Merikanto’s *Työväen marssi*. That was a march called *Työkansan marssi* (March of the Working People) written for the Vyborg’s Labour Association by J. H. Erkko and Jean Sibelius. Erkko wrote the lyrics for the song and asked his friend Sibelius to compose the piece, who agreed. However, the march of Sibelius and Erkko never became as popular as Merikanto’s composition. (See Rantanen 2020b: 312–318.)

⁴ The designer of the series Ilkka Suppanen had meant to symbolize how Finland had survived difficult times with his choice of images.