

Introduction

We look at the world once, in childhood. The rest is memory.
Louise Gluck

A child's world always has had odd dimensions, as narrow as the backyard
or a corner of the kitchen, but as broad as the imagination.
Reed Karaim

We have each of us a life story, an inner narrative—whose continuity,
“whose sense, is our lives. It might be said that each of us constructs
and lives “a narrative,” and that this narrative is our identities.
Oliver Sacks

Perhaps the most common myth about war is that it ends when the textbooks
say it does, when the cease-fires begin and the documents are signed.
Ann Hagedorn

Breaking the Silence

Until relatively recently, the stories of Finland's estimated 80,000 or more *sotalapsi* or *krigsbarn* (“war children” in Finnish and Swedish, respectively) were shared primarily among themselves. Most of these children were sent to Sweden for safekeeping during World War II, but some 4,000 were transported to Denmark and elsewhere. While the majority of stories that follow relate the experiences of children sent to Sweden, there are a few that describe the experiences of those sent to Denmark or who remained in Finland throughout the war, as well as the story of one little girl who during Finland's difficult postwar years was sent to the United States, where her childhood was blighted by confusion, servitude, and humiliation. Considering the number of such children, a number rivaling Finland's approximately 89,000 military casualties,¹ it is surprising that more has not been written about “the world's largest child transfer,” now perceived as “a great social-historical mistake.”²

As an identifying label, “war children” has generally come to refer only to children sent to other countries in wartime (and, of course, to the adults they later became), but for the purposes of the present volume I

would like to extend the definition to include children who lived on the home front during the war. It is important to see that even those children who were not separated from their biological families and native language also often endured great emotional trauma and hardships. Aura Korppi-Tommola writes about “the forgotten group of those Finnish children that stayed in Finland” whose “life stories have been subordinated to adults’ memories and to the experiences of the children that were evacuated to Sweden or Denmark.”³ While statistically it may be true that there is “evidence for greater vulnerability and individual weaknesses” among evacuated children than those who remained behind, it is important to remember that a vast number of these were also brutalized by war and their families’ often desperate circumstances.⁴

In 2001, while living in Finland, I was introduced to a war child and became fascinated by what she described as the mass evacuations of Finnish children during the “Winter,” “Continuation,” and “Lapland” Wars (1939–1945), fought by Finland mostly against Russia, Finland’s principal historical oppressor. Although I had read many books on these wars, I had seen nothing in English about the Finnish child transports, which puzzled me. Similar wartime transports—from Central Europe to other countries during 1919–1922; from Spain to England and the USSR in 1937; from London to the English countryside (“Operation Pied Piper”) throughout World War II; from Europe to various countries during the 1930s and 1940s (the “Kindertransports” of Jewish children); and the “Peter Pan Children” of Cuba, sent to the United States after the Bay of Pigs fiasco, to name a few examples—have been widely researched and written about.⁵ Yet there appeared to be virtually nothing in English concerning the Finnish war children. Even more perplexing was the discovery that there appeared to be extremely little written on this subject in either Finnish or Swedish, though nearly all other events relating to Finland in World War II have been exhaustively researched and written about.

Not until 1977 was the silence broken when former war child Annu Edvardson published her revealing history and memoir, *Det får inte hända igen: Finska Krigsbarn: 1939–45* (This Must Never Happen Again: Finnish War Children, 1939–45).⁶ Today considered the first real work published about the Finnish war children, this book created a sensation and inspired other war children to come forward. Among them was Sinikka Ortmark Almgren, who related her war child story in *Du som haver barnen kär* (Thou Who Hast the Children Dear), which appeared in 1989.⁷ The momentum grew and several other war children came forward to share their stories. As of 2004 some “seventy works [nearly all of them written in Finnish or Swedish] from the genres of fiction and autobiography”

had been located by Irene Virtala.⁸ Since then, more have been published by war child associations that grew up in the 1990s in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. According to Pertti Kavén, who also helped to break the silence in 1985 with his acclaimed *70,000 små öden* (70,000 Small Destinies),⁹ one of the reasons for the prolonged silence surrounding the child transfers is that criticisms of them were officially censored by the Finnish government “because it was thought that they would offend the Swedes.” Kavén further writes that the “censorship organ used child transports as a means of active propaganda aimed at improving the relations between the two countries.”¹⁰ Another concern both during and after the war years was that, “had they [i.e., Finnish government officials] not allowed the child transfers, Finland might not have received any other war-related help from Sweden.”¹¹

Later, during the Cold War years of the 1950s and 1960s, Finns were officially discouraged from discussing *any* of their war experiences for fear of Russian reprisals. Former war child Kai Rosnell—whose story is included in the present anthology—has written that, “after some discussions in the Finnish Parliament in the early [1950s], the war children were never mentioned in Finland; they were forgotten.” Nor were they “mentioned in history books until the end of the 1990s, so a whole generation of Finnish youngsters grew up without knowing anything of this part of their history.”¹² I have also been told by many former war children who returned to Finland—upwards of 15,000 never returned or, after returning, found their way back to Sweden—that they felt their burdens were relatively insignificant in light of the enormous personal and material losses experienced by surviving parents and siblings. After the war Finns were busy rebuilding their devastated country, and many Finnish parents refused to discuss their children’s expatriate experiences out of shame, guilt, or due to their own overwhelming war traumas.

Veikko Inkinen—a war child whose story is also included here—has another theory: namely, that “Finns have an underdog psychology. Many of us believe that the last thousand years have been a long series of catastrophes or dangerous mistakes. There is little sentimental feeling toward things gone. Why should anyone dwell in useless memories?” Regarding the postwar years he adds, “Why remind the Russians that we had made war with Hitler against them? The war, war veterans, and war children were subjects better to avoid speaking about.”¹³ Finally, the trauma of the initial separation from their biological parents and native language (at the time of the war Finland’s Swedish-speaking minority was about 12 percent of the population, and some war children came from this group), compounded by the often worse trauma of forced repatriation and post-war separation from their Swedish foster parents and second acquired

language, was simply too painful for many to address until psychologically and emotionally unavoidable.

In her own war child memoir, *Att inte höra till* (Not to Belong), Ann-Maj Danielsen describes how, after decades of repression, she felt “confronted with memories [that had been] dormant for over fifty years [but which suddenly] created an almost unbearable chaos and confusion in [her] life.” She writes that

for a long time, I was convinced I was getting ill and that I was even about to lose my mind. Without understanding the reasons, I slipped into a surreal parallel world that, aside from the usual life with work, family, and spare time, also contained nightmares robbing me of my night’s rest. Also, there were all these scary glimpses and memories that wouldn’t let go, but very vividly made me understand that these weren’t just nightmares sprung from unreal fantasies.

Danielsen describes how, despite her efforts to suppress disturbing glimpses of her past, “one painful memory after another rolled up like a movie from my subconscious mind. When I finally realized that I couldn’t get away from nightmares or flashbacks, I instead forced myself to try to finally understand what all of this meant.” Once she began to write about her early childhood, Danielsen’s memories “came crashing down”: her departure at age five for Sweden, the five years spent with her caring foster parents, and her forced return to an extremely hard life in the Finnish countryside. There she lived with her family in a wooden shed with newspaper on the walls, lice, little food, no heating or plumbing, and a tyrannical father who had been psychologically damaged during the war.¹⁴

Like Danielsen, most of the war children I have corresponded with since 2001 claim that their wartime experiences haunted them in later life. Many underwent years of therapy to deal with troubling memories and general feelings of emptiness and rootlessness. And although not all experienced irrational feelings of guilt, others have struggled to deal with this additional emotional burden. In a text written for Waltic, an International Writers Conference in Stockholm in 2008, Almgren wrote: “We lonely war children were expected to be nice, obedient, and grateful. Some of us found a loving family, others didn’t. . . . But most of us are plagued by guilt from feeling rejected by our parents as well as from having deserted both them and our Swedish foster parents.” Other war children have sought healing through sharing their stories in the safe context of war child associations. Today, according to Kavén, there are fifteen such associations in Finland with a combined membership of 1,193, six associations in Sweden, and one in Denmark. Though this is a small percentage of war children still living in Finland, Sweden, Denmark, and elsewhere (there are an estimated 30,000 to 40,000 living in Finland alone), it nevertheless

points to the collective imperative that gave rise to these associations. Inkinen was the first chairman of Hämeenlinna's war child association and feels the sharing of stories to be so central to emotional healing that he has personally coached many members in how to write their memoirs. As he puts it, this is the "best and safest" way to deal with childhood trauma.

Part of my purpose in collecting these stories—and they are as various and unique as the war children themselves—is to bring them to an English-speaking audience. Although several anthologies of stories, mostly sponsored by war child associations, have appeared in Finnish and Swedish, I believe mine to be the first anthology of its kind in English. As such, it fills a void in the English literature on World War II by some of the war's last surviving eyewitnesses and its most invisible victims.

It goes without saying that the Finnish war child transports would never have occurred in peacetime; therefore, a very brief summary of Finland's three wars—which together span most of Europe's World War II—appears below.

First, however, a note on this anthology's title: *To the Bomb and Back*. This was the name given to a game that Eeva Lindgren played with her friends in wartime Finland. Eeva is one of those who remained in Finland for the duration of the war and remembers the nearly constant bombardments by Soviet planes with special vividness. After a bomb had created a colossal crater in her neighborhood, she and other children had racing contests to and from the crater. They called these contests "*Pommille ja Takaisin!*" (To the Bomb and Back!).

Having heard and read dozens of war child stories, it seems to me that every child of war had his or her "bomb" to contend with: living under constant threat of enemy attack and near-starvation in Finland; being put on a train in the middle of the night to suddenly find one's mother has vanished; encountering an entirely alien culture where no one can explain what is happening; having to learn a new language in Sweden and again in Finland after several months or years away; discovering the shocking news that one has another long-forgotten "family" to which one must now immediately return; being brutalized in one's native land, host country, or both; being "sold" without explanation to a foreign family to work as an unpaid laborer; and/or suffering terrible homesickness in Sweden or, later, in Finland. These describe just a few of the traumas war children commonly describe, and it must be emphasized that most war children experienced multiple traumas. Sadly, many experienced the majority of them. In part, through writing about their often very painful pasts, the majority of contributors to this anthology all seem to have made it "back" from their own personal "bombs" and to have achieved greater peace of mind, although it has often been a long and arduous journey.

Finland at War: 1939–1945

For Finland, World War II meant three distinct wars. The first was the fabled Winter War (*Talvisota*), which lasted from November 1939 to mid-March 1940: three-and-a-half months during which Finns proved themselves “Davids” in their valiant struggle against the Soviet “Goliaths.” The second was the so-called Continuation War (*Jatkosota*), which lasted from July 1941 to September 1944 and was fought in concert with Nazi Germany as a cobelligerent against the Soviet Union.¹⁵ The third and final war was the Lapland War (*Lapinsota*), which began in September 1944 and was reluctantly waged: as part of the ruinous armistice agreement with the Soviet Union at the end of the Continuation War, Finland was compelled to drive German troops out of Lapland, which was ultimately accomplished in April 1945.

In 1939, Finland, like her three Baltic neighbors to the south—Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—had enjoyed only brief independence from Russia and was still a young nation. Although it had declared its independence on December 6, 1917, independence was not realized until May 1918 after a bloody civil war that created bitter divisions but resulted in the expulsion of the Bolshevik army. In 1939 Finland did not want to give up its hard-won independence. Nor did it want to give up any of its territories. The Winter War came about because Finland refused to agree to territorial demands made by the Soviet Union.¹⁶ As a consequence of Finland’s noncompliance, Russia broke off diplomatic negotiations and began its attack along Finland’s eastern border.¹⁷ Russia believed its conquest of Finland would be swift. Both Finns and Soviets were in for a surprise, however. Eloise Engle and Lauri Paananen describe how, at the beginning of the war,

Finns along the 800-mile-long border found themselves being attacked from every road. ... Trees cracked and crashed into the deep snow sending clouds of white ice and slush, black rocks and debris mushrooming into the air. Overhead, airplanes roared low over the treetops, spraying machine-gun fire and dropping bombs. There was no nightmare with which the Finns could compare the scene. Nothing in their memories or wildest imaginations had prepared them for this.¹⁸

Finland had begun its preparations to resist in September through October 1939, but only on November 30 of that year did the Winter War begin when 450,000 Russian troops crossed Finland’s eastern borders, and Russian planes rained incendiary bombs on helpless civilians in Helsinki and other major Finnish cities. Nevertheless, the Soviet strategy to defeat this small country of 4 million people in two weeks and install a puppet government failed abysmally. Soviet aggression united the once-divided Finns and aroused a determination among them that became famous as

“The Spirit of the Winter War.” As Finns withstood aggression from their neighbor to the east, their country became a magnet for the world press. Even Winston Churchill was moved to declare that “Only Finland—superb, nay, sublime—Finland shows what free men can do.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the grossly outnumbered Finns eventually lost 16,000 square miles of territory in eastern Finland known as “Karelia” (and today part of the Russian Federation), and some 420,000 Karelian Finns had to be evacuated. When a peace agreement was finally reached on March 12, 1940, 25,000 Finnish troops had been killed and 45,000 wounded. Astoundingly, Soviet casualties were far greater, with 200,000 dead and 400,000 wounded.²⁰

From March 1940 to June 1941 the Finns enjoyed an “Interim Peace,” during which time they looked for new allies. Unfortunately, only Germany was willing to assist in any significant way, though for its own purposes. On June 29, 1941, when Finland attacked the newly expanded Soviet border, the Continuation War began. In an attempt to recapture lost lands, Finns advanced rapidly with the aid of the Germans. Their battle cry was: “A Greater Finland; Free White Sea Karelia!”²¹ Although Finland regained Karelia in 1941, it lost it again in 1944 during this far more disastrous second war. Four hundred thousand Karelians were once again displaced and had to be evacuated inland. During the ensuing Lapland War, other massive evacuations of Finns living in the northern territories occurred, while Finland’s embittered former allies pursued a scorched earth policy, resulting in the ruination of many towns and cities. According to Korppi-Tommola, by 1945 some “88,000 men [had been] killed in action [... leaving] 30,000 war widows and more than 50,000 war orphans.”²²

In addition, “Infant mortality was high. ... although the bombings and enemy fire caused the direct deaths of 337 children, the main cause of death was disease, especially diphtheria. Altogether, 44,181 children under 15 years of age died during the years 1940–1945.”²³ But many also died of hunger. In 1943 Thérèse Bonney reported that “Of the 800,000 children in Finland, approximately 20 per cent are starving. In the northern part of the country 60 per cent have tuberculosis. In Salla, scene of one of the biggest battles of the first war between Russia and Finland, the rate of this disease has risen as high as 80 per cent.” Bonney also writes that “about 10 per cent of the children are stillborn. Another 10 per cent are premature. Few hospitals or clinics are available for the children: they are filled [instead] with wounded soldiers.” Newborns fortunate enough to survive were often wrapped in paper and slept in cardboard cradles, due to wool and cotton shortages. Most were dangerously malnourished as, according to Bonney, “Milk production has declined 40 per cent, because Finland has 200,000 fewer cows than in 1939.”²⁴

Three years earlier, Martha Gelhorn published a touching story about a young Finnish woman who filled in as a “fireman” in Helsinki while the men were at the front. In 1940 this woman had just been to a bomb site where she found “more children buried under the bombed houses since the first afternoon raid.” Amid the rubble she found one small girl alive. Angrily but eloquently, this woman expressed the feeling that “you always love one child, you always pick one child out of many, one wounded soldier, one weary old woman: you have to fix your mind on someone, the heart cannot hold everything.”²⁵

It is against this grim backdrop that tens of thousands of Finnish children were sent to Sweden and some four thousand to Denmark for safety. Statistically these children, 7–8 percent of all Finnish children up to fourteen years of age, stood a far better chance of survival abroad. But survival came at a heavy emotional and psychological cost for many, if not most, of the children. In 1939 psychoanalyst John Bowlby warned about the consequences of sending children to the British countryside and separating them from their mothers. In 1943 Anna Freud and Dorothy Burlingham also discussed the long-term consequences of such separations and stated that what children fear most is not hunger, disease, or death—the very calamities Finland and Sweden endeavored to spare Finnish children. Instead, they fear separation from parents and families. Unfortunately, Bowlby’s and Freud’s research came too late to enlighten the architects of the Finnish war child transports, nor were their warnings relevant to the transportation of those Jewish children who would certainly have been murdered had they not been moved to safety.²⁶

A saying circulated in Finland, a country still known for its black humor, at the end of the war: “The East took our men, the Germans took our women, the Swedes took our children. But at least we are left with our war debt.”²⁷ As part of the peace agreement, the USSR demanded \$300,000,000 in gold from Finland. This equaled 5–7 percent of the Finnish GNP at the time: a staggering sum which, according to several sources, helped the USSR rebuild its entire infrastructure after the war. At the same time, however, Finland was burdened with a problem far more elusive and difficult than that of reconstruction and reparation. Thousands of war-traumatized children, many greatly in need of healing and relief from often unimaginable sufferings, were gradually returning to Finland’s lakes, mountains, and shores.

The War Child Transports

By far the greatest number of children was transported to Sweden during the Continuation War. During the Winter War some 10,000 children were

sent abroad, along with 3,000 adults—mostly young mothers as well as ailing and elderly women. Throughout the Continuation War, however, approximately 65,000 children—anywhere from two months to fourteen years of age—were sent abroad.²⁸ The number of children sent privately to Sweden (which is to say, outside of official transports) is believed to have been around 5,000. Due in part to the enormous difficulties of postwar reconstruction, efforts to bring the war children home continued long after the war, the last official transport occurring in 1949, four years after the war's conclusion. An estimated 15,000 children were lost to Sweden permanently either through adoptions, the biological family's choice, or other circumstances. An estimated 3,000 were formally adopted; 4,000 remained foster children in Sweden; 7,000–8,000 children and young people who were repatriated found a way to return to Sweden, where many settled permanently.²⁹

The idea of sending Finnish children to Sweden was the brainchild of Maja Sandler, wife of Sweden's then-foreign minister, and Hanna Rydh, president of a prominent Swedish women's organization. According to Rosnell, Sandler was inspired by three previous child transports: the thousands of children sent from Germany and Austria to Denmark, Holland, Sweden, and Switzerland during World War I; the relocation of thousands of Spanish children sent abroad during the Spanish Civil War during 1936–1937; and the seemingly successful “Pied Piper” operation in Britain, by means of which children were sent from British cities to the countryside at the outset of World War II. Shortly after 1918, Sweden itself had accepted more than 21,000 Austrian and German child refugees, creating an important historical precedent.³⁰ During World War II, Switzerland also offered to take some 100 Finnish children, but the Finnish War Children's Transport Committee rejected this offer, due to the distance involved. In 1944 Hungary also offered to host Finnish children, but this proposal was rejected for similar reasons.

Initially, Finland resisted the idea of sending children to Sweden, preferring any material and military assistance their neighbor could give. But initiatives in Sweden, associated with the slogan *Finlands sak är vår* (Finland's cause is ours), seemed unstoppable, and the Centrala Finlandshjälpen (Center for Help for Finland) was born. Influential Finns were approached, including pro-Swedish Gustav Mannerheim, who had won the civil war for the Whites in 1918—and who, as “Finland's George Washington,” was made commander-in-chief of the Finnish armed forces in 1939 at age 72. Thus, early in December, the Nordic Assistance Center in Finland was formed, and Swedish families were encouraged to host Finnish children without compensation—although it is important to note that Swedes were given extra ration coupons for agreeing to this (a fact referred to in several of the stories here).

There may also have been an ulterior motive in the drive to “import” Finnish children. According to Swedish historical statistics on population numbers, the Swedish birth rate during 1930–1940 was significantly lower than that of 1910–1920. In 1940, for instance, there were only 445,195 Swedish children aged 0–4 years of age, compared with 619,518 children of the same ages in 1910. All this may have been a concern for the Swedish government and for many childless couples, which figure prominently among the foster parents referred to in war child stories. As Alva Myrdal, a well-known Swedish author and politician put it, “The Finnish war children were like a gift from heaven to Sweden.”³¹

The first wave of children, mothers, and the elderly was sent from Finland to Sweden on December 15, 1939, just two weeks after the outbreak of war with the Soviet Union. The evacuations were arranged by the Red Cross, and the children were given tags to wear, each tag identifying the child as well as the name of the family to which that child was assigned in the event that a family had been pre-chosen. In the beginning this program was aimed at poor Karelian children, and many of the stories in this volume feature families who had been deprived of their homes and property in Karelia. The general belief was that evacuation would be brief. Before the Continuation War commenced, war children were even referred to as “summer children,” suggesting only a few months’ absence from home. As the war dragged on, however, criteria were relaxed and eventually nearly all children, from infants to fourteen-year-olds, were allowed to go, including many who were handicapped or ill. During the ensuing Continuation War, some 72,000 children in all were evacuated by ship, train, or plane to Sweden and Denmark.

In the beginning, ship travel was more common, aboard the hurriedly prepared SS *Arcturus* or SS *Heimdall*, both of which sailed frequently from Turku to Stockholm. However, this mode of travel was deemed unsafe after a boatload of children was attacked by a Soviet submarine in January 1940. Although no children were killed, many sailors died, and after the Russians began to mine the Gulf of Bothnia, rail transport became more common. Unfortunately, this mode of travel was also fraught with danger. In March 1940 a tragic collision of two trains travelling north to the border town of Haparanda in Sweden killed fifteen children and several mothers and caretakers.³²

Rail travel took place only at night because of the possibility of air raids, and train-car windows were blacked out.³³ Despite this precaution, many war children vividly recall having to rush out of the train to hide in the forest when Soviet bombers targeted their trains. Journeys that had been short in peacetime often became interminable ordeals with children sleeping on boards placed crosswise over seats or even in overhead baggage racks. Once they arrived in Tornio on the Finnish-Swedish border,

children had to change onto Swedish trains in Haparanda because of different track gauges. For the majority, however, train travel soon resumed, with stops in towns where couples had either committed to taking a child or where they selected children according to their whims and preferences.

Inkinen remembers the ordeal of being chosen at random when one day, “women began to move around the beds [in the holding center] and to touch us.” Several of the women, he writes, were “stroking my hair and feeling my hands and feet. Some removed the blanket ... to see me more clearly, perhaps to make sure I wasn’t deformed or ill ... I remember that I was so afraid that I forgot to cry.” According to many accounts, the first chosen were usually blonde curly-haired little girls. Mirja Luoma luckily fit that description and acknowledges her good fortune, since “Swedish couples seemed to prefer” pretty little girls. Many older boys or visibly malnourished and less conventionally attractive children, however, traveled from station to station, yet were never chosen: an extremely humiliating experience. “Eine Miller,” for example, remembers being left alone in a large room after all the other children had been selected by foster parents. She recalls that, at the time, she believed she hadn’t been chosen “because I was very pale, skinny, and ugly.”

Many children fell gravely ill during journeys that often lasted ten days or more. According to Kavén, more than a few of the evacuees died of diphtheria contracted during transfers. As many as 20 percent of those who had been well when they left Finland were so ill by the time they arrived in Sweden that they had to be hospitalized.³⁴ Veijo Paine was one such unfortunate child, contracting a grave illness during his transportation by railway to Sweden.

At various hospitals, schools, garrisons, and even at the Hotel Anglais in Stockholm, children were often placed in quarantine and subjected to frightening medical exams, boys and girls having sometimes to stand nude to wait in line for checkups and vaccination shots. Like many war children, Soile Ilvesoksa was deeply frightened of the blood tests. Helena Nilsson also relates how terrifying it was to stand in a long line of screaming children, waiting for injections. Children with lice had their heads shaved or were treated with sabadil vinegar—and later, in 1944, with DDT. Their clothing was either burned or placed in heated chambers to eradicate lice, while the children were being bathed or washed. According to Inkinen, the delousing and burning of clothes may have been unnecessary but carried out because some Swedes believed Finns to be “dirty,” due to their proximity to Russia. Those children diagnosed with infectious diseases, such as Marita Merilahti, were kept in isolation in Swedish hospitals for weeks and even months. According to Kavén and Tapani Rossi, who published a book in 2008 on the Swedish care of sick Finnish children, some 3,000 war children were saved in this way from various diseases and

malnutrition.³⁵ Nevertheless, medical care at the hands of strangers was often experienced as traumatic.

Another great trauma for many war children was their separation from siblings (although, as Rossi states, this was often done when one of the siblings was ill and had to be hospitalized or quarantined to prevent contagion). Often the last thing older children heard their mothers tell them was to “watch out for” and “never be separated from” their younger sister or brother. Unfortunately, most Swedish parents preferred single children, and siblings were almost always divided. Juha Hankkila and his older brother were sent to Denmark in 1941, and Juha remembers being “separated immediately” and meeting his brother only once during his five years in Denmark. He describes this as “A terrible thing. Why couldn’t we have been placed in the same village?” Even many siblings who happened to be placed in the same town or within short distances of one another seldom met or never saw each other until they were reunited in Finland. Nor were many introduced to other Finnish-speaking war children. Compounding these traumas, at least in many cases, was the total absence of anyone who could explain what was happening to the children in a language they could understand.

Wartime evacuation would be traumatic in the best of circumstances. Consider, for instance, “Operation Pied Piper,” in which thousands of British children were evacuated to the countryside. Dozens of these children have written memoirs about their often very challenging experiences. Yet none of them lost their language in the process, while the vast majority of Finnish war children lost their language not just once but *twice*. Like the German Jewish children sent to England during the war, they could understand nothing upon arrival.³⁶ In other words, both upon arriving in Sweden and again upon returning to Finland, children were effectively rendered both deaf and dumb; they were forced to navigate strange new worlds without the benefit of adult explanation and guidance. Although female Finnish interpreters escorted the children during transports, it was not always possible for the larger transports to obtain enough women translators. And although the larger quarantine centers also had interpreters on hand for the children, there were often far too few to meet the demand. As Rossi also points out, the farther from Stockholm the children traveled, the fewer Finnish or bilingual escorts there were to accompany them.³⁷ Unfortunately, many of my war child correspondents did not benefit from such assistance and only remember how bewildering it was to be surrounded by strangers, speaking a strange language.

As former war child Brita Stenius-Aarniala has written, language is not merely a tool with which to communicate. It defines us: “Finnish is my skin, my air, my snowfall, my rage and my sorrow. In this language I heal my deepest wounds, and in it I mold and plant my feelings. My Finnish

language is the very origin and foundation for whom I am.”³⁸ Often, foster parents lacked Swedish-Finnish dictionaries, as well, though more educated and considerate foster parents attempted to bridge the language gap through such aids. Luckily, Martti Brostrom’s foster and later adoptive parents, as well as Peter Louhimo’s foster parents, had such dual language dictionaries to ease the transition. But learning the language, customs, and habits of an unfamiliar culture required time. Furthermore, most war children, especially those who were too young to understand their “abandonment” (sometimes referred to by war children as the “Betrayal of the Mother”), were desperately homesick and lonely. Marja Tähtinen suffered such terrible “homesickness” that she attempted to escape Sweden on a kicksled, was discovered, and was forced to wear her name tag for many weeks after.

Worse: many children believed their ordeal was “punishment” for displeasing their Finnish parents in some way, especially if they had been singled out from several siblings before being sent abroad. Undefined feelings of guilt often underscored not only their first banishment from Finland, but also their second banishment from Sweden. Somewhat older children who understood the reasons for their evacuation, and even voiced their desire to leave the ravages of war behind, experienced a different kind of guilt. Marja Barron “felt guilty” when she parted with her mother, because she believed that while she would be “in a safe place,” her mother and brother would continue to be exposed to the chaos and hazards of war. It is also important to note that, upon their arrival in Sweden, many war children moved several times and were handed from one set of caretakers to another. Some of the least fortunate were sent to children’s homes or a series of children’s homes. According to Rossi, about 12,000 children were placed in orphanages in Sweden, some functioning as temporary housing while foster families were found, and some functioning as convalescent homes. Just as the quality of foster care varied from family to family, however, so too did the care children received in these holding centers. Some orphanages or children’s homes had Finnish women employees, so that the children could at least keep their language. But with every move, of course, the initial trauma was intensified and compounded. The more times a child was moved and disoriented anew, the greater the collective trauma, which profoundly impacted many war children in later life.

Complications surrounding the war child transports didn’t end with the last shipment of children returning to Finland. After World War II ended in 1945, and in spite of efforts on the part of the Finnish government to repatriate all evacuees, it proved impossible to bring home some 15,000 war children who remained in Sweden and some 500 who remained in Denmark. Due to the 1931 Treaty on Adoption in Nordic countries—a treaty that, in effect, protected the interests of foster parents

in participating host countries—the written document signed by biological parents, which stated that their child or children would not be left abroad permanently, had no authority after 1945.³⁹ All legal procedures relating to adoption were thus carried out according to legislation in the host country. Many children were adopted against the will of their Finnish parents, who often fought tireless and futile legal battles to retrieve them. Tragically, although it was official Finnish policy that all war children be returned to Finland before 1950, many Finnish and Swedish parents were still fighting as late as 1956 for custody of these children. According to Rosnell, “there were hundreds of cases like that, in which [each] Finnish mother was left to grieve the loss of her child for the rest of her life.”⁴⁰ As Korppi-Tommola has written, “Poor Finnish parents who did not speak Swedish and did not have legal advice, should have been supported legally. When looking back from today’s perspective, these Finnish parents were not fairly treated.”⁴¹

War Trauma Among the Finnish War Children

The endless variety and range of war child experiences invites comparison with an indifferently rotating roulette wheel. For those fortunate children sent to loving families, Sweden is often remembered as paradisiacal. But for those placed in homes where they felt unloved or valued merely as unpaid field hands, maids, or babysitters, Sweden is remembered as hell on earth. Marja Tähtinen, the little girl who tried to escape Sweden on a kicksled, was referred to by her foster mother as her “little cellar maid” and forced to do tiring domestic chores as an unpaid servant. “Rita Trent” was virtually given away at age eight to an American couple who immediately changed her name and put her to work cleaning their house. Soile Ilvesoksa was also eight when she was sent to Sweden and was put to work weeding fields of beets.⁴² A small number of evacuees were even denied schooling and/or sufficient food and clothes.

Worse than functioning as unpaid labor, though, was physical and/or sexual abuse endured by some war children. According to a recent study by a Swedish war child association, at least 3–4 percent of all war children must have been abused—this based on statistics relating to any general population of children.⁴³ A one-year-old boy who was sent to a children’s home was beaten with a leather strap and kept in a dark room both day and night. Others, mostly young girls, were raped by either their foster fathers or other caregivers. When 80,000 children are sent to largely unsupervised homes, one can understand how such abuse could occur. Eric Jaakkola was sent to Sweden at age six, together with his five-year-old sister. While Eric was sent to a loving family with which he bonded completely, his sister Airi suffered. Upon arrival at her foster parents’ home,

Airi's clothes were given to her new foster sister, and Airi herself was forced to sleep in the attic. She was often spanked and punished by being locked in the bathroom where she was made to eat her meals.

The vast majority of war children are believed to have been treated decently, however. Lea Rehula and her sister Eila were twelve and ten, respectively, when they were sent to Sweden and placed with the same nurturing family. "Karina Heino," Peter Louhimo, "Eine Miller," Helena Nilsson, Veijo Paine, Ossi Rahkonen, Gertrud Rullander, and many others whose stories appear in this volume remember their time spent in Sweden as completely happy and even the "best time" of their lives. Many bonded so tightly with their foster families that it was the involuntary return to Finland that proved most traumatic. For these children, especially those who were very young when they were evacuated, it was the second banishment they remember as their worst childhood experience. Often these children had possessed no photos of their biological parents, nor had they communicated over months or years, so that their real mothers and fathers were virtual strangers to them upon their return. Not surprisingly, many children loathed their Finnish parents whom they even perceived as abductors or kidnappers. When her mother demanded her daughter back, Barron "was furious and never got over it." Paine "had hateful feelings toward my mother, which intensified after our departure" from Sweden. He "blamed her for taking me away from the Westers, but especially *Pappa*, the only father I had ever known. At the same time, I felt guilty for all of the hardship and anguish she [his mother] had experienced," Paine writes in his story.

Unless returnees had siblings who had also been sent to Sweden, they often endured intense longing for their foster families in complete isolation, without recourse to a sympathetic ear or even someone who could speak Swedish. Often, returning evacuees were taunted by siblings and schoolmates for their inability to speak Finnish, their strange accents, or their "different" clothes. Many were called *hurri*, a perjorative term for Swedish-speaking Finns, and were ridiculed for being "stupid." Seppo Mälkki admits that he was "bullied in Finland by my contemporaries, due to my having lived in the neutral and, therefore, more prosperous Sweden." For this reason he was "made fun of" and treated as "a kind of misfit." Gertrud Rullander remembers being spat upon by her schoolmates and having her ski equipment, a gift from Sweden, broken and burned by her contemporaries.

In addition to all this, the dwellings to which returning children were taken were often extremely primitive in comparison with their Swedish foster homes. Barron thought that her Finnish home "looked small and poor, and even smelled weird." Veijo Holopainen spent several years in Sweden, as did his sister, and like many war children he relates what "a

shock it was for both of us to go from a comfortable life in Sweden to an extremely poor one in Finland.”

Rosnell points out that the age of the child when he or she was sent to Sweden was extremely important to his or her experiences, and he writes that older evacuees with clear memories of their families and former life often adjusted better to their evacuation, while younger children were greatly traumatized. Here too, however, there were exceptions. Virve Palos was only two when she was sent to Sweden, having been placed by private arrangement with long-standing friends of the family. Both her foster parents and Finnish mother corresponded regularly. Virve’s mother also visited her in Sweden, so that when Virve returned to Finland she recognized her mother at once and does not recall any particular trauma attached to her return. As she herself acknowledges, however, her circumstances were especially favorable.⁴⁴

In contrast to Virve’s case, Rosnell points out that the vast majority of children sent to Sweden when they were infants or toddlers

soon forgot their biological family. They had no memories of them, and many Swedish foster parents encouraged this process by not telling the children where they had come from. Many Finnish boys and girls grew up in Sweden believing their [Swedish] fathers and mothers were their biological ones. To them it was a shock when they were told they were Finnish, or when they were summoned back to Finland, or when they eventually found out the truth by themselves.⁴⁵

In *Krigsbarn erinran* (War Children Recalling Memories), Almgren’s Swedish collection of Finnish war child stories, one author who signs herself only as “Anja” describes how at age two-and-a-half years old she was sent to Sweden and was abused by her mentally ill foster mother before being reassigned to loving foster parents with whom she bonded. Hoping to adopt Anja, they kept her biological family secret, so that after seven years in Sweden, “the shock was great when a letter came from Finland where my biological mother wrote that she wanted me back.” Imagine going from a loving family and a large farm to a “home consisting of one room where seven people lived.”⁴⁶ Even for somewhat older children who might have remembered their Finnish families, the news of having to re-join them could come as a cruel blow. Sirpa Kaukinen was five when she left for Sweden in 1944. A year later she was cutting paper dolls when her foster parents gently informed her that she would soon have to return to Finland. Describing the scene, she writes that “to the amazement of myself and my family, I began cutting and cutting until the good tablecloth fell to either side of the table in two pieces. I started to cry, and *Mamma* pulled me into her lap, and everyone began crying.”

Upon repatriation, such traumas might have been alleviated had biological parents been able to discuss their children’s experiences abroad.

Kavén—who, like “Anja,” was two and a half when sent to Sweden—continues to lament the impossibility of speaking with his real father and mother after his return because they apparently felt guilty about what they had done. “I did not want guilt,” he writes, but “only to know and understand” the reasons why he had been sent away. “It is sad,” he writes, “that we have not been able to grieve over this matter together.” Instead, Kavén recalls that, “As a child, I felt that my sisters had a closer relationship with my parents than I, and I felt myself to be an outsider.”⁴⁷ Rauno Juntunen experienced similar feelings of envy and alienation from his biological parents upon his compulsory return to Finland: “In Sweden I got love and care from my foster parents. Here [in Finland] I many times watched how the five-year-old [younger] brother could climb and sit in our father’s arms [and] I wondered why I couldn’t be treated the same way, sit and hug.” Like Kavén, Juntunen never felt as close to his Finnish parents as he did to his foster parents; additionally, his living circumstances in Finland were very primitive in contrast to Sweden. Luckily for him, Juntunen returned to Sweden permanently quite soon thereafter. In describing his final departure from Finland he writes, “I was not sorry at all leaving the house which had been my home for two and a half years.”

Peter Heinel, a celebrated psychiatrist and therapist in Great Britain and Germany who specializes in war-related trauma, discusses the catastrophic impact of “polytrauma”: the “network of causally related traumas or a cluster of coinciding, concomitant or sequentially occurring traumas” in many of his patients, mostly those who, as children, lived in Germany during World War II. About these war children, Heinel writes that many of his patients “had suffered more in their short [childhood] lives than many adults, during their whole lifespan.” In adulthood their “trauma[s] had not simply faded away nor had the (post-)war children simply ‘grown out’ of them. Quite the contrary, the polytrauma had remained virulent even after the passage of decades.” Heinel discusses the “collective catastrophes” often experienced by war children, which “tend to shift the axis of normality and to distort the measuring stick of perception of what constitutes a trauma.”⁴⁸

That trauma may even be inherited by the offspring of war children or those intimately impacted by war. Heinel and other psychoanalysts and therapists have witnessed the “transmission of early traumatic experiences across generations, the so-called transgenerational effect.”⁴⁹ I myself have been contacted by two offspring of Finnish war children who felt that their parents’ war traumas had clouded their own childhoods and in one case even damaged the lives of grandchildren two generations removed. In both cases the former war children (whose stories are not related here) had been moved several times between shifting sets of caretakers and had clearly experienced the “polytrauma” or the effect of “collective catastrophes” that Heinel describes.

Heinl himself laments the fact that even after 1945, child psychiatry and child psychotherapy were still “in their infancy.” In addition, in the aftermath of war, “traumatized families, and indeed societies, are hardly able to muster the resources for a sophisticated psychological support if existential issues such as housing, clothing, food, and heating are at stake.” He agrees with Rosnell on the importance of the age a child was when he or she was evacuated and writes that “A given trauma impacting the mental world of a tiny baby, of a six-year-old child, or of a fifteen-year-old adolescent, may produce rather differing long-term consequences.”⁵⁰

For infants and very young children, loss of a parental figure is especially traumatic and can result in a lifelong inability to create lasting relationships.⁵¹ Virtala reminds us that there is an important mirror stage in children’s development, which is necessary to build a harmonious base from which to start the identity process. If children do not have positive reflections from their mothers during these early years, they will seek that mirror for the rest of their lives.⁵² She adds that “When Finnish war children were removed during this important phase of life, they were subjected to this trauma.”

Virtala notes too that, as Anna Freud observed of British child evacuees, often very young children will attempt to cope with their loss through important “transitional objects.” In reading Finnish war child literature, Virtala sees an “endless variation in the transitional objects.” These “objects” may be activities or places as well as inanimate things, including “Finnish magazines, swimming in the Gulf of Bothnia toward home, a secret hut [to replace] their home in Finland, nature sites like a cave or a brook.”⁵³ Maternal deprivation, as Bowlby has described it, can result in a seemingly endless search for a substitute that will always prove inadequate.⁵⁴

Literature can also be used as a coping or rescuing mechanism. Rauni Janser describes how, after having been placed with her Swedish foster family, she immediately came to the conclusion that her foster mother was a “witch” who might be fattening her to kill like the rabbits she kept in cages in the yard. But on the morning after her first night in this frightening new place, she awakened to find a man, lying on a bed on the other side of the room. He smiled at her and suddenly she knew that she was not the prisoner of a witch, since witches in such stories as *Hansel and Gretel* “don’t have husbands.” Historian and Brothers Grimm authority Maria Tatar explains that “fairy tales register an effort on the part of both women and men to develop maps for coping with personal anxieties, family concerns, social frictions, and the myriad frustrations of everyday life.”⁵⁵

Food was also something many war children turned to, to alleviate their sorrows and homesickness. In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bruno Bettelheim identifies bread as a metaphor for mother love, an idea expressed

about food generally and frequently by the war children who often became attached to their new foster mothers through the medium of food and being fed.⁵⁶

In contrast with those war children who bonded with foster mothers through food, Juha Hankkila describes the comfort he derived from eating delicious pancakes or custard slices he received on the sly from neighbors and the village baker because his foster mother was stingy with food as well as affection.

It is doubtful, however, that most war children found sufficient compensation for the loss of their biological families and native language in transitional objects or even in plentiful food and hugs from their foster parents. Many studies have shown that most, if not all, war children were injured for life. Pentti Andersson has concluded that “compared to non- evacuees, Finnish refugees exhibit a significantly higher level of PTSD” symptoms on the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Checklist.⁵⁷ Andersson also compares the Finnish war children to “Jewish children who came to Sweden from Nazi concentration camps” in terms of their “forced displacement ... loss of parental figures of origin, loss of spoken language, and loss of family history.” Both groups of war children had no survival strategy other than living with their own fear of rejection. He concludes that such trauma “led to permanent consequences in adult life.”⁵⁸ Former war child Mona Serenius describes how as an adult she

locked away the child which I carried inside me, behind walls, back into the shelter. Partly, I believe, to protect this vulnerable living core from more hurt, but also because I could not endure the overwhelming feelings of sorrow and hate, love and guilt, hidden within this child. [... Her life] felt like a series of compartments, with no connection between them [... like] Russian dolls, with many colourful but empty shells, one within the other, hiding ... a small solid core deep inside it.⁵⁹

As the result of sequential ruptures in their childhood routines and surroundings, many Finnish war children never really felt they “belonged” in any one place in particular and have suffered from the emptiness that Serenius describes. Many of them have lived their adult lives in states of suspended animation and experienced difficulty trusting other people or retaining relationships.

As Heinl explains, the more a child was moved, the more he or she was traumatized, and many war children were frequently transferred from one foster family to another. Bodil Söderberg remembers that just as she was getting over her homesickness and developing a fondness for her foster Swedish mother, they “took the steamboat to Uddevalla one day. At the boat dock was a strange lady and a little girl whom I had never met. This was how they had planned to do the transfer to the other family!” Söderberg writes that she had “a sort of meltdown and screamed and cried so

hard” that her first foster mother said the little girl could stay with her after all.

Official Recognition of Mistakes Made, Attempts at Redress, and Ongoing Studies

After the first appearance of war child memoirs in the 1970s and 1980s, more followed in the 1990s. War child societies actively encouraged the sharing of stories, and public acknowledgment and interest spread. In September 1994, one popular Finnish newspaper ran on its first page the headline printed in capital letters: “THIS MUST NEVER BE REPEATED.” The article that followed was written in response to a psychological study that had been recently published, which announced that war children who had repressed their memories, often for decades, had suffered throughout their lives from disproportionately high rates of divorce, suicide, alcoholism, affective disorders of various kinds, and self-punishing guilt.

Only in 2005 was the plight of the war children officially recognized when, in apparent acknowledgement of wartime mistakes made by both countries, Sweden’s King Gustav XVI and Tarja Halonen, then president of Finland, presided jointly over the installation of a statue named *Ero* (Separation) on the Finnish-Swedish border where the vast majority of war children crossed into Sweden. Other commemoration plaques have been erected in honor of the war children in both Finland and Sweden. Also, in 2005 the film *Den bästa av mödrar* (Mother of Mine) won international recognition, further increasing public interest.⁶⁰ In *Mother of Mine*, director Klaus Härö relates the touching story of ten-year-old Heikki, who is transported “with an address label tied around his neck, together with 600 other children in the cargo hold of the ship *Arcturus*,” to Sweden in 1944. In an interview published in 2005 in the *Svenska Dagbladet*, Härö provides another explanation as to why the child transports and experiences of the Finnish war children only began to be discussed in the mid-1980s and 1990s:

When the war was over, there was so much misery to deal with that people felt the war children should keep quiet and be thankful for how good they had it during the war compared to everyone else. Later, when things started going well for Finland during the 1950s, people didn’t want to talk about the war anymore, they wanted to forget, so the war children never got a chance to share their experiences, either the good or the bad ones.⁶¹

Several documentaries on the war children have also appeared in recent years. One film director, Erja Dammert, was interviewed for Helsinki’s chief newspaper, the *Helsingin Sanomat*. In that interview, which appeared

on November 11, 2003, Dammert remarks on the widespread insensitivity of adults during the prewar, war, and postwar years. Dammert claims she read that “in the 1930s, children sometimes underwent surgery without anaesthesia, because it was believed that their emotions were not sufficiently developed” to feel pain! She also lists egregious errors relating to the war child transports, adding—significantly—that “there is much that adults could learn from the survival mechanisms of children.”

Some resolute former war children are doing more than “learning.” Kai Rosnell—frequently referred to this introduction and a journalist by profession—has dedicated his retirement to the cause of the war children. For fourteen years since 1999, Rosnell has edited *Finska Krigsbarn*, a quarterly magazine published for Sweden’s nationwide association of war children, and has contributed innumerable articles to it. More than that: he has led investigations on behalf of many dozens of war children who desired to find lost relatives and has, through intense digging and detective work, reunited hundreds of war children with their long-lost families. He has reunited not only Finnish war children who wanted to rediscover their Finnish families, but Swedes who wanted to be reunited with former foster children. Rosnell has also challenged the laws in both Finland and Sweden that make it difficult for abused war children to seek compensation even when they have the clearest evidence of prolonged sexual or physical abuse. In accordance with the Convention of Children’s Rights, he has even helped some former war children discover the paternity of fathers who abandoned them. As of October 2013, and thanks in part to Rosnell’s efforts, the Finnish Supreme Court of Justice is working to effect changes in the law.

Rosnell has never received remuneration for his work on behalf of war children, but in December 2012—and in recognition of his extraordinary service—Sauli Niinistö, president of the Finnish Republic, awarded Rosnell the First Class Medal of the White Rose of Finland with Golden Cross. Tapani Rossi, who has also dedicated his retirement to the cause of Finnish war children, received the same decoration on the same day for his outstanding accomplishments on their behalf.

Keeping their cause alive, war child associations in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark continue to collect as many stories and memoirs as possible. Still other efforts include the War Child Memory Project sponsored by the Central Organization of War Child Associations in Finland. This project, currently being conducted by Stenius-Aarniala and Inkinen, involves collecting hundreds of stories or fragments of stories from war children otherwise unlikely to have recorded their reminiscences for posterity. Stenius-Aarniala and Inkinen created and circulated a questionnaire that is greatly facilitating this process. Almgren, who is frequently quoted here, has worked to make November 20, the date on which the General Assem-

bly of the United Nations adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to be known as “A Day for the Children of War” in Sweden, England, and elsewhere. Her goal is to make this an internationally observed occasion on which to remember all war children: past, present, and future.

Tiina Kinnunen and Markku Jokisipilä have referred to the recent, European-wide “memory boom” in all matters relating to World War II and to burgeoning “memory communities,” such as the war child associations that exist today in Finland, Sweden, and Denmark. “For many” war children, Kinnunen and Jokisipilä remind us, “writing either for folklore collections or with the aim of publishing one’s reminiscences, functions as a route to the therapeutic catharsis of traumatic emotions.”⁶² In other words, despite the decades-long Finnish war censure, many war children have themselves taken steps toward healing as autobiographers and members of associations. In a speech delivered in 2002 about her own memoir, Serenius talked about the “extraordinary experience” of sharing her story “with those who had had the same childhood experiences, and were better able to understand beyond words” what her own childhood trauma had been. Finding fellow war children, she said, “was suddenly [like] acquiring a large family of sisters and brothers, and filled [her] with a deep sense of community.”⁶³

The dozens of war children who have shared their childhood narratives with me have done so, I believe, to liberate caged memories that have haunted them from childhood, to achieve peace, and to gain a deeper appreciation of who they are. Working with and learning from them, I too have come to better know myself and to admire the persistence and resourcefulness of children in peril.

My Collecting and Editing Process

Because I speak neither Finnish nor Swedish, in the beginning of my quest for war children and their stories I had to advertise my interest in American-Finnish newsletters and, later, in war child association magazines. Eventually, though, my interest spread by word of mouth and what began as a single story grew into a small but for me miraculous avalanche. Whenever I heard from a war child, it was cause for celebration. And whenever I received a new story—or usually the kernel of one—I was thrilled, though the content of developing stories often reduced me to tears.

Since 2001 I have been in contact with more than sixty Finnish war children living in Australia, Canada, England, Finland, Sweden, and the United States, and I am sorry that I can neither mention them all nor include all their stories. In most cases I have exchanged dozens or many

dozens of e-mails and/or letters with each war child. With Virve Palos alone, one of my earliest correspondents, I have exchanged hundreds of e-mails, not only about her war child story but about anything regarding Finland or of general interest to us both. Initially Virve wrote to say that she had read a notice about my interest in the *Suomi-American* magazine. In May 2003 my husband and I visited Tampere where Virve lives, and in September 2005 I visited her a second time. It was through e-mails and interviews that I was able to piece Virve's war child story together—although I was the student and she the coach—and her story must stand as an example of them all.

Because Virve speaks and writes excellent English, my job was made much easier than it otherwise would have been. Even with Virve's story, however, I sometimes made slight changes to her wording so that it would be more idiomatic in English. In other instances I made changes to earlier statements Virve herself corrected in later messages. In one e-mail, for instance, she had referred to a "red tree house," which she later revised, writing, "I should have written red-painted wooden house." This going back and forth with my questions and my correspondents' answers has been typical of the process in bringing stories together. It has not been the only process I have adopted, however, because I have also interviewed several war children while visiting them in Finland, Sweden, and the United States. To compile Gertrud Rullander's story I first transcribed tape recordings she mailed to me and later visited her in Sweden to discuss and further clarify her wartime experiences.

Some of the stories required extensive explanation to my inquiries and developed in painstakingly piecemeal fashion. Others arrived in nearly complete form. What follows, of course, is material that Finnish- and/or Swedish-speaking war children have drafted in English: a language that is not their native tongue. However, many war children have informed me that writing their stories in English has actually helped them feel more "objective" about their often traumatic experiences. Others have thanked me for helping them heal and better understand the remarkable and often distressing experiences of their now-distant yet, for many, ever-present pasts. With regard to story titles, some were suggested by the narrators, but the majority I have derived from phrases, anecdotes, or images embedded in the stories themselves with the approval of the authors. In order not to privilege one story over another, I have alphabetized them according to the first letter of the last name, whether it be real or invented. Of the thirty-nine stories here, five appear under pseudonyms (and within quotation marks) to indicate anonymity.

It has been said that truth is soonest found among the very young and the very old. Here we have in every story the combined truth from the perspectives of both childhood and relative old age, and it is always spo-

ken from the heart. What began for me as curiosity about a little-known aspect of World War II soon became something of an obsession and, later, a labor of love. I can only hope that readers will find the stories in this volume as fascinating as I do, and that the appearance of these stories in print will bring some measure of gratification and catharsis for its contributors.

Notes

1. Estimates of military losses vary. One estimate is that some 94,000 Finnish soldiers either died or went missing in action. See Tiina Kinnunen and Ville Kivimäki, eds., *Finland in World War II: History, Memory, Interpretations* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 172.
2. Irene Virtala, "Identity Processes in Autobiographies by Finnish War Children," in *Entering Multiculturalism: Finnish Experiences Abroad*, ed. Olavi Koivukangas (Turku: Institute of Migration, 2002), 240.
3. Aura Korppi-Tommola, "War and Children in Finland during the Second World War," *Paedagogica Historica* 44, no. 4 (August 2008): 451.
4. See Pentti Andersson, "Post-Traumatic Symptoms linked to Hidden Holocaust Trauma Among adult Finnish Evacuees Separated from Their Parents as Children in World War II, 1939–1945: A Case-Control Study," *International Psychogeriatrics* [Turku, Finland] 23, no. 4 (2011): 659.
5. See, for instance, Martin Parsons, *War Child: Children Caught in Conflict* (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2008); Kjersti Ericsson and Eva Simonsen, *Children of World War II: The Hidden Enemy Legacy* (Oxford: Berg, 2005); and Lynn Nicholas, *Cruel World: The Children of Europe in the Nazi Web* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005).
6. Annu Edvardsen, *Det får inte hända igen: Finska krigsbarn 1939-45* (Stockholm: Askild & Kärnekull, 1977).
7. See Sinikka Ortmark Almgren, *Du som haver barnen kär* (Stockholm: LT, 1989).
8. Virtala, Summary Abstract, *Finnish War Children in Literature* [Web Reports No. 5] (Turku: Migrationsinstitutet, 2004). Unpaginated.
9. Pertti Kavén, *70,000 små öden* (Stockholm: Sahlgrens, 1985).
10. Kavén, Summary Abstract, "Under the Shadow of Humanity" (dissertation: University of Helsinki, 2010).
11. Parsons. *War Child*, 158.
12. Kai Rosnell, "The Complexity of the War Child Movement from Finland to Sweden and Denmark, 1939–1946," *New World Finn* 13, no. 1 (2012): 23.
13. Veikko Inkinen to the present author in personal correspondence.
14. Ann-Maj Danielsen, *Att inte höra till: ett finskt krigsbarn berättar* (Stockholm: B. Wahlström, 2000), 8–10.
15. The Finnish government signed no treaty of alliance with Nazi Germany, but with Germany's military and material assistance Finland was able to recapture territories lost in the Winter War.
16. Before they invaded Finland, the Soviet Union offered military assistance in the event that Germany attacked Russia by way of Finnish soil. But Finland refused to

- cede the Hanko Peninsula, the western part of the Karelian Isthmus, and islands in the eastern Gulf of Finland to the USSR.
17. Finland was proved right not to succumb to Soviet pressure. When the USSR signed a nonaggression pact with Germany, the so-called Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, it included a "Secret Additional Protocol," which stated that—like Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—Finland was to "belong to the Soviet Union" after the war. See Martin Parsons, ed., *Children: The Invisible Victims of War—An Interdisciplinary Study* (Denton, Peterborough: DSM, 2008), 213–23.
 18. Eloise Engle and Lauri Paananen, *The Winter War: The Soviet Attack on Finland, 1838–1940* (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1992), 16.
 19. Winston Churchill, in a radio broadcast to the British people, January 20, 1940.
 20. Philip Jowett and Brent Snodgrass, *Finland at War: 1939–45* (Oxford: Osprey, 2006), 5–10.
 21. Lempi Kähönen-Wilson, *Sisu Mother* (St. Cloud, MN: North Star, 2002), 16.
 22. Korppi-Tommola, "War and Children in Finland," 446.
 23. *Ibid.*
 24. Thérèse Bonney, "Children in Peril," *Collier's* no. 112 (July 3, 1943): 20.
 25. Martha Gelhorn, "Death in the Present Tense," *Collier's* 105 (February 20, 1940): 15. For additional information on Finland's wars, see Max Jakobson, *Finland Survived: An Account of the Finnish-Soviet Winter War, 1939* (Helsinki: Otava, 1961); Leonard C. Lundin, *Finland in the Second World War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957); and Kinnunen and Kivimäki, *Finland in World War II*.
 26. Bowlby's work appeared in several places during 1938 and 1940, but his principal publications bear later dates. See John Bowlby et al., *Children in War-time* (London: New Educational Fellowship, 1940). See too Anna Freud and Dorothy T. Burlingham, *War and Children* (New York: Medical War Books, 1943; reprinted Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1943).
 27. Engle and Paananen, *The Winter War*, 148.
 28. During the Lapland War, October 1944 to April 1945, another 30,000 children were evacuated, many of them refugees from northern Finland, although most of these were relocated within Finland itself.
 29. Statistics vary according to different sources, but the consensus appears to be that at least 15,000 Finnish war children were permanently lost to Sweden.
 30. Rosnell, "The Complexity of the War Child Movement," 22.
 31. See *Historical Statistics of Sweden, Second Edition, 1720–1967* (Stockholm: National Central Bureau of Statistics: 1969); and Rosnell, "The Complexity of the War Child Movement," 24.
 32. Rosnell, "The Complexity of the War Child Movement," 22.
 33. The windows of Finnish houses were also blackened to evade Soviet bomber plane detection. Some referred to the blackout curtains as "Molotov curtains" after the Russian who had cosigned the 1939 Ribbentrop-Molotov pact that would have divided Europe between Germany and Russia. "Molotov cocktails," which the Finns devised and used so effectively throughout the war, were also named after this archenemy of the Finns.
 34. Kävén, *70,000 små öden*, 27–30.
 35. Information provided by Tapani Rossi in communication with the present author. See too Rossi, *Räddade till livet: om en stor svensk hjälpsats för Finlands barn*

- 1939–1949 [Their Lives Were Saved: The Swedish Relief Effort for Finland’s Children, 1939–1949] (Höör, Sweden: self-published, 2008).
36. See Nicholas, *Cruel World*, 169ff.
 37. See Rossi, *Räddade till livet*.
 38. An observation made at the International War Child Conference held from September 9–11, 2009, at the University of Reading, England. The passage was provided by Ms. Brita Stenius-Aarniala in communication with the present author; it was taken from the paper she presented at the conference identified above.
 39. Parsons, *War Child*, 164.
 40. The quotation comes from Rosnell, “Searching for War Children”: a lecture delivered at “FinnFest 2013” held in Hancock, Michigan; June 19–23, 2013. See too Kavén, *70,000 små öden*, 129–30.
 41. Korppi-Tommola, “War and Children,” 441.
 42. For other examples of similar mistreatment, see Sue Saffle, “Children, War, and the Rhetoric of Remembrance: The Stories of Finland’s War Children,” *Children in War* [Reading] 1, no. 4 (November 2006): 97–103. NB: some of the stories that appear in the present volume have also appeared, albeit in different and less complete versions, in the following articles: Saffle, “Toward a Collection of Finnish War-Child Stories: The Reminiscences of Seppo Mälkki,” *Children in War* 1, no. 5 (January 2008): 25–31; “Understanding Backwards: The Story of Finnish War Child Veijo (Pönniäinen) Paine,” *Children in War* 1, no. 6 (February 2009): 77–84; and “The Stuff of Fairy Tales: Finnish War Child Rauni Janser Remembers,” *Children in War* 1, no. 7 (February 2010): 85–92.
 43. According to the *Riksförbundet Finska Krigsbarn*. Information provided to the present author.
 44. For additional information about Virve’s positive war child experiences in Sweden, see Saffle, “A Happier War Child Story?: One Finnish War Child’s Exceptional Memories and Circumstances,” in *Children: The Invisible Victims of War—An Interdisciplinary Study*, ed. Martin Parsons (Denton, Peterborough: DSM, 2008), 213–23.
 45. Rosnell. “The Complexity of the War Child Movement,” 25.
 46. Sinikka Ortmark Almgren, *Krigsbarns erinran: snäll, lydig och tacksam* (Stockholm: SinOA, 2003), 52.
 47. Kavén, in conversation with the present author.
 48. Peter Heindel, *Splintered Innocence: An Intuitive Approach to Treating War Trauma* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 70–72.
 49. *Ibid.*, 50.
 50. *Ibid.*, 78–82.
 51. See note 26 above. See too John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1999).
 52. Virtala, *Finnish War Children in Literature*.
 53. *Ibid.*
 54. See notes 26 and 51 above.
 55. Maria Tatar, “Introduction,” *The Classic Fairy Tales*, ed. Tatar (New York: W.W. Norton, 1999), xi.
 56. Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment* (New York: Vintage, 1977), 159.
 57. See Andersson, “Post-Traumatic Symptoms.”
 58. *Ibid.*

59. Mona Serenius, "The Silent Cry: A Finnish Child during World War II and 50 Years Later," *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* 4 (1995): 40–41.
60. According to <https://www.barbican.org.uk/education/event-detail.asp?id=5189&pg=514> (accessed October 22, 2013) and other online sources, *Mother of Mine* won thirty awards internationally—including the Ingmar Bergman Award and recognitions of various kinds at the Cairo International Film Festival, the Lübeck Nordic Film Days, and the Palm Springs International Film Festival. *Mother of Mine* was Finland's and Sweden's nominee for a 2005 Oscar.
61. Translated from the *Svenska Dagbladet* [Stockholm] (November 7, 2005).
62. Kinnunen and Kivimäki, *Finland in World War II*, 475–76.
63. See note 59 above. Information about the speech was mailed to the present author.