

Abstract

The largest evacuation of children in history took place in Finland during the World War II. Approximately 70,000 children were evacuated to the safety in Sweden (some of them also to Denmark and Norway) during several waves of evacuation that to a large extent followed the on-goings on the front. However, this episode was despite its magnitude until recently one of the forgotten chapters of the Finnish history. This thesis focuses on historical circumstances that led to the final decision to evacuate children, describes how the transports were organized and executed. It also mentions the time that the children spent in Sweden and difficulties with which they had to cope after their return to Finland.

Since the 1990's, the „war children“ have gained more public attention. In the second part of my thesis, I try to explain how the children experiences found their way to the public awareness, explain the previous lack of interest as well as the sudden wave of attention paid to these children. It seems that this was caused by the combination of political factors and development in the personal lives of the children. During the previous decades, the children had to cope with the denial of their experiences on two levels – by the state and by their own family. During the Cold War, the conflict with the Soviet Union was mentioned only rarely and guardedly. Years of this „imposed silence“ led after the end of the Cold War to a new wave of interest in the World War II. Thanks to a generational shift, *sotalapset* are also more willing to share their experiences. This was supported also by the oral history boom.