For about two decades now, memory studies have globally boomed in the humanities.\(^1\) Frequently, they concern themselves with the events of World War II from many different perspectives. For example, the experiences of women, children and minority groups are finally being examined in Finland and elsewhere. But this is where the trajectories between Finland and other European countries tend to end. While it can be said that the Holocaust, the systematic European-wide attempt to annihilate European Jewry, has become the mainstay of collective memory studies, the situation is different in Finland. Namely, where memory studies have often come to evoke nations’ complicity with the Final Solution, molding the currently burgeoning image of postmodern European identity, the politics of memory in Finland has managed to keep the issue at arms length. Finnish diplomat and writer Tom Söderman formulated the Finnish mentality thus:

Finland seems to have an ability to distance itself from anything that feels uncomfortable [...] news about the Holocaust will not grow old. We have not understood that in Finland, but we labor under a miscomprehension that everything is forgiven and forgotten. Our trouble is the screen of silence we are so quick to erect.\(^2\)

This chapter will sketch out the way in which the collective memory of the Holocaust has been forged in Finland since 1945. Before moving

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\(^1\) On the whole, the literature on collective memory and history is so vast that it cannot be dealt with here. However, for excellent assessments of this trend, see Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (2000): 1, pp. 127–50; and Wulf Kansteiner, “Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies,” *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 2, pp. 179–97.

on, however, a personal caveat is needed. First, the chapter will present a broad overview of the issues and events where the Holocaust was discussed in Finland, therefore offering some glimpses into the place of the Holocaust in Finland’s historical culture. The picture is necessarily fragmented and incomplete but in many ways it will always remain so—not least because the tragedy of European Jewry has never attained a similar level of fascination in Finland as in many other European countries. Second, the purpose here is not to put forward any methodological theories about “collective memory” as such. Yet I will recognize that a number of issues relating to the term are contested and problematic. For example, I realize that “collective memory” rests on a psychological fallacy because, strictly speaking, memory is always an individual process. However, individual memory is always interacting with many different affiliations, making it socially constructed, as Maurice Halbwachs pointed out nearly 100 years ago. Thus, it makes sense not to reject the term outright. More importantly, I hold that memory (whether individual, collective or public) is not politically innocent—on the contrary. “Doing politics with memory” is an influential way of doing politics. Finally, relating to what I have said above, I am inclined to use the term public or institutional memory rather than “collective memory.”

Institutional memory refers to the efforts of “political elites, their supporters and their opponents to construct meanings of the past and propagate them more widely or impose them on other members of society.” In addition, in light of my sources (newspapers, magazines, literature etc.), it seems necessary to take into account that the very nature of my sources makes it sensible to conceptualize the object of this study as public memory, which also includes the academic presentations of the Holocaust. Further, neither public nor institutional memory refers to one single shared idea of memory, which is more apparent under the category of “collective memory.” However, as will be argued throughout, there is a hegemonic view of the past, which has dominated Finland’s memory of the Holocaust for a long time. In addition, institutional and public memory is explicitly linked with studying

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