

## FIN-1 Followup Report: Lotta Svärd

The Lotta Svärd organization has been receiving a lot of attention in Finland in recent years after almost fifty years of silence, and many researchers have taken an interest in the topic. Although at the time Lotta Svärd had more members than any other women's voluntary civil defense organization in the world, there has been very little research done on the topic outside of Finland. My purpose in writing this paper was to give English speakers an overview of the Lotta Svärd organization's history and achievements, and to discuss the organization's significance to the people of Finland. Part of my reason for choosing this topic was the desire to educate myself on Finnish history.

I decided from early on that I would not write my paper chronologically from the Lotta Svärd organization's founding to its abolition, because I felt that would not have given a very clear picture of the organization's operations. Instead, I concentrated on giving an overall description of how the organization operated. This included introducing the organization's divisions and what tasks they each took care of. I also described how the organization was managed, and what was required from the members. I concluded the paper by summarizing the Lottas' achievements during the war years.

If I started this paper now again, I would probably reconsider choosing this topic because of the amount of work it involves. When I first began, I had no earlier knowledge of the topic, and it turned out to be much broader than I had presumed. All my source texts were either too succinct or too detailed, which is why I spent a lot of time just looking for the most essential pieces of information. In addition, I had to translate almost everything.

If I did decide to start again with the same topic, I would spend more time in the beginning reading through my material and trying to get a better idea of what exactly I wanted to say in the paper. It might have been better to concentrate on some particular aspect of the topic, for example how the Lottas were viewed in Finnish society while the organization existed and during the years after its abolition. I think this would be an interesting topic for further study.

My paper is meant only as an introduction to Lotta Svärd organizational operations; as such there are many aspects of the institution which I did not cover or only mentioned briefly. Possible research questions for further study include: what happened to the Lottas after the organization was abolished? How was the organization viewed abroad? Other Finnish military institutions such as the Jaegers and the Civil Guards are also potential topics.