

THE RUSSIAN RECORD OF THE WINTER WAR, 1939-1940:  
AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF SOVIET RECORDS  
OF THE WAR WITH FINLAND FROM  
30 NOVEMBER 1939 TO  
12 MARCH 1940

by  
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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
of the University of Maryland in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
1968

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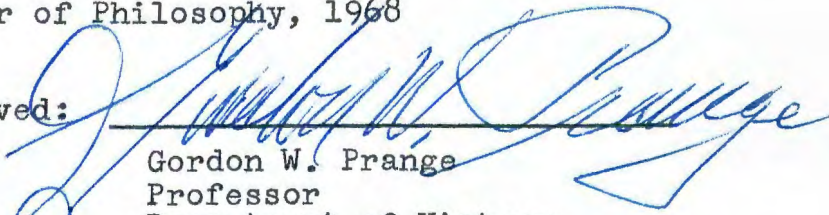
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Title of Thesis: The Russian Record of the Winter War,  
1939-1940: An Analytical Study of Soviet  
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## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: The Russian Record of the Winter War, 1939-1940: An Analytical Study of Soviet Records of the War with Finland from 30 November 1939 to 12 March 1940

James Venceslav Anzulovic, Jr., Doctor of Philosophy, 1968

Thesis directed by: Dr. Gordon W. Prange

This dissertation is an analytical examination of material published by the Soviet Union which concerned the Winter War with Finland from 30 November 1939 to 12 March 1940.

The events leading to the conflict grew out of Russian efforts to protect their northwestern borders after the defeat of Poland in September 1939. Diplomatic pressures enabled the Soviet Union to establish air and naval bases along the Baltic coast in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania by the end of October 1939. However, efforts to obtain similar concessions from Finland, especially the leasing of Hanko at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland, proved unsuccessful.

The first material published by the Soviet Union about the Finnish situation was part of a newspaper campaign during November 1939. At first this campaign merely denounced those Finnish leaders who were known to be opposed to a diplomatic settlement with the USSR. Gradually this campaign increased in tempo and after the alleged firing of Finnish artillery



on Russian borderguards at Mainila on 26 November 1939, Soviet newspapers began to call for the punishment of the Finnish Government.

Along with this part of the campaign, the Russian press also pictured Finland as a small nation divided by class conflict and supported only by certain western imperialistic powers. The Soviet writers predicted that such a nation could not resist the Red Army, especially as the Finnish proletariat would certainly rise against their bourgeois masters.

With the beginning of the Soviet attack on 30 November 1939 the Red press trumpeted the early successes of the Red Army and Red Fleet and confidently predicted a swift end to the Finnish Government in Helsinki. To support this the Russian newspaper pointed to the foundation of a revolutionary Peoples' Government of Finland in the newly-captured city of Terioki under Otto Kuusinen. This regime, it was confidently predicted, would provide the leadership for the expected proletarian revolt in Finland.

By mid-December 1939 when it had become apparent that the Soviet forces were not likely to sweep over Finland nor the proletariat to rise in revolt, there came a subtle change over the Soviet press releases. Stories about the conflict appeared less often. Contempt for the resistance of the Finns tended to disappear and more emphasis was given to the difficulties encountered by the Red Army.

References to the Terioki-based Peoples' Government of Finland diminished almost to the vanishing point. Only the heroic deeds of individual Soviet fighting men increased in the press coverage during late December 1939 and January 1940.

When the Red Army began its drive to break the "Mannerheim Line" on the Karelian Isthmus in February 1940, press coverage of the fighting increased significantly. Even then, the earlier predictions of a complete victory over the Helsinki Government were not repeated. Along with this the Peoples' Government of Finland was completely ignored throughout this period. For these reasons the rather sudden announcement of the Treaty of Moscow on 12 March 1940 was rather easier to accept. These changes in the Soviet newspaper campaign during the Winter War indicate that the Russian press did respond to events, much like all newspapers, and that the Russian people could not be made to believe everything their leaders might wish them to believe.

The personal experiences of the Soviet fighting men published in newspapers and books during and after the Winter War revealed a great deal about the problems of the Soviet armed forces. One of the first problems mentioned was the lack of coordination between the various arms. Other defects were a lack of training and equipment for winter combat and a deficiency in scouting and patrolling

which left the Red Army at the mercy of swift-moving Finnish ski patrols. All of this arose because of a lack of proper leadership in the higher ranks of the Red Army. According to these recollections, these defects were finally dealt with before the campaign which broke the "Mannerheim Line" in February 1940.

The major lesson of this study was the discovery that Soviet records, despite their domination by the officially acceptable truth, can be useful in obtaining information about developments in the USSR. Through a careful reading of these sources and an understanding of the requirements of censorship, one can readily obtain a better understanding of the problems of the Soviet leadership and even some idea as to the feelings of the Russian people in response to the events which make up the history of our times.

PLEASE NOTE:

Several pages contain colored illustrations. Filmed in the best possible way.

UNIVERSITY MICROFILMS

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I should like to acknowledge the help of my advisor, Dr. Gordon W. Prange, without whose suggestion, aid and support this thesis would never have been conceived or completed. Also I should like to acknowledge the assistance of my mother, Mrs. Bertha M. Anzulovic, who read over this manuscript and exercised great patience when her house was disrupted by the completion of this work. Also credit must be given to my typists, Mrs. Ellen Behrens and Mrs. Joyce Brown, both for their suggestions and their skill with their machines without which this work would still be an unreadable scrawl.

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MAP I  
THE INITIAL ATTACK OF THE SOVIET UNION ON FINLAND  
(30 November 1939--16 December 1939)

This map shows the major Soviet routes of attack into Finland during the first three weeks of the Winter War. The railroads and waterways shown are only the most important transportation lines in that nation. There are, of course, many more rivers, lakes, canals and railroad lines in Finland but to have included them would have only made the picture more complicated.

This picture of the Soviet attack is an interesting one. It should be noted that the aggressive moves at either end of Finland, i.e., the Red Fleet's movements in the Gulf of Finland and the 14th Soviet Army's seizure of the Petsamo region, seem to have been planned to cut the Finns off from any aid that might arrive by sea. The 7th Soviet Army from Leningrad and the 8th Soviet Army from Petrozavodsk were moving to break through the eastern Karelian defenses and clear a good road into southern Finland.

The 9th Soviet Army at Uhtka, however, has remained something of a mystery as to the purpose and strategy of its attacks along the extended eastern borders of Finland. A solution is suggested by the map. Even if the 8th and 9th Soviet Armies succeeded in breaking through in eastern Karelia the result would most likely be a rapid retreat north and west of all Finnish forces. With its supply routes open to Sweden at Kemi, the Finns could play a very difficult guerrilla war among the lakes and forests of western and central Finland. If the 9th Soviet Army, however, could seize most of the waterways and railroads of eastern Finland, Soviet forces would be in an excellent position to outflank such a retreat or at least to cut off the supply lines into Sweden. It was thus very likely that the attacks of the units of the 9th Soviet Army had as their objective the seizure of transportation routes in eastern Finland, not a direct drive to cut the nation in two.

The Winter Roads which provide the only transportation routes to Petsamo and Norway are merely strips cleared through the forests and/or tundra. Brush is laid down and water poured over it. This quickly freezes in the cold weather. These roads are limited in their use, however, because of the problem of weather (think what even a brief warm spell could do) and the inability of the ice surface to avoid shattering under the impact of heavy vehicles.

SYMBOLS:

-----	Political boundaries
HANKO	Important towns, islands and bases
.....	Ship channels
~~~~~	Winter road





Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet Army.

Fortified defense lines

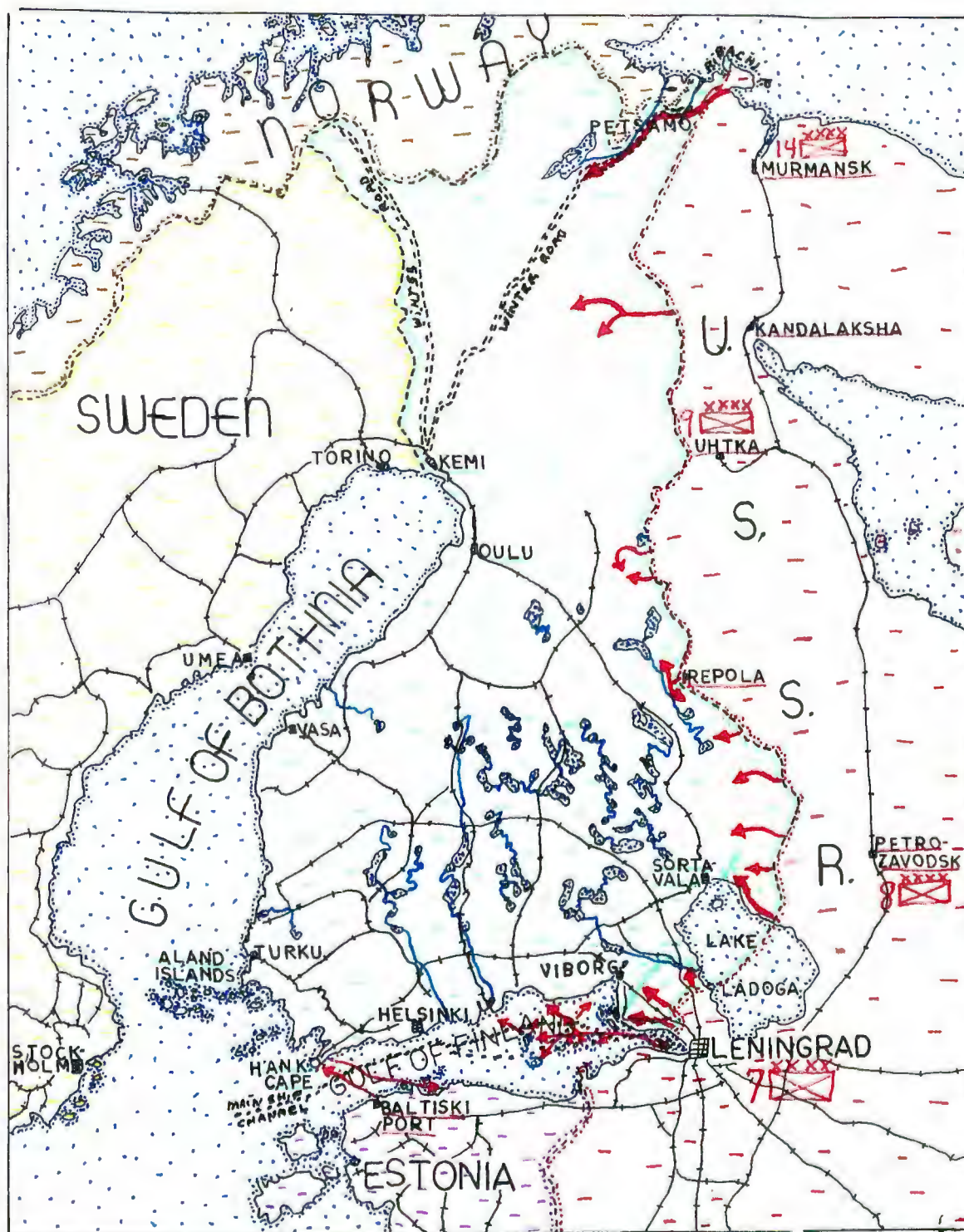
Territory of the Republic of Finland

Territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Territory of the Kingdom of Norway

Territory of the Kingdom of Sweden

Territory of the Republic of Estonia



FINLAND 1939

SOVIET FORCES: —  
FINNISH FORCES: — x x

0 60 120 180 240 300 360 KM

## INTRODUCTION

By April 1939, it was clear that Nazi Germany had embarked upon a career of aggrandizement in Europe. In the preceding six years Adolf Hitler had rearmed his nation, defied the western powers of England and France and swallowed Austria and Czechoslovakia. With the rise of a warlike Third Reich on its western frontier, the leaders of the Soviet Union, hoping to stay neutral in case of world conflict, began a search for security.

In the spring of 1939, there were tentative feelers between the Kremlin and the Wilhelmstrasse.<sup>1</sup> By late July and early August negotiations were definitely underway to secure a working political accord between the two dictatorships. Since Germany wanted to avoid a two-front war over the Polish question and Russia wished to buy time and secure her western borders, the two countries reached agreement in the notorious Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of 23 August 1939.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond James Sontag and James Stuart Beddie (eds.), Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941: Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office, State Department Publication No. 3025 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1948), pp. 1-32.

<sup>2</sup>Walter C. Langsam, Documents and Readings in the History of Europe Since 1918 (Chicago: J. B. Lippincott, 1939), pp. 850-853.

A secret protocol in this pact provided for a division of eastern Europe between Germany and the USSR.<sup>1</sup> With the Nazi destruction of Poland in September 1939, Hitler and Stalin set out to take over their "spheres of influence" assigned in the secret protocol as amended on 28 September 1939.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, Finland and the three Baltic States were acknowledged by Germany as within Russia's "sphere of influence." In swift succession, during late September and early October, the nations of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were forced to sign pacts of "friendship and mutual aid" with the Soviet Union.<sup>3</sup> These agreements allowed Soviet armed forces to establish various naval and air bases in these Baltic states. Thus Russia secured her western border and in effect protected the southern approaches to Leningrad. As long as Finland remained apart from these "mutual assistance" agreements, however, there was still a way for a potential aggressor to mount an attack on the northwestern frontiers of the USSR.

On 6 October, therefore, Soviet leaders invited the Finns to send representatives to Moscow to discuss

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<sup>1</sup>Sontag and Beddie, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>3</sup>"Text of Estonian Treaty," New York Times, 29 September 1939, p. 8; "Text of the Latvian Pact," New York Times 6 October 1939, p. 9; and "Text of the Lithuanian Pact," New York Times, 11 October 1939, p. 6.

confidentially a "change in relations between the two countries."<sup>1</sup> The Kremlin requested border adjustments on the Karelian Isthmus to protect Leningrad and the withdrawal of the Finns from the Ribachi peninsula in the north to secure the approaches to the port city of Murmansk. To protect the sea lands to Kronstadt and Leningrad the Kremlin also asked the Finnish Government to sell the four major islands in the Gulf of Finland: Seiskari, Lavansaari, Tytarsaari and Suursaari (Hogland), and lease Hanko Cape at the mouth of the Gulf as a naval base. These positions, combined with the Soviet naval base at Paldiski (Baltiski Port) in Estonia would, so the Russian military experts thought, secure Leningrad from any sea-borne threat.

The Finns seemed willing enough to permit border rectifications on the Karelian Isthmus and on the Arctic Coast. They also appeared ready to consider the sale of the Gulf Islands. But they catagorically refused to discuss the leasing of a naval base at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland. Since this lease was felt by the Kremlin to be absolutely necessary for the security of Leningrad, the talks in Moscow came to an end on 13 November 1939.<sup>2</sup> It would appear that at this point, while the Finns thought the discussions had merely

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<sup>1</sup>Vaino Tanner, The Winter War: Finland against Russia, 1939-1940 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 22, cited hereafter as The Winter War. (Tanner was Head of the Finnish Social Democratic Party and Foreign Minister from 1 December 1939 to 15 March 1940.)

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-68.



been postponed, the Soviet leaders had decided that diplomacy could not solve Russia's Baltic problem and they then resolved to use force. As a result the Red Army invaded Finland on 30 November 1939 while the Red Banner Baltic Fleet occupied the Gulf islands and the Red Air Force bombed Helsinki and other population centers in Finland.

In reviewing the published literature on this conflict, the present writer discovered several years ago that one area has not been very closely examined--the field of Soviet material relating to the war. This can be easily understood because the large amount of propaganda present in all Communist writing has tended, in many cases, to obscure the real grains of fact contained in many published works. It will be the purpose of this thesis to analyze representative examples of Russian material, both from newspapers and books, in an attempt to understand what the Kremlin leadership was trying to do and what they wanted the Russian people to read about their efforts to "protect the northwestern frontiers of the socialist state." Because so much propaganda is present in Soviet materials and because the factual record of the Russo-Finnish War is still so scanty, this thesis will compare the Communist version of the conflict with the best available western sources in an attempt to balance the record.

The first part of the thesis will systematically examine the Russo-Finnish conflict as it appeared in the Soviet press during the period from 1 November 1939 to 13 March 1940. Selected newspaper articles will be combined with a cursory

study of the events of the war in order to trace the circumstances which may have had a bearing on the attitude of the Communist news bosses. This study will also try to examine the question of just how accurately the Red news sources reported the events of the Winter War.

In preparing this thesis the author has relied for the most part on five Russian newspapers: Pravda and Izvestiya, the news organs of the "Great Communist Party (of bolsheviks)" and the Supreme Soviet of the USSR respectively; Krasnaya Zvezda, the Red Army's newspaper; Trud, the mouthpiece of the Peoples' Commissariat of Labor Unions; and Komsomolskaya Pravda, the journal of the "Lenin Young Communist Youth League." Copies of Krasnie Flot, the news source for the various Soviet naval forces and Industriya were also examined but only occasional references are made to these two journals because the collection of these newspapers in the Library of Congress is relatively spotty and the articles which appeared in them contributed little to the total picture of Soviet information about the war.

The second part of this thesis will examine the personal recollections of the Russian participants in the Russo-Finnish War. These accounts have been found in the various newspapers and a number of books published by Soviet authorities in the years following the Peace of Moscow. The present study will make a selective analysis of these accounts in an effort to determine how the individual Red Army man, sailor, airman, commissar and commander remembered his part in

the battles with the "Whitefinns." More importantly, these recollections will be analyzed to try to understand what prevented the Soviet armed forces from accomplishing their mission of "crushing the bankrupted gang of Ryti-Tanner,"<sup>1</sup> much sooner than they did.

The major collections of personal experiences consulted for this thesis were the two volumes of Boi v Finlyandii, V Snega Finlyandii, V Boya Protiv Belofinnii, Dekabr, 1939 Goda, Flot v Boya s Belofinnaii, and Borba za Ostriva. Other works from the Russian will be utilized, of course, but the basic ideas of this report were developed largely from the above sources.

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<sup>1</sup>Risto Ryti, leader of the Agrarian Party and Premier of Finland from December 1939 to March 1940.



## CHAPTER I

### THE ADVENT OF WAR IN THE NORTH

(1 November 1939--26 November 1939)

The negotiations between the Finnish delegation and the Soviet representatives in Moscow during October 1939 on the question of securing Russian bases in Finland had been carried on under a veil of newspaper silence at the request of the Soviet Government. But on 31 October at the first meeting of the Supreme Soviet, the head of the Council of Commissars, Vyacheslav M. Molotov, made a report to the delegates in which he revealed the complete details of the Russo-Finnish negotiations from the Soviet viewpoint.<sup>1</sup> The public announcement of these confidential talks was extremely disturbing to the Finnish negotiators, then on their way back to Moscow to continue the meetings.<sup>2</sup> In spite of this Soviet breach of diplomatic etiquette, the Finnish delegation, after consulting with Helsinki, decided to continue on to the Russian capital.

Unfortunately these renewed negotiations did not result

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<sup>1</sup>"The Text of Molotov's Speech," New York Daily Worker, 1 November 1939, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, pp. 59-60.

in any agreement between the two nations. The leasing of Hanko Cape as a Russian naval base still remained the chief stumbling block. The Finnish delegation, which hoped that these talks would be revived at some future date, left Moscow on 13 November. For the time being diplomacy had come to an end.

One of the results of these negotiations had been the relaxation of Finnish mobilization which had been ordered by Marshal Gustav Mannerheim on 14 October.<sup>1</sup> Preparations for the defense of Finland were stopped and reservists who had been called to the colors began to return home. Strangely enough, this period in early November corresponded to an increased "war of nerves" against Finland in the Russian press. However, the Finns seemed to have felt that the Reds were merely "trying to soften Finland into a state of acquiescence towards making concessions."<sup>2</sup> Thus while the Soviet press was stirring up animosity against Finland, the Finns were relaxing their guard in the hope that the Moscow talks would be renewed.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of the Soviet press during this period was twofold. In the first place the Finns were pictured as a divided nation. At the top was a "governing clique" that was seeking an all-out war with the Soviet Union while the "working classes" at the bottom of the social structure were

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<sup>1</sup>Gustav Mannerheim, Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim, translated with introduction by Eric Lewenhaupt (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1954), p. 309.

<sup>2</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup>John Henry Wuorinen, A History of Finland (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 347.

against such a conflict and therefore violently opposed the warmongering policy of the "ruling circles" in Helsinki. For their second point the Russian newspapers blasted Finnish leaders as a rabid group of warmongers who were supported by western imperialists, while the great mass of the Finnish people were described as sunk in poverty and bloody political repression. Obviously these lower classes did not support the warlike policy of their "black reactionary" rulers.

Soviet press reports before November on Finland were not unlike those concerning any of the other Scandinavian countries. There were the usual articles about the economic difficulties which were being faced by the Finnish people, and the comings and goings of various Finnish delegations during October.<sup>1</sup> Other than these notices Finland might just as well have been on the other side of the world.

The news famine on Finland ended abruptly with the speech of Molotov before the Supreme Soviet on 31 October. His address covered all fields of Soviet diplomacy but his most significant emphasis was on the Finnish question. For some weeks the foreign press had been predicting that the

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<sup>1</sup>"Priezd v Moskvu Upolnomochennovo Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva g-na I. K. Paasikivi" (The Arrival in Moscow of the Representative of the Finnish Government, Mr. Paasikivi) Krasnaya Zvezda, 12 October 1939, p. 1; "Priem t. Molotoviam Upolnomochennovo Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva, g-na I. K. Paasikivi" (The Reception by Com. Molotov of the Representative of the Finnish Government, Mr. I. K. Paasikivi) Krasnaya Zvezda, 14 October 1939, p. 1; "Priezd Upolnomochennovo Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva" (The Arrival of the Representative of the Finnish Government) Krasnaya Zvezda, 24 October 1939, p. 1.

Russians and the Finns would soon announce an agreement in the same way that the Baltic States had "fallen into the Soviet sphere." Now the Russians had admitted that there had been a hitch in their plans. The Finns had proved difficult and did not seem ready to accept Russian guidance. The speech therefore was a sort of international bombshell, for it marked the first setback in the Russian plan to control the northern Baltic.

Surprisingly enough, Molotov's address, though direct and forceful, contained only a veiled threat against the Finnish Government. The single note of warning can be found in the last paragraph:

. . . We are certain that the Finnish leading circles properly understand the importance of consolidating friendly Soviet-Finnish relations and that the Finnish public men will not yield to anti-Soviet influence or instigation from any quarter.<sup>1</sup>

The warning was plain enough. Finland was not to seek allies and things would go well for her. But if there was any hint of intervention, she would have to accept the consequences. In short the Russians served notice on the Finnish Government that they meant to have their own way in the Baltic.

On 3 November the first rumblings of trouble appeared in the Russian newspapers. An article in Trud pointed out that the foreign press, especially in Finland, had protested

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<sup>1</sup>"Okonchaniye Doklada tot. V. M. Molotova" (The Opening Speech of Comrade V. M. Molotov), Pravda, 1 November 1939, p. 2.

too loudly about these negotiations and had looked upon the Soviet terms as a "threat to the West."<sup>1</sup> The article also noted that the speech of the Finnish Foreign Minister, Eljas Erkkö, on 1 November in Helsinki was a definite threat of war against the USSR.

On the same day Pravda too carried an article which commented on the unfavorable reaction of the Finnish press to the Moscow terms. Indicating that some Finnish leaders were unfriendly towards the Soviet Union, this official organ noted that the actions of the Finnish Government, such as the evacuation of city populations, the mobilization of supplies and the change of industries to a war footing could be looked upon as a "series of measures which made sense only in case of a nation preparing for war." Then, too, Erkkö's speech was labelled a threat to the USSR because he indicated "what forces would guarantee the neutrality and freedom of Finland in the event of a threat to its neutrality." In response to these dangers to the Soviet State, the article announced that the Russian people were resolved to ". . . throw back to the devil all the games of the political gamblers . . . (and) guarantee the safety of the USSR: not overlooking anything

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<sup>1</sup>"Inostrannaya o Dokladye tov. Molotova na Vneocherednoi Pyatoi Sessii Verhovnov Soveta SSSR" (Foreigners about the Speech of Com. Molotov at the Opening Session of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR), Trud, p. 4.



(and) overcoming all and every obstacle on the way to the goal."<sup>1</sup>

Basically the articles scored the point that there were some Finnish leaders who did not like the idea of negotiation with the Soviet Union. These leaders, led by Erkke, so the press asserted, acted as though they wanted war with the Soviet Union. In this desire, it was reasoned, they evidently expected help from "certain western powers,"; the Soviet people, therefore, were told to be on guard against such a threat. For the most part, these articles seemed to have served as a warning both to the Soviet people and the Finnish negotiators then in Moscow.

By 12 November there were definite signs of stepped up activity in the Soviet press against Finland. In both Izvestiya and Pravda there appeared a reprint of an article from the left-wing Finnish magazine Soihtu which revealed that the warlike preparations of the Finnish Government had caused the workers to hope for the success of the Soviet-Finnish negotiations. The implications were that the Finnish working classes had a different attitude towards the possibility of a settlement with the USSR than did the Finnish political leaders.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"K Voprosu Sovetsko-Finlyandih Peregovorah" (On the Question of the Soviet-Finnish Negotiations), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Sjurnal Soihtu o Sovetsko-Finlyandih Peregovorah" (The Magazine Soihtu about the Soviet Finnish Negotiations), Izvestiya, p. 4, and Pravda, p. 1.

On this same day Trud also published an article in which the author argued eloquently that the Finns must be planning an attack on the USSR with the help of the "Anglo-French imperialists." Here the Soviet press scored a significant point, for this was the first time that it identified the imperialist powers who were allegedly supporting Finland's political leaders. Heretofore Russia's newspapers spoke in general terms about "imperialistic powers," but now they pointed the finger directly at England and France.

After all, Finland with its own forces, so Trud continued, ". . . could not resist an aggressor who might try to invade its territory for a war against the USSR." Then, too, since Finland was such a small nation her political leaders must be dragging the country into war with the support of the West. Of course no intelligent person would want this but, with the backing of the West, these political intriguers would go "into a fight with the Soviet Union with its 183 million fiery patriots." Naturally, the article concluded, the Soviet people must "strengthen the security of Leningrad, and . . . end every intrigue in spite of everything."<sup>1</sup>

On the next day Pravda and other newspapers reinforced the picture of Finland as a nation split by economic and political troubles which, it was claimed, were brought about principally by the warlike measures which had been initiated

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<sup>1</sup>F. Lopanov, "Finskie Mal'bruki Vedut Opasnou Igru" (The Finnish Malbruks Play a Dangerous Game), Trud, p. 2.

in October. In connection with these preparations, the article estimated that "Finland could not maintain such a position for more than 4-7 months." It then went on to predict that "the government . . . will declare that the Soviet proposals are impossible."<sup>1</sup> As the Russian press saw it the outlook for a settlement with the Finns grew less likely every day.

A further development in the growing campaign against Finland appeared in an article in Komsomolskaya Pravda on the 14th. This was in the form of a letter written by a prominent Danish Communist. It purported to be a description of conditions inside Finland, but in reality it was part of the usual attack on the "mad Finnish leaders" who were leading their nation to war. Utilizing a great deal of historical material, the author demonstrated that the "bourgeois government" had been the enemy of the "liberties of the Finnish people" for the past twenty years. During this excursion into history, the old motto of some defunct Finnish right-wing groups "a greater Finland up to the Urals" was brought out as a possible motive for the aggressive actions of the Finnish military. The letter also pointed out that the Finnish people were against this policy of aggression as were the working classes of Denmark. This being the case the hopes of the present

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<sup>1</sup>"Polosjeniei v Finlyandii" (The Situation in Finland), Pravda, p. 2.



Finnish government for support among the Scandinavian countries was only a pipe dream.<sup>1</sup>

The above viewpoint received official "sanction" in an article which was widely printed throughout the Red press on 16 November. Here again one sees the slogan of the Finnish reactionaries who have always "dreamed of extending the borders of Finland to the Urals" presented as the real reason for the "aggressive actions" of the Helsinki Government. "Finland has been orienting itself towards the West," the message read, "so that at the first opportunity they could reveal their hostility to the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> This certainly was indicative of western support, it was argued, and of the activities of "the Finnish black-reaction." Even the efforts of the Finnish rightists to convince the people that the diplomatic rupture was temporary was only "an attempt to influence public opinion by introducing falsehoods."<sup>3</sup> This piece concluded as follows:

It is evident that the Finnish ruling circles do not wish an agreement with the USSR, that they will continue their antisoviet policy. The wide mass of the Finnish people sincerely desire the arrangement of friendly relations with the Soviet Union. The hostile antisoviet course has no support.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Andersen Nekse, "Vokrug Finlyandii" (Around Finland), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>"Antisovitskaya Kampaniya v Finlyandii" (The Anti-soviet Campaign in Finland), Pravda, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

These ideas were further emphasized in a series of stories subtitled "Letters from Finland," which appeared during this period in the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda. The one to which reference is now made was published on 17 November. It supported the view that the Finnish workers and peasants were definitely against the Helsinki Government's policy of aggressive actions on the Russian border. Of course pro-Russian sentiment of the Finnish working classes was suppressed by the "okranka" (secret police) and the "United Front" of Finnish political parties.<sup>1</sup> However, the author ended on a note of optimism:

With such terror and persecution the officials will not be able to break the resistance of the people, to take them into an antisoviet war. The adventurers will not be able to sacrifice the peace of the Finnish people for the sake of the interests of London and Paris.<sup>2</sup>

Here again was further reference to the western imperialists.

The very next day another article appeared in Komsomolskaya Pravda. Its subject was a proclamation of the Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party. The sheer fact of such a proclamation, it was reasoned, was further proof that there was a body of discontent within Finland which would be in favor of a settlement with Russia. The proclamation recited the wrongs done to the Finnish workers

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<sup>1</sup>A. Kalervoinen, "Finskaya Molodesj Protiv Avanturistov i Provokatorov" (The Finnish Youth Are Against the Adventurers and Provokers), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

by the "bourgeois rulers" over the past twenty years. It also answered the argument of the Finnish Government that it was merely protecting the sovereignty of the nation.

Observed the anonymous author:

It is funny when the Soviet proposals are considered an infringement on the sovereignty of Finland by the same circles which, in the case of sovereignty, were prepared to surrender the constitutional rights of Finland to the Tzar and who after this in 1918 sold their nation to the Kaiser.<sup>1</sup>

Naturally the "manifesto met with great interest in the factories and plants, the barracks and among the forest workers of Finland."<sup>2</sup>

In a two-column front-page story in Krasnaya Zvezda on 19 November entitled "The Ruling Circles Are Provoking War with the USSR," the reader was given a review of the entire picture of "Finnish aggressions" against the Soviet Union. It pointed out that after the leaders of Finland had entered into talks with the USSR, certain rightist circles in that country began a "specious campaign against the socialist state." This campaign was intended, so the story indicated, to discredit beforehand any Soviet proposal which might eliminate the troubles in the Baltic. These same rightist circles, the account continued, also began a program of "brazen defamation" to "provoke hatred against the muscovite." Even the military took an active part in this effort. In the Finnish magazine,

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<sup>1</sup>"Golos Finskovo Naroda" (The Voice of the Finnish People), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

Suomen Kuvalshti, two articles were printed which seriously considered the possibility of war with Russia. This, the story pointed out, was definite indication of the aggressiveness of the Finnish Army.<sup>1</sup>

Not only that but this same account insisted that the "imperialist West" had its hand in the Finnish pie. Proof of this were the two "good will" visits in 1925 and in 1939 of a certain British Major General Walter Kirk to Finland to observe the development of the Finnish Army. According to the article these trips were made not only to inspect the Finnish Army but to supervise its training. What is more, during his earlier visit this "remarkable man" evidently not only organized and trained the entire Finnish Army but even drew up the plans and directed the construction of the so-called Kirk-Mannerheim fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus. General Kirk managed to accomplish this astonishing feat, so the story ran, in the total elapsed time of some eleven months. One can well understand the natural concern that the Russians felt when they learned that this same superman had complimented the Finns on their military development. Of course, this evidence was only being utilized as "proof" of the complete control of Finnish territory by the "imperialist West." This same Soviet line continued with the assertion that the Finnish armed forces were being reinforced from abroad. "All sorts of adventurers and lovers

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<sup>1</sup>"Pravyashchiei Krugi Finlyandii Provotziruut Voinu s SSSR," Krasnaya Zvezda, 19 November 1939, p. 12.



of battle have been brought together by a (warlike) zeal," said the article. "With such help the boldness of the Finnish Army becomes clear: it is no joke that they threaten to defeat and disperse the Red Army."<sup>1</sup>

This article concluded with a warning about an old Finnish proverb: "A Finn is worth 10 Russians." Krasnaya Zvezda observed that such ideas only encouraged the already aggressive Finnish rightists to carry out their plans to invade the USSR. This led to the gloomy observation: "Despite their implacable antisoviet policy, they continue on a downward path."<sup>2</sup>

The above review is an excellent example of the type of campaign which was waged in the Russian press during this period. Any chance observation by a Finnish publication or the visit of foreign military observers was made to appear as an indication of the aggressive intention of the "Helsinki warmongers." All this contributed to the Russian picture of Finland as a focus of war in the North.

What the Russian leaders were doing, of course, is clear. They were first of all building up a case against Finland and in the same breath warning the West (France and England) against intervention should the Soviet Government find it necessary to take forceful action to "restrain the raging Finns."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

In another story which appeared on 20 November in Krasnaya Zvezda, Pravda and other newspapers, additional "proof" of the aggressive intentions of the Finns in the Baltic was supplied. This time the Soviets drew upon an article from the Swedish Communist newspaper Nu Dag for their evidence. "It is well understood that the Government (of Finland) has the power to terminate this atmosphere which is hostile to the USSR, but it does nothing," so ran the charge.<sup>1</sup> Therefore the very fact that the "Helsinki managers" had allowed their newspapers to print adverse comments on the Soviet Union was a further indication of the aggressive intent of Finland towards her neighbor to the east.

Other pieces of the Soviet "picture of Finland" appeared in a series of small articles during the month of November which were printed on those pages of Russian newspapers devoted to news items from foreign sources. For the most part these reports added up to the view that the October mobilization had a bad effect upon the economic situation in Finland, especially in respect to rents, prices and high taxes. All this created intolerable conditions for the families of married reservists who had been called to the colors and as a result the Finnish people were very discontented with the policy of their present Government. While these articles were too small to be considered especially

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<sup>1</sup>"Shvedskaya Gazeta s Politike Finlyandi" (A Swedish Newspaper about the Policy of Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 12.

important, they nevertheless served to keep the Russian picture of the Finnish nation constantly before the people of the Soviet Union.

On 21 November the Soviet press for the first time launched a direct attack on their old enemies, the Finnish Social Democrats. Izvestiya blasted their leaders for betraying their original principles. Instead of fighting for the high ideals of true socialism, they had become a "social-democratic aristocracy." As a result they were no longer "fighting for the betterment of the material welfare of the workers, poor-peasants and the intelligentsia," nor "for the widening of democratic rights and for peace among people." On the other hand "this group of aristocrats had been assimilated with the capitalists and fascists and has wandered into the camp of black reaction. The workers, peasants and intelligentsia should leave the party."<sup>1</sup>

Another story which emphasized the perfidy of the Social Democrats had this to say about their part in the ill-fated Moscow negotiations:

. . . one notes the clumsy veering of the leaders of the Social-Democrats. After they had worked for a breaking of the negotiations with the USSR from their camp comes a timid voice (calling) for the employment of "all possible (means) for the continuation of the talks." This, in particular, is found in a statement by the president of the parliamentary committee of foreign affairs, Svato (Svento) (who is) very sorry that there is no agreement with the USSR.

The crocodile tears of Postine Svento (Social-

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<sup>1</sup>"Suomen Penvil'eliya' o Predatel'stve Finskoi Sotzial-Demokratii" (Suomen Penuilelia about the Perfidy of the Finnish Social-Democrats), Izvestiya, p. 4.

Democrat deputy to the Parliament) involuntarily reveals the antisoviet course of the reactionary leaders of the Social-Democrats.<sup>1</sup>

This quote was typical of the method used by the Russian press to discredit the statements of Finnish leaders. The semi-humorous reference to "crocodile tears" and other zoological features played a great part in certain Soviet stories about the efforts of the Finnish leaders to explain their side of the diplomatic situation.

In a story of the 24th a Finnish author, in another of the "Letters from Finland" series, reviewed the situation from the Communist point of view. According to this writer, the reactionaries utilized all the forms of propaganda to promote their hopes to conquer a "greater Finland to the Urals." It seems as though "bourgeois history and poetry, by the 'large and small robbers of feathers' have given a tone to (Finnish) literature in which it appears that the territory from the Finnish border to the Urals (and) to the Siberian rivers Obi and Yenese, by some kind of mythical 'right' belong to Finland."<sup>2</sup> This "exaggerated claim," according to the author, was evidently the basis for the reactionary attack on the USSR.

On the other hand the young Finnish workers had not

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<sup>1</sup>"Razgul Antisovetskoi Kampanii v Finlyandii" (The Outpouring of the Antisoviet Campaign in Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, 23 November 1939, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>A. Kalervoinen, "Finskaya Trudyashchayasya Molodesj Deug Sovetskovo Naroda" (The Finnish Working Youth Are The Friends of the Soviet People), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.



forgotten that Finland received her freedom from the hands of these same Bolsheviks whom the reactionaries were planning to attack. The reason there was no open protest by the youthful proletariat in Helsinki against this aggressive policy was the "bloody terror" employed by the Finnish leaders to suppress the political action of these young workers. In spite of that:

No police prohibition, no cruelty of repression, no terror can destroy in the breasts of the Finnish youth the love for the great socialist state . . . The younger generation of the Finnish people together with all the workers will conduct a fight against the antisoviet war, kindled by you, the retained lords of foreign imperialists.<sup>1</sup>

The final major article in this period appeared on 26 November in Pravda and was widely reprinted throughout the Russian press on the next day. This story, entitled "A Clown in the Office of Premier" received some notice in the foreign press as well. It was a report of a speech made by Finnish Premier A. K. Kayander in which he tried to explain the position of Finland in the recent negotiations. As had been noted, the Russian correspondents when they report such events try to discredit the speaker with a heavy layer of odious comparisons. In the case of the Finnish Premier it seems that he:

. . . changed the concert platform into the ring of a circus tent. As a clown he somersaulted and spoke all topsy-turvy. He stood on his head and walked on his hands.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

With the adder creeps the Finnish Premier. He sobs, besmearing tears on a dirty face.<sup>1</sup>

These insults were a rude way of calling Premier Kayander a liar. The article did not stop here in discrediting the Finnish position. All the "proofs" of "western influence" in Finland and the encouragement of the English newspapers, it continued, lead to the conclusion that the Finns were meditating an immediate attack on the Soviet Union.

Thus in this period of 1-26 November one can see the growing Russian press campaign against Finland. From the Molotov speech of the 1st and the "editorials" of the 3rd to the satire on the policy speech of the Finnish Premier it can be said that Russian newspaper reports moved from "kind advice" to ridicule. For the most part, Soviet leaders seemed to have been intent upon presenting a picture of Finland as the focus of war in northeast Europe. The "reactionary ruling clique" in Helsinki was described as using every means to convince the Finnish people that the "muscovite" was their great enemy. These "bourgeois managers," so ran the Soviet accusation, revived the old hopes of the Finnish nationalists for a greater "Finland to the Urals." Since it was hard to imagine that even the "mad rulers of Helsinki" could hope to accomplish this ambitious program with only the resources of Finland, the Russians revived the old revolutionary myth that the Finns were going to allow the "western imperialists" to use their country as

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<sup>1</sup>"Shut Gorohovii Na Postu Prem'era," Pravda, p. 1.

a springboard for an attack on the "state of socialism." The delusions of the Finnish "rightist circles" combined with the power of the western allies, the Soviet line continued, caused the Finns to become an unendurable menace to the city of Lenin, the "cradle of the proletarian revolution."

But there was more to the story than this. According to the Russian writers, the picture was not too black. In spite of the "maniac ravings" of their bourgeois leaders, the Finnish people would not support them in such a mad adventure as an attack on Soviet Russia. Indeed, these workers were so suppressed that they would probably fight against any attempt by their political leaders to invade the Soviet Union. Thus while Finland constituted a danger to the strategic position of the USSR, Stalin's newspapers ground out the old theme that the Finnish people were so divided that the nation could not fight a real war.

It is interesting to note that with all the writing in the Soviet press about foreign influences in Finland no mention was ever made of Germany. This is true despite the fact that the Finnish Army had been trained and armed largely from German sources at the end of the first World War. To protect the Nazi-Soviet alliance the Russians evidently decided to overlook the German influence in this "focal point of war" in the northern Baltic.



## CHAPTER II

### JUSTIFICATION FOR ATTACK--THE MAINILA SHOTS

(27 November 1939--30 November 1939)

Towards the end of November the Soviet press campaign against Finland increased appreciably. The event around which the Soviet leaders built their anti-Finnish campaign was the so-called "Mainila Shots" that took place on the Russo-Finnish border in the western part of the Karelian Isthmus (see Map II). Here is the report of the incident that appeared in all the Russian newspapers:

On 26 November at 15 hours, 45 minutes our soldiers stationed a kilometer northwest of Mainila were suddenly fired on from Finnish territory by artillery. In all there were seven rounds fired. Killed were three Red Army men and one sergeant, wounded were seven Red Army men, one sergeant and one second lieutenant. Colonel Tikomirov, chief of staff of the first division, was sent to investigate the area. The incident caused great commotion among the troops stationed in the area opposite the Finns . . .<sup>1</sup>

To this "outrageous incident" the Soviet Government reacted immediately. That same day the Foreign Office in Moscow protested the shooting and asked Finland to withdraw

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<sup>1</sup>"Vozmushchenie Provokatsiei Finlyandskoi Voenshinie" (The Insolent Provocation of the Finnish Military), Krasnaya Zvezda, 27 November 1939, p. 2.

her forces from the border to a distance of 25 kilometers to "insure the security of Leningrad." The Finns quickly answered the Russian charge. The next day in a rather stiff note they insisted that the Finnish Army was not responsible for the incident. They also suggested a mutual withdrawal of all forces so that the incident could be investigated by a border commission in accordance with the Russo-Finnish nonaggression pact of 1934.<sup>1</sup>

This caused the Russians to take still another step. On 28 November they not only rejected the Finnish suggestion but abrogated their nonaggression pact with Finland of 1934 as well, thus freeing their hands from any diplomatic restrictions. As a result the Finnish Foreign Office sent a much more conciliatory answer the next day which accepted the Russian demand for a withdrawal of Finnish forces. By then, however, time had run out.

The Soviet Government did not even answer this latest note. Instead Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, broadcast a rousing speech which condemned the Finns as aggressors and accused them of planning an attack on the Leningrad area.<sup>2</sup> To substantiate these accusations the Red Army reported that their forces had repulsed Finnish "infantry

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<sup>1</sup>"The Shape of Things to Come," The Nation (2 December 1939), p. 593.

<sup>2</sup>"Otvét Sovetskovo Pravitel'stva Na Notu Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva" (The Answer of the Soviet Government to the Note of the Finnish Government), Pravda, 29 November 1939, p. 1.



units" which had tried to cross the Russo-Finnish border on the 29th. The next day at 8:00 A.M. the Red Army moved across the boundary to "punish these raging provokers of war in their own territory."<sup>1</sup>

The Russian newspapers during the last four days of November were almost completely dominated by the "Mainila Shots" and the diplomatic notes which resulted from this incident. Besides front-page stories about diplomatic exchanges and the speeches of Molotov, one could read two other types of articles. The first of these were the so-called "eyewitness" accounts of the Mainila incident. In actual fact most of these stories were "on the spot" reports from news service correspondents who apparently went immediately to the Mainila barrier to give a firsthand report of this example of "Finnish aggression."

The other type of article concerned itself with meetings of Russian workers or soldiers who proclaimed that the Soviet people were solidly behind their party and government in its policy of punishing the Finnish "warmongers." Many of these articles contained speeches and resolutions from the various meetings held in "workers' clubs" throughout the USSR. The use of such articles to verify the drift of Russian public opinion is suspect for none of the speakers ventured to disagree with official policy. The articles are

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<sup>1</sup>"Ssjimutsys Kulaki Ot Gneva" (They Clench Their Fists in Anger), Krasnaya Zvezda, 29 November 1939, p. 2.

very useful, however, in determining just what the Soviet leaders wanted their people to believe during these crucial days before the actual outbreak of the Russo-Finnish War.

On 27 November the Soviet press blossomed with a front-page announcement of the note of protest sent to Finland by Molotov. After reviewing the facts as presented by the Red Army communique, Molotov pointed out that the Soviet Government had warned the Finns about the possibility of just such incidents during the recent Moscow talks. As a result of this incident the Russian Government requested that the Finnish army on the Karelian Isthmus withdraw its border units some 20 to 25 kilometers from the boundary. In order to soften this demand, the note announced:

The Soviet Government does not intend to 'blow up' this rebellious act of attack by units of the Finnish Army, since perhaps these units were badly controlled by the Finnish commanders. However, it is desirable that such rebellious acts from now on will not take place.<sup>1</sup>

The note seemed to have been an effort to place the Soviet Government in the position of offering a "reasonable" solution to a very touchy situation. After all the Red Army did not move immediately into Finland to "punish the inciters of war." Then, too, the Soviet Government did not demand that the Finns find and punish the perpetrators of this "international outrage." All the Kremlin leaders wanted was

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<sup>1</sup>"Note Sovetskovo Pravitel'stva Po Povodu Provokatsionnovo Obstrelya Sovetskih Viosk Pinlyandskim Voinskim Chastyama" (The Note of the Soviet Government about the Provoking Shooting of Soviet Troops by the Finnish Military), Pravda, p. 2.

the removal of the Finnish border guards to a respectful distance so that this type of incident would never recur. Under the circumstances this seemed a reasonable reaction to a situation which might well have called for stronger measures. For the most part, this "request" could be considered a final Russian effort to give the Finns another chance to end the diplomatic stalemate rather than force the Russians to take the ultimate step of war to secure their strategic and political demands.

The articles from the various "peoples' meetings" on 27 November, on the other hand, were more violent in tone and suggestion. Although they did not call for an armed invasion, they advocated a strong and active defense. Typical of these was the observation of a deputy commissar by the name of Pandhin:

In answer to the provocations of the Karelian Isthmus we will increase our vigilance. The enemy will not take us unawares. We are ready at any minute to defend our sacred border. With the name of Stalin on (our) lips we will go into battle and smash any enemy.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the articles berated Finnish diplomacy. A typical example follows:

Our Government repeatedly offered to the Finnish Government a peaceful solution of all difficulties between the Soviet Union and Finland. But the leaders of the Finnish Government, it seems, hope for some other solution. To peaceful negotiations they prefer impudent provocative action. This

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<sup>1</sup>"Privetstvuem Mudruu Politiku Nashevo Pravitel'stva" (We Welcome the Wise Policy of Our Government), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.



cannot be allowed to them. Our Government will carry on the necessary measures to repress the activities of the warmongers.<sup>1</sup>

Still others warned Finland to behave. Listen to the workers of Leningrad:

. . . the limits of the toleration and peacefulness of the Soviet people have been reached. We will further not expose our troops, the city of Lenin and the sacred soil of the state to the dangers of more provocations. The unbridled hands of Finnish kulaks, armed by the capitalists, will immediately retire from the border to a proper distance.

If the incompetent, but impudent, Finnish generals cannot keep good order and proper obedience in their gangs, we will not allow them to remain on the borders of our land any longer.<sup>2</sup>

Then examine this sample by a master-instructor of the plant "Red Proletariat," a certain comrade Pohvalenski:

What do we know about Finland?

This we know: the population is about the same as one of our cities, Leningrad. And here the braggart-leaders of this nation dream of extending the borders of Finland to the Urals. You hear, comrades, up to the Urals!

As long as this was simply conversation we listened to them and paid little attention. But when the Finnish bandits open fire on our border guards, when they earnestly attempt an attack on the power of our state, then workers simply say:

'We will send you to your graves, you fools!'<sup>3</sup>

The editions of Russian newspapers which appeared on 28 November scored the tense situation brought about by the

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<sup>1</sup>"Obuzdat Zarvavshihnya Provokatorov Voinie" (Repress the Activities of the Provokers of War), Trud, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>B. Lavrenkev, "Bespredlen Gnev Narodnie" (The Limitless Anger of the People), Izvestiya, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>"Obuzdat Nagletzov!" (Bury the Impudent Ones!), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

"Mainila Shots." Some of the most interesting stories which appeared were the accounts sent in by correspondents from the Mainila barrier. Many of these were very similar to their descriptions and conclusions. The authors painted a lurid picture of innocent Red soldiers being shot down in cold blood by the treacherous Finnish border guards. The best "official" description of the incident appeared in Krasnaya Zvezda. This account was the most complete and most nearly agreed with the original communique of the Leningrad Military District:

. . . It was an ordinary day on the border. Snow fell. Low clouds slowly moved in the sky. On the frosty calm came the young voices of the Red Army men. In the forests, in the field the usual Red Army exercises took place. A group of skiers, preparing for competition, whirled from hill to hill.

Suddenly from the surly Finnish area came the drumming of gunfire. Louder and louder. In the air the shells came with a growing howl. They tore into our Soviet earth and on the snow splashed young blood.

'Prepare the guns for battle,' ordered the commander of a battery, but he recovered:

'What am I doing? Well, if they provoke us, we will retire.' On the snow lay dead soldiers. Comrades gave first aid to the wounded. Recovering from the pain, they told how they were torn by the shells which landed in the middle of their exercises at the top of a hill.<sup>1</sup>

There were two points here which might strike the casual reader as rather strange. The first concerns the fact that the troops in this area were out training. The

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<sup>1</sup>"V Rainoe Mainila" (In the Province of Mainila), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

Mainila barrier lies in the western part of the Karelian Isthmus within a sharp bend of the river "Sister" which forms the border in this area. At this spot the Finns had guards on two sides of the border post. Why then hold maneuvers in plain sight of an enemy on two sides? Another part of this description told of skiers whirling from hill to hill. Unfortunately this particular area is very gentle terrain with no elevation of more than a hundred meters in any direction. A strange place to practice skiing. Perhaps it can be said that the reporter did not feel it necessary to go to the area to write a stirring account of the "atrocities."

The second suspicious point in this narrative is the reaction of the battery commander when the "Finnish" shells struck. He at first prepared for battle and then decided to retreat if there was any further provocation. For one thing it is strange to find a battery commander in such an exposed position. Then, too, his conduct was rather odd to say the least. The normal reaction would have been to prepare for a fight to hold the road to Leningrad. However, this was not the only "eyewitness" story of the Mainila incident.

There was a second account of the Mainila "aggression" and it also appeared in Krasnaya Zvezda. It is obvious too that a far more careful observer wrote this report than the one who penned the first story:



The border guard Rechitskii went on a patrol with his section. Suddenly there was a swishing in the air. Then he was disturbed by a stunning explosion. Rechitskii stood on his guard: 'What does this mean?'

This was 15 hours, 45 minutes (3:45 P.M.) of 26 November.

'Again a provocation!' said Grigorinko at his post of observation on the border, as over his head whistled the shells.

On that day stationed at an outpost was the light machine gunner Dibrov. Having heard the artillery fire from the Finnish side, he gave the command: 'To arms!'

In a second everyone was ready to fight.

The barrier commander explained to the border guards that it was impossible to retreat.

'Go to your places. Carry out combat preparations carefully.'

The whole barrier became more watchful to defend the border of the beloved nation.

The men off duty went to look at the place where the shells had fallen. This was quite near the barrier, about 200 meters away. It was in a meadow. It was the usual place for tactical exercises. Now it was covered with holes from enemy shells.

The enemy had shed the blood of good soldiers and commanders of the Red Army. Hatred and anger squeezed the breasts of the border guards . . .

The area of Mainila barrier is a favorite place for the provocations of the Finnish white-bandits. Here took place the shooting of two Soviet border guards. Here the Finns send their spies. The barrier always uncovers the plots of the enemy, bringing them into clear water, since this barrier is the advance barrier of the section.

. . . On the table of Bogolubov, the barrier's commissar, lay a shell splinter. Perhaps this piece of lead had wounded our soldiers. In a meeting, holding the splinter in his hands, Bogolubov said:

'Let this evidence of the provocation remind us every minute of the baseness and vileness of the enemy.'<sup>1</sup>

From this story it can be said that the Mainila barrier was somewhat upset by the shelling in spite of the

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<sup>1</sup>p. Nestorov and S. Solodovnikov, "Na Mainil'skoi Zastava" (At the Mainila Outpost), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

fact that there had evidently been other provocations in the same area. Indeed, commissar Bogolubov, evidently called a meeting sometime after the incident to explain the situation to his comrades. In spite of the fact that these men had just lost thirteen of their countrymen, the commissar does not even mention their names at this meeting. Instead he merely holds up a shell fragment as a sign of the "vileness of the enemy." This is especially strange in an article in which almost every other person was carefully given a surname. For that matter where are the names of the "fallen heroes"? They did not appear in any story from the Mainila barrier or indeed in any part of the Russian press. As a matter of fact these thirteen "martyrs of Mainila" have never appeared by name in any Russian account of the war. This is a strange omission from a government which prides itself on its careful records.

For an answer to this mystery perhaps one should take a look at the Finnish description of the Mainila incident:

Urko Sundvall said he was on duty at the spot (the Mainila barrier) at 2:30 P.M. He saw eleven Russians in the field sloping down in front of the foremost building at Mainila. A horseman came riding up. He stopped for a moment to talk to them, and then all twelve went away in a westerly direction. The horseman went a short distance with them, then wheeled around and disappeared at a gallop in an easterly direction. Ten minutes later, Sundvall heard a shot fired crosswise from the east, and in a matter of twenty seconds a shell exploded just where the Russians had been. It was a loud explosion and seemed to make a big hole, because a lot of dirt was thrown into the air. The first shot was followed by six more, all

the shells exploding in the same field. The last shell exploded at 3:05 P.M. Ten minutes later six men arrived on the spot where the shells had fallen, stayed three minutes in inspecting the ground, then went back. There was, of course, no dead or wounded; the spot was deserted at the time.<sup>1</sup>

If the Finnish version of the incident is compared with the second Russian "eyewitness" account, it becomes apparent that the incident consisted of seven rounds of artillery which landed in a field outside the Mainila barrier. It seems obvious too that the thirteen "victims of Mainila" were added to the story at some later time. This was probably done to create more public interest in what Moscow wanted the people to think was an insolent provocation by the Finns. Thus from a critical examination of all materials, it would seem likely that these seven rounds were fired by the Red Army to create an incident which could be used to justify any Russian invasion of Finland as a move to protect Leningrad.

The various reports from public meetings which appeared on the 28th were principally concerned with violent threats of vengeance against the "bad-rulers" of Helsinki. A certain Lieutenant Marushchan, for instance, insisted:

The fools who hold office in Finland threaten us with war. Haven't these artillery volleys been instigated by them? But the boastful soldiers forget that on the other side of the border stands

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<sup>1</sup>Herbert B. Elliston, Finland Fights (Boston: Little, Brown, 1940), p. 241.



the greatest army in the world, which at any moment will compel respect for the force of Soviet arms.<sup>1</sup>

In regards to the reaction of the Finnish workers to this "policy of provocation" the All-Moscow convention of writers observed:

We know the Finnish workers are not responsible for the policy of the provokers of war and are hostile to it. The Finnish workers at present do not wish to shed their blood in the service of native and foreign imperialists. So much more criminal then is the policy of the raging adventurers.<sup>2</sup>

One special quality of these threats against Finland was the mention of the fate of the late Polish Republic. Evidently the Russians felt that there was a similarity in the two situations for they frequently commented:

The political card-players of Finland must be reminded how the heroic Red Army battered the Polish lords, freeing the people of the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia from insufferable tyranny.<sup>3</sup>

The same emphasis came from a stahanovite, one Aleksei Nikolaevich Zaborovski, who declared:

It seems that the 'fools' do not understand that this is a bad trick (to play) on the Red Army. Well, if the bullies do not come to their senses, we will have to teach them a lesson such as was taught at

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<sup>1</sup>I. Agranovski, P. Karelin and V. Chernishev. "Na Karelskovo Peresheike" (On the Karelian Isthmus), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Velik Gnev Naroda" (The Great Anger of the People), Izvestiya, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>"Finskaya Voennaya Klika Poteryala Razum" (The Finnish Military Clique has Lost Its Mind), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

Hasan, Halhin-Gol, in the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia.<sup>1</sup>

It would appear from the content of these and other articles that there was much discussion among Russian workers and soldiers concerning the possibilities of war with Finland. Not only that, but the Soviet comparison of the Finnish situation with the incidents on the Manchurian border with Japan and the advance of the Red Army into eastern Poland was especially indicative of Soviet thinking towards a potential war with the Finns. What the Soviet press was grinding out for the Russian public then was essentially this: a winter campaign against the Finns would be relatively easy, just like the "liberation" of eastern Poland. At least this is the impression one gets from reading all these stories.

On the front pages of all Russian newspapers on the 29th appeared copies of the notes which had been exchanged between Finland and Russia during the previous day. These consisted of the text of the Finnish reply to the Molotov demands of the 27th and the Soviet answer to this proposal. There can be no doubt that, in spite of all amenities, the crucial point of the earlier note was the demand for the withdrawal of Finnish forces 20 to 25 kilometers from the border of the Karelian Isthmus. The Finnish note countered

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<sup>1</sup>"Terpeniu Est Predel" (Patience is Over), Pravda, p. 2.

this demand with the suggestion that instead both nations withdraw their forces to an agreed-upon distance from the trouble spot. Even friendly western observers were somewhat astonished by this suggestion and explained it as a Finnish attempt to "call the bluff" of the Soviet rulers.<sup>1</sup> A further reading of the Finnish note, on the other hand, reveals that the Finns were merely proposing a move to clear the border of soldiers to facilitate the work of this commission:

The Finnish Government . . . in order that this incident can be clearly reported, offers to initiate an investigation by the joint border commission on the Karelian Isthmus in conformity with the Convention of the border commission concluded on 24 September 1928.<sup>2</sup>

It should be noted that the Finns did not set any certain distance for the withdrawal, only so far as would be necessary for the investigation of the incident at Mainila. This interpretation justified the following observation by Finnish Foreign Minister Viano Tanner: "It might have been supposed that with the dispatch of this factual reply the matter would be settled."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Elliston, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup>"Otvét Sovetskovo Pravitel'stva Na Notu Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva" (The Answer of the Soviet Government to the Note of the Finnish Government), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 86.



In considering the strategic situation in the Baltic, it was obvious that the Russians would not settle the matter on this basis. Ignoring the details of this Finnish offer, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs in his reply denounced the "mutual withdrawal" suggestion as just one more example of the aggressive intent of the present government of Finland. In his analysis of the situation Molotov said:

The position of the Finnish and Soviet forces are not quite the same. No Soviet soldiers threaten the vital centers of Finland, indeed they are actually hundreds of kilometers from them. However, Finnish troops are stationed (only) 32 kilometers from a vital center of the USSR--Leningrad of some three and one-half million people, which has created a direct threat. It would be impossible for the Soviet troops stationed here to withdraw 25 kilometers for that would place them in the suburbs of Leningrad, an absurd position to defend Leningrad.<sup>1</sup>

Since the Finns refused to comply with the initial request to withdraw their forces, the Soviet note concluded that they were trying to maintain a hostile position to threaten Leningrad. This refusal to consider the defensive situation of the Soviet Union was, in the eyes of the Kremlin leadership, a direct violation of the 1934 treaty of nonaggression between Finland and the USSR. Therefore, the Soviet Union abrogated this treaty and ordered the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the Helsinki Government. The Russian rulers obviously had now abandoned

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<sup>1</sup>"Otvét Sovetskovo Pravitel'stva Na Notu Finlyandskovo Pravitel'stva," loc. cit.

all hopes for a negotiated settlement with Finland.

The reports of the soldiers and workers' meetings for this day reveal how far "public opinion" in Russia had moved towards an acceptance of war as a possible solution to the Baltic problem. The speeches and resolutions at these meetings were filled with derogatory observations about the Finnish Government and its leaders: "The new impudent act of the provokers of war was the answer of the Finnish Government to the upright note of the Soviet Government. No words can describe this obstinately mean answer of the Finnish managers."<sup>1</sup> The Finnish "governmental pack" was warned that "they are playing with fire" and if the Finnish Army "forces us to speak with the language of fire, on that day (they) will sweat freely."<sup>2</sup> There seemed to have been universal agreement that if the Finns persisted in their attitude and actions, the Soviet people "and their powerful Red Army and War Fleet will send to the devil every trick of the political card-players and guarantee the independence of the USSR."<sup>3</sup>

According to these speeches the peaceful inclinations of the Finnish workers and peasants, on the other hand, were

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<sup>1</sup>"K Otvetu Zarvavshihsy Provokatorov Voinie!" (In Answer to the Raging Provokers of War!), Izvestiya, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Budem Biet Vraga Besposhchadno!" (We will be Merciless to the Enemy!), Pravda, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Gotovie Razgromit Vraga Na Evo Sje Territorii" (Ready to Crush the Enemy in His Own Territory), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.



being suppressed by a reign of terror initiated by their bourgeoisie masters. It was pointed out at one meeting that in Finland "if you are hungry and cold, then you are accused of 'revolt,' of spreading 'false stories'" and the "secret police seize you by the throat." As a result of this all of the Finnish working classes "are convinced that the Soviet Union does not want to threaten Finland."<sup>1</sup> This oppression, according to Russia's leading newspaper, caused the proletariat to oppose the government:

. . . with all means available . . . to protest against the provocative antisoviet policy of the Helsinki warmongers. The Finnish workers also protest against the violent evacuation, the Finnish wives and mothers demand the return of their men from the Army, the small depositors withdraw their money from the savings banks.<sup>2</sup>

So the Soviet people were being told that the condition of the Finnish population was by no means good. Certainly, to anyone reading the Russian newspapers, the nation of the Finns could not be expected to put up any effective resistance to a well-trained force such as the Red Army.

In the opinion of the Soviet news writers the Finnish Army was not well led, for it was commanded by a group of "mad fools" who were determined to have war with the Soviet Union. With the tremendous odds against them and with such

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<sup>1</sup>"Finlyandskii Narod Protiv Podsjigatelei Voinie" (The Finnish People are Against the Warmongers), Trud, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>A. Bartov, "Gel'singforsskie Provokatorie Za Rabotoy" (The Helsinki Provokers are at Work), Izvestiya, p. 4.



"ridiculous fools" as commanders of their armed forces, it would seem impossible for any responsible government to plot war against the USSR, but apparently these political card-players of Helsinki had decided on just such a course.<sup>1</sup>

Russian readers were assured that despite the presence of well-trained Schutzcorps and Jaegers, there would probably not be any real fighting in Finland if the Red Army should have to "punish these warmongers within their own territory." As one comrade, a certain Nodakov, a veteran of the Polish campaign, pointed out:

When the Red Army came into the territory of Western White Russia in order to come to the defense of the oppressed brothers, the soldiers, serving in the Polish Army, workers and peasants came over to our side and went together with the Red Army. That is the way it will be in Finland.<sup>2</sup>

An interesting picture of the conditions inside Finland was also presented in the Soviet press. The Russian people were told, for example, that the greater part of the population of Finland was straining under the oppressive rule of the "Helsinki clique" and was violently against any sort of war with the Soviet Union. The Finnish Army, while outwardly good, was beset by the demands of wives and mothers to release the reservists who made up the majority of soldiers. In spite of this intense opposition the military leaders of

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<sup>1</sup>I. Agranovski, P. Karelin and V. Chernishev, "Na Granitze" (On the Border), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Prihodit Konetz Terpeniu Sovetskovo Naroda!" (The Patience of the Soviet People has Come to an End!), Izvestiya, p. 1.

Finland, acting under the orders of the western imperialists, wanted to invade the USSR. With all this division within the nation, the Russian soldiers and civilians were assured that the punishment of these warmongers would be as easy as was the invasion of Poland in September 1939. The Finnish people, disgusted with their leaders, and violently opposed to war with the Soviet Union, would surely welcome the Red Army.<sup>1</sup>

In order to bolster their claim that the Finns intended to invade the Soviet Union, the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District issued a communique which reported that Finnish patrols had attempted to cross the Russian border at two widely separated points. According to the report these crossings occurred first in the Rybachi area on the shore of the Arctic Ocean and next in the sector of the border post of Kyasyaselka just above Lake Ladoga (see Map II).<sup>2</sup> Whether these patrol clashes were merely the normal results of the tense situation along the border or a calculated attempt by the Russians to provoke a war, the whole situation was widely reported throughout the Soviet press in an obvious effort to justify the idea that Finland had become a base for potential attack against the "cradle of the revolution"--the city of Leningrad.

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<sup>1</sup>"Provokatorie Budut Unichtosjenie" (The Provokers will be Destroyed), Krasnaya Zvezda, 30 November 1939, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Noviei Provokatzii Finlyandskoi Voenshinie" (New Provocations of the Finnish Military), Krasnaya Zvezda, 29 November 1939, p. 1.

The front pages of the Russian newspapers of 30 November were dominated by Molotov's speech which had been delivered over the radio to the Soviet people the night before. In this address Molotov reviewed the entire situation from the Russian standpoint. Citing the "new provocations" of the Finnish military that had been reported by the Red Army, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs came to the conclusion that all diplomatic resources had been exhausted and that the Soviet Union could now only "defend herself from the aggressions of Finland and her western allies." Evidently, to soften the impact of this necessity, he held forth the hope of eventual reunification of the Finnish and Karelian peoples, but only under a government of Finnish leaders who were "friendly to the USSR." To this desired end the "state of socialism" would help the Finnish people secure their free and independent growth. Indeed, according to this speech, the present difficulties would be ended only when "the efforts of the Soviet Union has resolved this problem in friendly collaboration with the Finnish people."<sup>1</sup>

This latter point was important for it was the first direct, official statement that assumed the Finnish people, as distinct from their leaders, would very likely join the

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<sup>1</sup>"Rech Po Radio Predsedatelya Soveta Narodish Komissarov SSSR, Tov. V. M. Molotova" (The Radio Speech by the President of the Soviet of Peoples' Commissars of the USSR, Com(rade) V. M. Molotov), Pravda, p. 1.



Soviet Union in its efforts to overthrow the bourgeoisie government in Helsinki. After this Molotov went on to announce that the Soviet Union did not desire to dominate the "government of the Finns" but would go to war to "protect the borders of the beloved fatherland."<sup>1</sup>

If the reports on soldiers and workers' meetings of this day can be trusted, Molotov had the support of the Russian people for any action he wished to take to solve the Finnish difficulty. The present government of Finland was characterized in most of these stories as being composed of:

. . . bankrupted fools . . . who lie from the skin with defamations and with impudent provocations to blame the Soviet Union for war. To everyone of us it is clear that this, to a great degree, is repudiated by the ardor of the working people of Finland. The sick leaders and soldiers from the camp of the imperialists are in a rage and are capable of any rash action. From such political card-players one cannot expect a reasonable answer.<sup>2</sup>

The workers and soldiers of the USSR, apparently in response to this threat, warned the Finnish "political jugglers, the diplomatic tricksters, who do not wish to remember our sober and wise policy of peace, (that) we are prepared to speak in another language . . . the language of fire and steel."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>"Rech, Polnaya Silie i Musjestva" (A Speech Strong with Force and Courage), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Polomaem Zubie Zarvavshimsya Psam" (We will Break the Teeth of the Raging Dogs), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 1.

From these articles one could expect that the Red Army would not be unaided if and when it entered Finland. It was pointed out by a group of pilots of the Red Air Force that the words of Molotov's speech would fly "across the lines of fortifications at the border, the barriers, the cruel censorship, across the heads of the unfortunate diplomats" and would then "penetrate into Finland and carry the point to the hearts of the true sons of the Finnish nation."<sup>1</sup> As a result of hearing this message of hope "the Finnish people will dismantle all the machinations of the political gamblers and their masters."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the meeting reports summed up the situation in Finland as a nation led by a group of bourgeoisie puppets of the west who were carrying the Finnish people into a ruinous war at the orders of their capitalistic bosses. The working classes of Finland, however, were against this policy and would probably revolt against their government at the first opportunity.

Another article of the 30th was concerned with the German reaction to the Finnish situation. It was unique because it was the first Russian report about the reaction of German newspapers to the Baltic problem since the beginning of the present emergency. The story revealed

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<sup>1</sup>"K Otvetu Podsfigatelei Voinie!" (To Answer the Inciters of War!), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

that the Nazi press generally approved of Soviet policy and condemned the Finnish leaders for their intransigent attitude.<sup>1</sup> This summary permitted the Russians to announce that their actions towards Finland had the approval of their German partner.

There is no doubt but that during the four days (27-30 November) the Soviet press tried to arouse the Russian people to a fever pitch for war against the "warmongering Finnish leaders of black reaction." The emphasis of the reports about the Mainila "Shots" and the "slaughtered comrades" would indicate that the Russian press men were trying to force the Finnish Government to accept their terms for a settlement of the strategic problems in the Baltic. Certainly the fact that the Soviet rulers resorted to such extreme action in response to a presumably minor episode of uncertain origin could only have meant that "the diplomatic cupboards of Moscow were rather bare" at this point.<sup>2</sup> This would explain the necessity for the increased violence of the press attack against Finnish leadership as a prelude to the Winter War.

The Soviet campaign against the Mainila "attack" was, as has been shown, supported by many "reports of the speeches

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<sup>1</sup>"Germanskaya Pechat o Finlyandskih Provokatziya" (The German Press on the Finnish Provocations), Trud, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Anatole Gregorovich Mazour, Finland: Between East and West (New York: D Van Nostrand, 1956), p. 108.



and resolutions of the meetings of workers and peasants of the USSR," which demonstrated the "unanimous support of the Russian people for the wise policy of their party and government."<sup>1</sup> There is no better illustration of the increasing warlike tone of these articles than the stark headlines which appeared over these stories in Krasnaya Zvezda. Here are a few examples: "The Red Army, Together with All the Soviet People, is Deeply Disturbed at the Impudence of the Finnish Inciters of War";<sup>2</sup> "The Workers'-Peasants' Red Army Unanimously Welcomes the Determined and Resolute Policy of the Soviet Government";<sup>3</sup> "The Red Army at Any Moment is Ready to Deliver a Crushing Blow at the Finnish Provokers of War";<sup>4</sup> "With an All-Destroying Blow We will Eliminate the Provoking Finnish Military."<sup>5</sup> The headlines illustrate quite vividly the steps by which the Russian people were led to accept the necessity of a war to destroy a nation which might serve as a base for an attack on the "beloved fatherland."

Actually Soviet pressure on Finland was closely patterned on the technique so successfully developed by the

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<sup>1</sup>"Golos Trudyaschihsya Sovetskovo L'vova" (The Voice of the Workers' Soviet of L'vov), Trud, 28 November 1939, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>27 November 1939, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>28 November 1939, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>29 November 1939, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>30 November 1939, p. 1.

Nazis.<sup>1</sup> This was certainly true for the campaign which ended on 30 November. It demonstrated the classic example of modern political-military aggression: the initial "reasonable" demands for bases and border rectifications, the doubtful border incidents, the whipping up of war fever among the people through the press and radio, the proclamation of the aggressive intent of the potential victim, all rising to a well-timed crescendo on the day of the surprise attack. Indeed, the Russian leaders could well have congratulated themselves on a very careful campaign during which they had made very few mistakes. To be sure, there was little hope that this campaign would do much to convince the other nations of the world, but with the nonaggression pact with Germany the Russians could make their moves with the safe knowledge that no western power would be able to interfere before the Red steam roller crushed Finnish resistance.

In retrospect, the major mistake of this well-organized press effort was the picture it presented to the Russian soldiers and civilians of conditions within Finland. According to Soviet sources, the Finnish people were divided along class lines. The leaders were "tools of the black reaction" who hated and feared the workers and jumped to the bidding of domestic and foreign capitalists. The laboring

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<sup>1</sup>"Shape of Things to Come," loc. cit.

masses, suppressed by police terror and depressed by their hard living conditions, were on the threshold of revolt. Under these conditions the Finnish proletariat could be expected to join the Red Army if it should ever invade Finland.

The Finnish Army itself was divided by these same class differences. The common soldier, who came principally from the working classes, would probably hasten to desert his unit and come over to the side of "triumphant socialism." Therefore, it seemed inevitable that the "invincible forces" of the state of socialism would sweep over the "rotten structure" of the Finnish Army and drive the bourgeoisie rulers out of Helsinki. After such a build-up the average Russian civilian or soldier could have little doubt that "the Russian-Finnish conflict would be merely a 'local' war, and that within three days, or at most a week, Finland would be brought to her knees."<sup>1</sup>

On this note of anticipated success the Russian press concluded its campaign to bestir the Soviet people and prepare them for a war with Finland. They had presented a good excuse for securing control of Finland (to protect Leningrad) and had predicted that any war, given the disparity in population and strength, would be very short. Unfortunately,

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<sup>1</sup>David J. Dallin, Soviet Russia's Foreign Policy, 1939-1940 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1942), pp. 141-142.

they neglected to convince the Finns of these facts. That omission would create great difficulties later on.









MAP II  
THE KARELIAN ISTHMUS AND THE FINNISH DEFENSES  
(29 November 1939)

This map consists of an outline of the Finnish defensive dispositions on the Karelian Isthmus as of November 1939. There are three areas of especial importance on this diagram. The first is the Neutral Zone established by the Treaty of Dorpat of 1922 from Muurila to Mainila. Within this zone the Finns agreed to dismantle all coastal artillery positions, especially at Ino and Terioki, and not to maintain major military units nor fixed land defenses in the area. The whole area was open to free inspection by the mixed border commission established by the Russo-Finnish Treaty of Neutrality of 1932 which was still in effect in 1939.

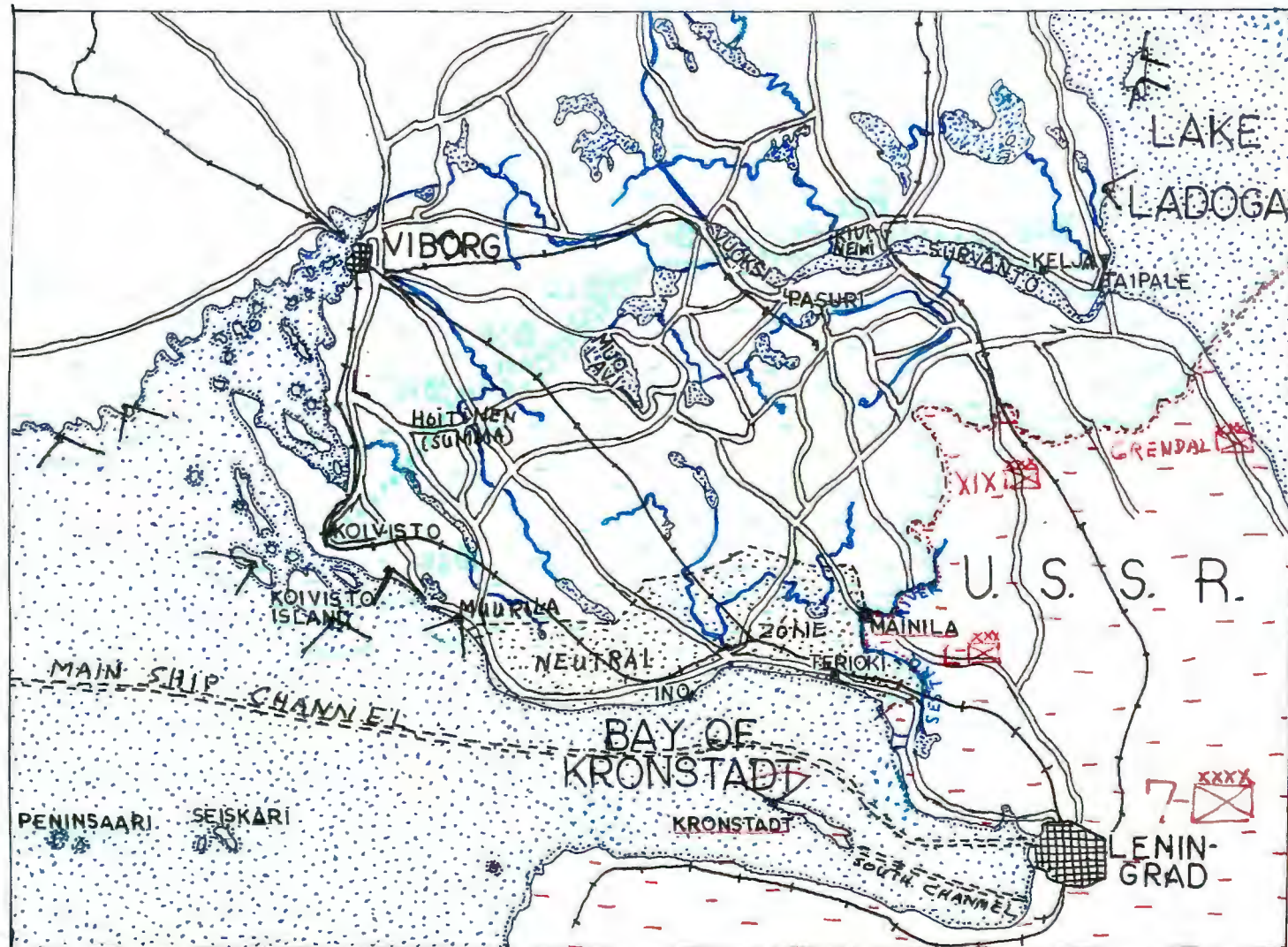
The second point of importance concerned the Main Ship Channel from Leningrad to the mouth of the Gulf of Finland. Despite the dismantling of the coastal artillery positions at Ino and Terioki, this waterway through the Gulf of Finland could still be threatened by Finnish coast artillery positions at Muurila, Koivisto Island and other areas as shown. Since this channel marks the region of the first open water of the spring, the importance controlling this channel to defend Kronstadt and Leningrad becomes apparent.

The third point refers to the location of the Mannerheim Line on the Karelian Isthmus. It should be noted, first of all, that only the inland lakes and rivers which were important in the defense were reproduced on this diagram. With this in mind it can be observed that the Mannerheim Line was built so that it was almost completely covered by relatively large bodies of water. Even when frozen over, these areas would provide wide fields of fire for weapons concealed in permanent fortifications behind them. The one exception to this rule was the western areas, particularly around Hoitinen (Summa) where only small creeks and bogs lay in front of the defenses.

SYMBOLS:

	Coastal defense positions capable of gunfire with a range of between twenty and twenty-five kilometers
	Political boundaries
	Approximate locations of the headquarters of a Finnish infantry division
	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet infantry corps
INO	Important centers and islands
	Territory of the Republic of Finland
	Territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics





THE KARELIAN ISTHMUS

0 15 30 45 60 75 KM

SOVIET FORCES: —  
FINNISH FORCES: —

### CHAPTER III

#### THE OPPOSING FORCES

(29 November 1939)

As the Russian and Finnish armed forces girded themselves for battle during the wet, snowy night of 29 November 1939<sup>1</sup> it would be well to review what is known about the armies on either side in order to have a better understanding of the events of the first month of the war. The total number of men engaged on both sides is difficult to determine with complete accuracy. The Communist estimate of two hundred thousand Red Army troops which are supposed to have invaded Finland at 0800 on the morning of 30 November 1939 should be accepted with reservation since it was published well after the Russian failure to overrun southern Finland had become painfully evident.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Prime Minister Ruti's boast that the Finns could put three hundred thousand volunteers on the line<sup>3</sup> was almost certainly an overstatement. According to most estimates, the number

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<sup>1</sup>V. Galahov, "Tridtzatoye Noyabrya" (The Thirtieth of November), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>"War on Land," Army, Navy Journal (30 December 1939), p. 388.

<sup>3</sup>Elliston, p. 142.



of Soviet divisions which took part in the first phase of the conflict in Finland, amounted to something like twenty-six infantry divisions and four tank brigades.<sup>1</sup> Since the Soviet infantry division had reorganized in 1937 to include approximately 18,378 men at full strength,<sup>2</sup> the number of Russian troops engaged in the initial attack on Finland could have been something like 500,000. Of course this would not just be front-line strength but would also include the supporting arms and the service troops so necessary to maintain an army in the deep woods of eastern Finland.

The difficulty of determining how many Finns were prepared to oppose Soviet aggression derives from the lack of uniformity in enumerating the volunteer replacement organizations which made up the largest part of their defense forces.<sup>3</sup> The Finnish regular army consisted only of eight full infantry divisions and one cavalry division, all of approximately 14,000 men each.<sup>4</sup> But there were obviously more armed defenders, even on the Karelian Isthmus, than

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<sup>1</sup>Johannes Wilhelm Ohquist, Das Kampfende Finnland (Stuttgart: Alemanner Verlag, Albert Janus, 1944), p. 23.

<sup>2</sup>A. N. Ivanov, Kurtz Zusammenstellung Ueber die Russische Armee (Berlin: R. Eisenschmidt, 1937), pp. 55-56.

<sup>3</sup>Frederick Wilhelm Borgman, Der Ueberfall der Sowjetunion Auf Finnland, 1939-1940 (Berlin: Gerhart Stalling, 1943), p. 74. Hereafter cited as Borgman, Der Ueberfall.

<sup>4</sup>Michael Berchin and Eliahu Ben-Horin, The Red Army (New York: W. W. Norton, 1942), p. 61.

could be accounted for in the estimated 60,000 men of the regular forces. Some competent observers have even judged the readily available Finnish reserves as high as 400,000 men,<sup>1</sup> while some Soviet sources placed the number at 600,000.<sup>2</sup> The guess of somewhere close to 250,000 Finns under arms in November 1939 is probably as close to an accurate number as is presently available.<sup>3</sup>

The infantry armament on both sides was quite similiar. The reason for this is simple. In 1922 Finland and the Soviet Union signed an agreement which provided that Russia would supply small arms and ammunition to the new Republic of Finland in return for a Finnish guarantee that they would not seek arms purchases abroad.<sup>4</sup> The reason for such an agreement seems to have been the fact that the Finns already possessed a large number of captured Russian weapons from their Civil War and the Soviet Government could thus prevent the rapid arming of Finland by any interested foreign power. This situation had its advantage during the Winter War for

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<sup>1</sup>T. Bentley Mott, "Service News and Gossip," Army, Navy Journal (30 December 1939), p. 382 and Spravochnik Po Voorusjenniem Silem Belo-Finlyandii (A List of the Armed Forces of White-Finland) (Moscow: State Publications, RKKA, 1940), pp. 31-34.

<sup>2</sup>Ya. Il'inskii, Finlyandiya (Finland) (Moscow: Government Social-Economic Institute, 1940), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup>"War on Land," Army, Navy Journal (2 December 1939), p. 328.

<sup>4</sup>W. A. B. Smith and Joseph E. Smith, The Book of Rifles (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 1945), pp. 171-172.



the Finns were able to make immediate use of all captured Russian weapons and ammunition.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the small arms agreement, the Finnish army had some major deficiencies. While the Soviets had supplied rifles, machine guns and even some mortars along with the respective ammunition, such essential arms as antitank and antiaircraft guns plus field artillery had to come from other sources. For this reason the Finns were short of these items at the beginning of the conflict.<sup>2</sup> Even the Russian artillerymen noticed this deficiency and remarked upon the fact that the Finns were still utilizing such obsolete cannons as the 1887 Model 107-mm. Howitzer in their defense of the Karelian Isthmus.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there was considerable evidence that the Finnish Government had made some large arms purchases abroad. Such excellent weapons as Bofors antiaircraft guns from Sweden, World War I field artillery from Germany and various small arms from Scandinavian sources were part of the picture.<sup>4</sup> One of the most serious deficiencies in Finnish small arms was the lack of a good automatic rifle,

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Vallotton, Finnland 1940; Was Ich Sah und Hoerte (Zurich: Verkehrsverlag, 1940), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>William L. Shirer, The Challenge of Scandinavia (Boston: Little, Brown, 1955), pp. 330-331.

<sup>3</sup>Bakaev, "Artilleriya Dal'nevo Deistviya" (Artillery in Indirect Action), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 313-314.

<sup>4</sup>Smith and Smith, pp. 173-174.

apparently because of a shortage of this type of weapon in the Soviet arsenal during the nineteen twenties. When the Russians finally developed the Degyatov 1931 it was apparently not covered by the 1922 agreement with the Finns.

This was partially overcome by the importation of the Swedish Automatic Rifle L-C<sup>1</sup> and by the design and manufacture of the "Suomi Submachine Gun."<sup>2</sup> Both these weapons were rugged and dependable but the "L-C" took the Swedish 7.62-mm. cartridge while the Submachine Gun used the 9-mm. "parabellum" pistol round, neither of which could be supplied from Russian sources. The Suomi Submachine Gun was extremely simple in design and operation and by arming their fast-moving ski troops with this rapid firing arm, the Finns combined speed with a heavy weight of close-range firepower to harass the enemy. The Soviets, it must be added, paid the Finns the compliment of stealing this design which is familiar to everyone as the "Russian Burp-Gun."<sup>3</sup>

The Red infantry was equipped with the basic small arms so familiar to students of World War II and the Korean conflict. The basic infantry weapon was still the Moisin 7.62-mm. Rifle 1891 and the shorter 1911 carbine version.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spravochnik Po Voorusjenniem Silam Belo-Finlyandii, p. 76.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Harold Black Smith, Basic Manual of Military Small Arms (Harrisburg, Pa.: Military Service Publishing, 1944), pp. 84-85.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 241-242.

With the 29 inches of barrel and a 14-inch "toothpick" bayonet one can understand the predilection of the Soviet commanders for the bayonet charge.

The basic rifle and machine gun bullet in Soviet service was the 7.62-mm. Moisin, copper-jacketed round which had a rimmed cartridge case. The use of rimmed rather than rimless rounds imposed some limitations on Soviet small arms. For instance, it is not possible to use a straight magazine for automatic weapons since the closely-packed shells might overlap and cause a misfire. As a result, the magazine of the Soviet automatic rifle, the Degyatov 1931, is a large, thin disk mounted on top of the weapon and thus presents a problem to carry around on the battlefield.<sup>1</sup> However, the simplicity of manufacture (tolerances on rimmed cartridge cases can be much lower than on rimless) and the resistance to damage and corrosion would recommend this type of round to the Russians.

The basic heavy machine gun for both the Finns and the Soviets was the Russian Maxim Machine Gun 1906, a relatively heavy but reliable weapon which can be mounted on a tripod, wheels or skis.<sup>2</sup> This gun was utilized extensively by both sides and it apparently was regarded as the basic infantry defense weapon. While there were larger 12.7-mm. Vickers Machine Guns in the Finnish armament, these

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 251-252.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 243.



seem to have been used mainly as antiaircraft weapons.<sup>1</sup>

Soviet artillery consisted of many types of guns ranging from the small, old-fashioned 76-mm. Howitzer, assigned to infantry regiments as a defensive piece,<sup>2</sup> up through the 107-mm. regimental Howitzer to the 152-mm. divisional Howitzers. Larger artillery pieces were organized as separate battalions to be utilized as the Corps or Divisional Commanders directed. The Soviet record confirmed that many types of artillery were used for special missions during the Winter War. Especially strange, considering the nature of the topography, was the presence of such flat-trajectory artillery pieces as the 122-mm. M-1931/37 (A-19) Field Gun<sup>3</sup> which might have been of some utility on the broad open plains of southern and central Russia but were somewhat out of place in the heavy forests of Finland.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Spravochnik Po Voorusjenniem Belo-Finlyandii, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Tolmachev, "Vitelnost, Hladnokroviye, Musjestvo" (Vigilance, Calmness, Valour), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup>The heavy weight of 15,692 pounds and the long barrel of 216 inches must have made this artillery piece very cumbersome in the thick brush and forests of Finland. Also its long range of some 22,747 yards and high muzzle velocity of 2,625 feet per second did not allow its easy use in indirect fire so necessary in areas covered by dense woods. Identification Handbook: Soviet Military Weapons and Equipment (Headquarters U. S. Army, Europe: Office of Chief of Staff, G-2 Intelligence Division, 1954), pp. 77-78. Hereafter cited as Identification Handbook.

<sup>4</sup>Vlademar Axel Firsoff, Ski Tracks on the Battlefield (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1943), p. 125.



In mortars the Finns made use of the "stoksa" 76-mm. and "tampella" 81-mm. types for their infantry support along with whatever Russian material their armories contained.<sup>1</sup> Despite this lack of uniformity, the Russian stories about the war leave no doubt that Finnish mortar fire was one of the principal problems faced by Soviet infantrymen and gunners.<sup>2</sup> The Red Army, on the other hand, possessed a complete line of efficient mortars from the small 52-mm. company trench mortar, through the 82-mm. battalion mortar up to the large 120-mm. regimental support mortars. The Russian tacticians apparently utilized mass mortar fire for everything from the support of ground attacks<sup>3</sup> to clearing a line of retreat for an infantry patrol cut off by enemy fire.<sup>4</sup> Evidently the Red Army had managed to bring the use of the trench mortar to a high degree of development.

The Soviet armored forces which, according to one authority, consisted of some 5,375 tanks<sup>5</sup> was organized into

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<sup>1</sup>Spravochnik Po Voorusjenniem Silam Belo-Finlyandii, p. 77

<sup>2</sup>P. Lyashenko, "Domik na Tom Beregu" (The Little House on the Opposite Bank), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 167.

<sup>3</sup>V. Bolousov, "Minomet--Groznoye Orusjiye" (The Mortar-- A Vicious Weapon), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 173-176.

<sup>4</sup>N. Blohin, "Minomet Pomogli Razvedke" (The Mortar Helped the Scouts), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 235-236.

<sup>5</sup>"International Military Survey: Russia; According to Polish Sources Quoted in the Tank Journal," The Infantry Journal (November-December, 1939), p. 595.

separate tank battalions attached or assigned to infantry divisions or corps commands, and separate armored brigades which were attached to army commands.<sup>1</sup> While there was a large number of tank models in Russian service, Soviet tracked armored vehicles tended to fall into two main types at this time. The light (10-11.5 ton) three-man tanks of the BT-3 and BT-5 designations, armed with a 37-mm. or 45-mm. gun seem to have made up the bulk of the armored detachments in the earlier stages of the attack.<sup>2</sup> Since such tanks seem to have been peculiarly vulnerable to Finnish antitank measures,<sup>3</sup> before the later attacks on the Mannerheim Line there was a replacement of the lighter vehicles with the heavier T-28 medium tank of 31-33 tons, armed with a 76.2-mm. cannon and carrying a six-man crew. It was this tank which helped to smash the Summa defenses, the central defense position of the western sector of the Mannerheim Line, in February 1940.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ritter von Xylander, "Zum Kriege der Sowjetunion gegen Finnland: Darstellung des Verlaufes des Feldzuges," Deutsche Wehr (10 May 1940), p. 274.

<sup>2</sup>Nikolai Gregor'evich Andrononikov and W. D. Mostovenko, Die Roten Panzer (Munich: J. P. Lehmanns, 1963), pp. 96-98.

<sup>3</sup>Edgar O'Ballance, The Red Army: A Short History (New York: Praeger, 1964), p. 150; and K. Simonyan, "Vsegda Pomogat Tovarishcham" (Always Help Comrades), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 96-98.

<sup>4</sup>Andrononikov and Mostovenko, pp. 225-226.

Despite the variety in type and the large number of vehicles, there is a distinct impression from Soviet records that the Red Army, while recognizing the value of armor, never saw it--at least at this time--as the all-conquering offensive weapon that it became for the German Wehrmacht.

One of the most important matters for consideration on the morning of 30 November 1939 was the nature and extent of the Finnish fortifications. Communist sources naturally make a great deal of the "Kirk-Mannerheim Line," the extreme strength of the forts and bunkers, and their large numbers. Indeed, Soviet writers have described the Finnish fortifications as being ". . . not at all inferior to that of the Maginot or Siegfried in Europe."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Finns tended to downgrade both the strength and the number of their positions in the Line. Marshall Mannerheim, for instance, declared:

Here, in a defense line about 88 miles long, were 66 concrete 'nests,' of which 44 built in the beginning of the twenties were out of date and also faultily constructed and placed. The remainder were modern but not strong enough to stand heavy gunfire. The recently constructed barbed-wire entanglements and tank-traps were of little value. Time had not permitted the building out of the position in depth and its foremost line generally merged with the principal defenses.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the Soviets, mostly through their newspaper articles and books by pro-Communist writers,

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<sup>1</sup>"Trechnedel'nie Itog Boevieh Deistvii v Finlyandii" (The Three-Week Summary of Battle Activity in Finland), Izvestiya, 23 December 1939, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, p. 325.



described the Mannerheim Line as the "third strongest military fortification in the world."<sup>1</sup> In more detail another author described these defenses and pointed out:

There were three zones in this system. The forward zone of a depth varying from three to eight miles and consisting of concrete blockhouses and pillboxes, equipped with machine guns, antitank guns and field artillery, and guarded by barbed wire, antitank traps and land mines.

The second zone, the main line of defense, was some 70 miles in length, and ran from its right on the coast fortress of Koivisto, across Lake Muolaa, then along the Vuoksi waterway and finishing with its left at the fortress of Taipale at the mouth of that river on Lake Ladoga. It was seven miles in depth except in the lake districts, where it narrowed to two miles. The fortifications of this sector were two-stories in depth, embedded in the ground and constructed of reinforced concrete and armored plate. Armed with heavy artillery, each fort was capable of independent defensive action . . .<sup>2</sup>

This same author emphatically announced that the whole line "consisted of 350 two-story reinforced concrete underground forts and 2,257 granite emplacements."<sup>3</sup>

Another pro-Soviet writer commented about the Finnish fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus as follows:

This entire system of fortification was built on the Siegfried rather than the Maginot principle, i.e., as a deep belt of independent forts, designed to cushion the thrusts of the invader, and on the other hand, to give its garrisoning troops aid and

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<sup>1</sup>Israel Amter, The Truth about Finland (New York: New York State Committee, Communist Party, 1939), pp. 2-3.

<sup>2</sup>Arthur Sanderson Hooper, Through Soviet Russia and the Finnish Campaign, 1940 (London: Privately Printed, 1944), p. 98.

<sup>3</sup>Arthur Sanderson Hooper, The Soviet Fighting Forces (London: Frederick Muller, 1941), p. 29.



deep maneuvering space. It was a typical defensive-offensive system as contrasted with the purely defensive French system. It was intended not for defense only, but to serve as a 'retrenchment camp' for the concentration of an offensive force.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that later Soviet recollections modified these earlier descriptions. It is true that the Russians claimed to have captured 356 iron-concrete forts and 2,425 wood-earth fire points<sup>2</sup> but this is considerably lessened by the careful description of these defenses. The iron-concrete positions, for instance, were apparently constructed during two distinct periods: 1929-1937 and 1938-1939. As Major General of the Engineers, A. Hrenov, further pointed out:

Forts of the first period ordinarily were small, one-story structures with one to three machine gun posts without room for a garrison and almost without any interior divisions. Afterwards, many of these forts were modernized with layers of concrete and/or concrete and stone slabs and the installation of armored plates in the embrasures.

The forts of the second period, called 'millions' by the Finns, (because they cost so much) were large permanent structures with four to six embrasures from which one to ten guns could fire, especially to the flanks. Such forts had full interior defenses and usually contained an iron-concrete room for forty to one hundred men--not only for the garrison of the fort but for the supporting troops as well. . . .

The weak side of the Finnish fortifications were: poor quality of concrete in the buildings of the first period, overuse of concrete on flexible armor, the absence in the buildings of the first period of hard armor.

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<sup>1</sup>Sergei Nicholas Kournakoff, Russia's Fighting Forces (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1943), p. 126.

<sup>2</sup>A. Hrenov, "Liniya Mannergeima" (The Mannerheim Line), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 15.

The strong qualities of these forts were the large number of embrasures which covered the frontal and immediate approaches and all the flanking approaches to the nearby iron-concrete forts and the tactical camouflage which permitted the fortifications to blend in with the locality and also the saturation of the 'intervals' with small forts

. . . The strength of the basic defense area on the Karelian Isthmus can be demonstrated by the following figures: 194 iron-concrete forts and 805 wood-earth fire points (were) taken by the Red Army in the battles for the Mannerheim Line.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the earlier claims of 350 two-story forts was modified. The number of iron-concrete positions totaled by the Kremlin's author at 356 rather than the Finnish figure of 200 may not have been as far off as might be expected. The Finns may have been referring to those forts taken by the Russians and not the whole belt of defenses on the Karelian Isthmus. Thus the Russian figure of 194 iron-concrete positions taken can be said to be roughly equal with Mannerheim's estimate of 200. Then, too, the Soviet total evidently included not only the so-called "Mannerheim Line" proper, but the Viborg defenses and the island artillery positions as well.

Likewise it is apparent from General Hrenov's description quoted above that the iron-concrete forts possessed wide differences of structure and armament. It is especially noteworthy that he made no mention of artillery pieces as part of the weapons found in these iron-concrete positions although there may well have been some "gun

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 10-11.

positions" in the larger fortifications. The Russian record thus tends to confirm the Finnish contention that the "Mannerheim Line," while undoubtedly the "third strongest fortified line in the world," (there was no other at that time) was not nearly as strong as the Siegfried or Maginot lines in western Europe.

The attempts of Soviet apologists to present the Mannerheim Line as the key barrier to the Red Army's rapid penetration of southern and eastern Finland breaks down when one considers the rest of the Russo-Finnish border. Despite some vague attempts to construct a "wilderness line" from Sortavala through Joensuu and Nurmes to Ulea<sup>1</sup> there is no reference in either Finnish or Soviet records about any regular system of defensive positions north of Lake Ladoga. The only exception to this was the use of the Finnish coastal artillery positions on Lake Ladoga islands to cover the coast road to Sortavala. The Finns obviously relied upon the paucity of roads and the trackless forests to form a barrier to invasion in the region north of Karelia.

Thus the Finns with perhaps six divisions of regulars backed with something like twice their number of volunteers faced an initial Russian attack of at least twenty-six infantry divisions, four tank brigades and other supporting

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<sup>1</sup>Nikolai Fedorovich Kuz'min, Na Strasje Mirnovo Truda, 1921-1940 (Engaged in Peaceful Work, 1921-1940) (Moscow: Military Publication of the Ministry of Defense of the Union of SSR, 1959), p. 235.



units. Since six or seven of the Soviet divisions were occupied in penetrating the eastern frontier, this left approximately nineteen divisions on the Karelian Isthmus to attack the Mannerheim Line.<sup>1</sup> Even with the advantage of fortified lines, this was a substantial force to be contained by the armies of Finland.

The Soviet superiority at sea and in the air was accepted from the start. However, the climatic conditions to be expected in December over the Gulf of Finland could be expected to nullify a good part of this advantage until the colder winter temperatures could clear the skies.<sup>2</sup> Thus the Soviet armies were dependent upon either a quick breakthrough on the Karelian Isthmus or a political upheaval within Finland, and perhaps both. From the Kremlin's view a long fight would be intolerable as this might give their capitalistic enemies in the west time to gather their forces and counterattack. For this reason there seems little doubt but that the Soviet troops, seamen and airmen poised on the Finnish borders, in their ships, and alongside their planes expected a swift attack, possibly aided by an internal revolt, to tumble the Helsinki "robbers," and so complete the triumph of Soviet arms within a relatively short time.

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<sup>1</sup>"War on Land," Army, Navy Journal (9 March 1940), p. 639.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Wilhelm Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg Gegen Finnland, Part II," Deutsche Wehr (5 July 1940), p. 394.



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FIRST FOUR DAYS AND THE EARLY

### SUCCESS OF THE RUSSIAN ATTACK

(1 December 1939--4 December 1939)

The Red Army advance which began without any formal declaration of war at 8:00 A.M. on 30 November 1939 moved swiftly forward and overcame the thin defenses of the Finnish border guards. Caught somewhat by surprise,<sup>1</sup> the Finnish Army could do little in the face of the sudden onslaught but retreat to less exposed defensive positions.

The Red Army crossed the borders of Finland in five general areas. On the Arctic coast the 52nd Soviet Division of the 14th Army from Murmansk landed in the Metovski Fjord behind the Fischer Peninsula, marched overland to the south, crossed the border and outflanked the reinforced company of Finns in Petsamo, thus gaining the only warm-water port in Finland.<sup>2</sup> With reinforcements from the 104th Soviet Division, the Red Army quickly began the long advance down the Winter Road towards Kemi on the Swedish border. In a movement which

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<sup>1</sup>Erkki Palolampi, Der Winterfeldzug: Krieg in Finnlands Walden, 1939-1940 (Berlin: Alfred Metzner, 1942), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 91.

was apparently designed to provide flank support for the northern armies, the 122nd Soviet Division left Kandalaksha on the Murmansk Railroad, crossed the border and attacked the Finnish road system in the region of Salla.

From Ukhta in the central sector the 163rd Soviet Division of the 9th Army began the long march through the wilderness aimed at the Finnish road-junction of Suomussalmi, the key to the easy route to the Finnish port of Oulu. A little later (1 December 1939) the 54th Soviet Division began an equally long move through the dense forests towards the railroad town of Nurmes on the Sortavala-Oulu line, with a secondary move towards Kuhmo to support the advance on Suomussalmi.

In Finnish Karelia, northeast of Lake Ladoga, the Russian 8th Army from its headquarters in Petrozavodsk began a two-pronged drive upon the Finnish defenses protecting the lumber town of Sortavala. To the north the 139th and 75th Soviet Divisions attacked along the Suojarvi-Tolvajarvi axis while at the same time the 18th Soviet Division moved along the road through Uomaa towards Pitkaranta and the 168th Soviet Division drove straight up the lake-shore road on the same area, towards Kitela.

On the Karelian Isthmus the Russian 7th Army, the largest of the four attacking forces, began its movement towards the Mannerheim Line. This so-called "Maginot Line of the North" ran from the fortress town of Taipale on Lake Ladoga behind the Suranto-Vuoski Water System to the town of

Vuoksela. There it made a wide angle and crossed the Vuoksi System, ran along the axis of lakes Ayrappaarjarvi-Muolaanjarvi, through the little town of Summa, on past the northern end of Lake Kuolemajarvi to the fortified positions around the port town of Koivisto. These defenses were protected from naval attack by the fortress island of Koivisto, just southwest of the town of the same name. The "Summa Lines," as this western portion of the Mannerheim Line became known, was reinforced by a belt of defensive works around the port city of Viipuri. While much of this area is open ground, it still was relatively easy to defend as long as the numerous rivers and swamps remained open.

The units of the 7th Red Army moved out in two directions. The eastern units, the 150th and 49th Soviet Divisions, pushed through and came up against the Taipale and the Vuoksi Water System defenses by the 3rd of December.<sup>1</sup> The western units, the 123rd, 70th, 24th, 43rd, 90th and 142nd Soviet Divisions occupied the area of Pasuri to Koivisto in the Principal attack on Viipuri. Since the heavily outnumbered Finns had immediately retreated back into their prepared positions, the Red Army during their first few days advanced against relatively light opposition.

During this period the various Red Armies moved quite well and, considering the conditions of weather and roads, make good initial progress. At the same time, units of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 99.



Russian Baltic Fleet without opposition occupied the principal islands in the Gulf of Finland. On the Karelian Isthmus the major towns of Terioki, Muolla, Muurila and Ranti were quickly taken with little or no fighting. Northeast of Lake Ladoga the towns of Salmi, Pitkaranta and Suojarvi also fell into the hands of the "liberators," as the Soviets called themselves. Equally impressive were the advances of the various units of the Russian 9th Army into central Finland with the rapid seizure of Salla, Suomussalmi and Kuhmo thus establishing positions from which it might eventually be able to drive completely across Finland. The 14th Army had, as well, accomplished its initial objective of seizing the ice-free port of Petsamo and closing Finland off from any help it might have received from that quarter. On the whole, during this early period of the war, the Kremlin rulers could well have been satisfied with the success of their military campaign against the Finns.

On the diplomatic front the Soviet leaders also appeared to have scored impressive victories. On the first day of the war a group of old Finnish Communists, under their leader Otto Kuusinen,<sup>1</sup> set up a provisional "Peoples' Government" in the newly-taken gulf-side resort town of Terioki. This new

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<sup>1</sup>Otto Vilgelmovich Kuusinen (1881- ) From 1905 Kuusinen was a leader in the Finnish Social Democratic Party until 1918 when he became the founder and leader of the Finnish Communist Party. He served as Secretary of the Executive Committee of the Communist International from 1921 to 1939. Exiled from Finland in 1930, he remained in Moscow and Leningrad until the beginning of the Winter War.



organization immediately proclaimed itself the legitimate political organ of the Finnish proletariat and called on the Finnish people to join their "Democratic Republic" in order to overthrow the "Helsinki robbers." The Soviet Government quickly recognized this new regime and concluded a treaty of peace and mutual aid with the "Peoples' Government." This treaty settled all the outstanding differences between Finland and the USSR on the basis of the terms proposed by the Russians during the November talks. As if to complement the Soviet move, the legitimate Finnish Government of Kayander-Ekko in Helsinki fell and was replaced by the Ryti-Tanner cabinet.<sup>1</sup> This information was presented to the Soviet people as evidence of the weakness of the bourgeoisie rulers of "White-Finland."

The only hitch which arose in the Kremlin's plans during this period was the successful effort of the Ruti-Tanner Government to present their case before the League of Nations. This diplomatic setback, however, did not seem so important at the time for it appeared that the war was rapidly moving towards a conclusion and there was no assurance that the League would take any action.<sup>2</sup> In such a case the Terioki "Peoples' Government" would soon come to power in Helsinki.

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<sup>1</sup>The Finnish Government from 2 December 1939 to 27 March 1940 was headed by Risto Ryti as Prime Minister, and Viano Tanner as Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>2</sup>Peggy M. Mulvihill, "The United States and the Russo-Finnish War" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1964), p. 210.

In spite of the growing sympathy for Finland in the west, the Russian leaders, sure of a swift victory, could safely ignore both a League of Nations censure and the frantic efforts of the Finns to re-establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Indeed, the situation in early December reflected the speedy success of Soviet plans.

The establishment of the "Peoples' Government of Finland" and the successful advances of the Red Army very much dominated the news releases of this early period. Front page stories during the first four days either reported the declarations of the treaties with this "Peoples' Government" or printed long articles which applauded the efforts of the "Democratic Republic" to lead the Finnish working class out of the camp of "Black reaction." Other articles, especially those from foreign Communist and leftwing sources, supported the Soviet position and generally approved the Russian attack upon Finland. There were also many "editorials" which, as in previous periods, argued that the Finnish people had been very much suppressed by the "bad bourgeoisie rulers" and consequently were impatiently waiting to be "liberated" from their "capitalistic oppressors." Finally a major part of the newspaper space was taken up with "eyewitness accounts" of the fighting in Finland by the correspondents of various Russian newspapers who had accompanied the Soviet forces on their invasion. Along with the ubiquitous reports of soldiers' and workers' meetings so common in the Communist press these were the principal types of news stories which



appeared during this early period of intense newspaper coverage concerning the fight against the "Finnish Whiteguards."

The Russian press coverage of 1 December was severely restricted because that day (Friday) is a holiday for most Soviet newspapers. Only Pravda and Izvestiya were published. However, on the front pages of both of these appeared a stark communique from the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District which officially reported the beginnings of hostilities between the USSR and Finland. This announcement began by insisting that there had been further attacks by Finnish forces on Soviet frontier posts during the night of 29 November. As a result of these hostile demonstrations, the Red Army had crossed the Finnish borders "on the Karelian Isthmus and in several other areas" at 8:00 A.M. of 30 November 1939.<sup>1</sup> After giving a detailed list of the towns and villages captured in the advance of Russian forces, the "operations report" announced that several scores of prisoners had been captured and aerial attacks had been launched against Viipuri and Helsinki. With this short communique the Winter War made its official appearance in the Russian press.

The "Finnish provocations" were, of course, merely an effort to substantiate the Soviet excuse that their troops were just "repelling a Finnish attack on the sacred motherland." On the other hand, the villages reported captured

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<sup>1</sup>"Stolknoveniya Sovetskikh Voisk s Finskimi Voiskyami" (The Encounter of Soviet and Finnish Troops), Izvestiya, p. 1.

seemed to have been quite accurate. The Red Army, in this case, did not even claim the fall of Terioki on the western shore of the Karelian Isthmus although this area had been evacuated by the Finns as soon as the Russian 7th Army had crossed the border. This Soviet account of the events of 29-30 November was a strange mixture of fact and fancy. The same was true of all Russian newspaper stories throughout the war.

The "meetings reports" which appeared in the press on this day all supported the invasion of Finland as a necessity. A Russian worker explained the situation as follows:

There comes an end to patience. The Finnish military has impertinently shot at our troops. It is necessary to teach these dogs a hard lesson so that others will not be encouraged to make an attempt on the city of Lenin. We will not be silent if anyone intercedes for these bandits. Behind the Red Army stands all the Soviet peoples. If necessary we, the old ones, will defend our nation.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, there was some surprise expressed in a number of these reports which evidently reflected the bewilderment of the Soviet people. One of these documents concerning the invasion follows:

We have just received the news of the departure of units of the Red Army with joy and satisfaction. In confirmation of this during recent days I have been surprised by the conduct of the Finnish leaders. How could they have been drawn into this? . . . How could they imagine that they could crush the Red Army?<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Prishel Keneta Terpeniu" (Comes the End of Patience), Pravda, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Finskie Rabochie i Krest'yane--Nashi Druz'ya" (The Finnish Workers and Peasants Are Our Friends), Izvestiya, p. 1.



The only other article of interest on 1 December appeared in Pravda. On the second page of this day's issue a story appeared entitled, "An Announcement of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Finland to the Working People of Finland." According to the Russian press this manifesto had been broadcast from the town of Terioki on 30 November before the Red Army had occupied the area. Indeed, this may have been one of the reasons why the "Operations Report" did not mention the fall of this town in its first communique. Soviet radio monitors, according to the news releases, had picked up this broadcast, translated it into Russian and passed it on to the newspapers. This devious channel may have accounted for the relatively obscure position this proclamation occupied in the pages of Pravda on the first day of its publication.

The announcement began with a review of recent Finnish history under the "oppressions" of "financial capital." Naturally the Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party came to the conclusion that the present Helsinki Government "cannot guard the national interests of Finland," and the reason was clear: The Helsinki Government merely "increased the power and wealth of the upper class while the families of the mobilized workers and small farmers were neglected in poverty."<sup>1</sup>

This dedicated group of Communists was quick to point

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<sup>1</sup>The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Finland, Pravda, p. 1.

out that the question of turning Finland into a communist state could not be decided until all sections of the Finnish public could be consulted. Indeed, many comrades who hoped for an immediate change in Finland would have to wait. The Central Committee, following the policy of the Soviet Union, would never change their country's form of government unless they were called to do so by a "majority of the people."<sup>1</sup> It was obvious that this assurance was included in order to allay the fears of small property owners in Finland who thought they might lose their land if the "Peoples' Government" should come to power.

The above statement also contained a list of reforms to be enacted if and when the future "Democratic Republic of Finland" would be installed in Helsinki. Principally, these involved such items as the reduction of taxes, rents and land payments for the working classes and the nationalization of all banks, businesses and factories, plus the redistribution of great estates among the "small and landless peasants" of the nation. The strange thing was that most of these reforms had already been enacted in Finland during the nineteen-thirties.<sup>2</sup> If the Russian people could believe this manifesto, they could only have concluded that the Finnish Government had been one of the most reactionary regimes in Europe.

Probably the most important part of this "Declaration,"

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Walter C. Citrine, My Finnish Diary (New York: Penguin Books, 1940), p. 15.



in the minds of the Soviet civilians and soldiers, was the evaluation of the fighting potential of the Finnish nation as presented by these leaders of the "oppressed" working masses. The authors of this document assured their Russian readers that ". . . the government of the Finnish bourgeoisie does not have much support and the commander of the Finnish Army does not have much chance for success."<sup>1</sup> After all, everyone in Terioki was convinced that:

. . . the masses of Finland, with great enthusiasm will greet the victorious, invincible Red Army, knowing that it comes into Finland not as a conqueror but as a friend, a liberator of our people.<sup>2</sup>

As evidence of the accuracy of this prediction, it was announced that "in certain parts of the country the people already have risen and proclaimed the creation of the Democratic Republic," while within the defending forces "units of the Finnish Army have already come over to the side of the new government . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Russian writers could say, therefore, that all the earlier hopes of the Kremlin leaders for support of their actions among the Finnish population had been realized. The formation of a "Peoples' Government" attested to that, so ran the party line. The Finnish Communists obviously represented the feelings of the majority of working Finns. According to

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<sup>1</sup>The Central Committee of the Finnish Communist Party, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

their "Declaration" this group readily admitted that the Red Army was the greatest army in the world, undivided by the abyss of class contradictions which always separated the officers and men in the bourgeois armies of the west.<sup>1</sup> With these factors on the side of the Soviet forces, there could be little doubt that the Red Army, supported by this new "Peoples' Government," would sweep aside the remnants of the "Whiteguard forces" and march triumphantly into Helsinki in a very short time.

This idea of creating a "Peoples' Government" was a cardinal point of Russian strategy during the early part of the war. It was nothing new. The Soviet Government had set up similar puppet governments during their wars with Poland and their "liberation" of Outer Mongolia in 1920-1922. The liquidated Marshal Michael P. Tukhachevski<sup>2</sup> had explained the principle behind such a move. He felt that such puppet regimes would facilitate the expected movement of the proletariat in an enemy nation into the ranks of the Red Army. He also pointed out that a military defeat of a capitalistic nation by a Communist Army would naturally hasten the inevitable revolution among the oppressed workers and thus bring closer the moment when Russia could deal with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Michael Nikolayevich Tukhachevski (1893-1937) fought in the Civil Wars with considerable honor. He rose in the Red Army to be head of the General Staff but was charged with Trotskyism and conspiracy with foreign powers during the Stalin purges and executed in 1937.



new Communist-led regimes.<sup>1</sup> The acceptance of this principle by the Soviet leaders most probably accounted for the rapid emergence of the new Terioki regime. It would also account for the Russian attempt to make their "Peoples' Government" look like a spontaneous rising of the Finnish workers against their reactionary leaders.

The fact that this program ultimately was a failure can be laid to the difficulties that Stalin had in getting reliable information from his Finnish agents. His ambassador in Helsinki, Vladimir Derevianski, could not speak Finnish and the only other source of information was the exiled Finnish Communists, led by Otto Kuusinen, who had not been back to their homeland since 1934. This long absence would suggest, of course, that these leaders were probably totally unfamiliar with conditions in their nation and hardly in a position to evaluate correctly the feelings of even the "depressed working classes." All other news seems to have come from paid agents in Helsinki who naturally wished to paint as rosy a picture of Communist chances as possible.<sup>2</sup>

The immediate reasons for a puppet regime were many and varied. For one thing it would seem that the Soviet leaders wished to represent the situation in Finland as a

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<sup>1</sup>Dimitri Fedotoff-White, The Growth of the Red Army (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), p. 172. From M. P. Tukhachevski, "Voina kak Problema Voorusjennoi Bor'bu" (War as a Problem of Armed Battle), Great Soviet Encyclopedia XII (Moscow: 1928), p. 596.

<sup>2</sup>Elliston, p. 196.

"typical" internal class war so that there would be no excuse for outside intervention. The Kremlin may have hoped, too, for a real uprising on the part of the Finnish proletariat in favor of the "Peoples' Government." Lastly, Stalin may have been in need of a government in whose name he could "make changes in the Finnish boundary which he could not publically accomplish by ukase from Moscow."<sup>1</sup> On the whole it must be said that Russian leaders had good reasons for creating the Terioki puppet government. But, in the end, this move probably hurt them much more than it helped. It also demonstrated the rigid adherence to dogma which marred a good deal of the Kremlin's diplomatic efforts.

The front pages of all Russian newspapers on 2 December were dominated by the "Declaration of the Finnish Communist Party" which had appeared the day before only in Pravda. Along with this "manifesto" appeared a very similar "Declaration" by the new provisional "Peoples' Government of Finland." This official statement of policy closely paralleled the language of the party "manifesto" and called for the overthrow of the "Helsinki inciters of war" in even stronger terms. It further assured the working people of Finland that the combined strength of the Red Army and the newly-formed "First Corps of the Peoples' Army" would swiftly settle these difficulties. The "First Corps of the Peoples' Army" would be the "kernel" for a future "Peoples' Army of

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<sup>1</sup>Dallin, pp. 135-136.

Finland" which would have the honor of raising the flag of the "Finnish Democratic Republic" over the presidential palace in Helsinki.<sup>1</sup>

If there had been any doubt as to the objectives of this new "Peoples' Government," Komsomolskaya Pravda cleared it up:

. . . its paramount problem is the overthrow of the government of the Finnish whiteguards, the destruction of its armed forces, the arrangement of peace and the guaranteeing of the independence and security of Finland through the establishment of solid, friendly relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup>

After a rather long list of promised reforms which, to no one's surprise, were almost word for word the same as those in the Central Committee's announcement of the previous day, the article concluded that the change in the Finnish bourgeoisie government from Kayander-Erkko to Ruti-Tanner was no improvement. As the leaders of the Terioki regime pointed out, the Ruti-Tanner cabinet "is as weakly supported by our people as was the government of Kayander" and therefore the only thing for the Finnish people to do was "to drive the hangmen from Finland . . . throw out the whole bankrupted governmental gang!"<sup>3</sup>

An article in Trud on 2 December also delved deeply into the qualifications of the present "Whiteguard leaders."

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<sup>1</sup>"Deklaratsiya Narodnovo Pravitel'stva Finlyandii" (A Declaration of the Peoples' Government of Finland), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Naturally this review emphasized the close connections between such Finnish leaders as Mannerheim, Erkkö, Kayander and Tanner with the western capitalists and their extreme hostility to the "peace-loving" Soviet Union. All these attitudes and connections only proved that these "gentlemen" were merely lackeys of the exploiters of the Finnish workers and peasants. Therefore, so this newspaper reasoned, these men have little or no support among the proletariat and so must fall before the manner-blows of the "armed forces of socialism."<sup>1</sup>

The reports from the many meetings still being held during the day reflected the feeling that there would be a quick victory over the enemy. If the workers of the USSR could believe their newspapers they would have been convinced of the fact.

The best of the Finnish people are gathering around the Peoples' Government of Finland and are entering the First Finnish Corps. After the first Corps they will form a second, a third and so forth until the workers of Finland have wiped from the face of the earth the whole gang of warmongers who dance under the direction of foreign capitalists.<sup>2</sup>

From the tenor of the press reports on the success of the initial moves of the Red Army there was little reason for the average Russian to have any doubts about the war in Finland.

. . . the Finnish corps, created from the revolting Finnish volunteers, with the help of the

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<sup>1</sup>"Bankrotstvo Gel'singforskih Zapravil" (The Bankrupted Helsinki Warmongers), Trud, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>"Prestupnyaya Klika Kayandervo Budet Unichtosjeha" (The Criminal Clique of Kayander Will Be Destroyed), Izvestiya, p. 1.



fearless Red Army will sweep the Whiteguard Government of provokers away and with honor accomplish the task entrusted to the Peoples' Government--to carry the banner of a free Finland into the city of Kelsinki.<sup>1</sup>

From a survey of the articles which appeared in Krasnaya Zvezda the crucial question was this: what kind of war would the struggle against Finland be? In a report of one of the many soldiers' conferences which were being held at this time, the Russian enlisted men were being assured that the "difficulty" on their "northwest borders" would be a relatively short, easy fight. In one conference, for example a young private,<sup>2</sup> by the name of Yaovlev, observed that it was the young Finnish soldiers who were deserting to the Red army because "they have decided that they do not want to fight the powerful Red Army to satisfy the mad Finnish military."<sup>3</sup> To this statement an elder fellow-soldier, one Korchagin, replied: "This is good; with the defection of Finnish soldiers they will not last two days under the blows of the Red Army; then this hostile mercenary Finnish Government will fly to the devil."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Novaya Era v Sjizni Finskovo Naroda" (A New Era In the Life of the Finnish People), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>On 22 September 1935 officers' titles were reintroduced (in the Red Army), along with a regular system of promotions. Officers' titles were similar to those in European armies except that as yet, the title of "general" was not instituted nor was "soldier" reintroduced, the troops still being termed "Red Army man." Littleton B. Atkinson, Dual Command in the Red Army, 1918-1942 (Colorado Springs, Col.: The Air University, 1950), p. 32.

<sup>3</sup>K. Tokarev, "Demokraticheskaya Respublike Budet Drugom USSR" (The Democratic Republic Will Be the Friend of the USSR), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

This same point was presented with even greater clarity by one private Sogadaev when he asked his unit commissar: "Well, do you think I will be able to take part in the battles for the liberation of the Finnish people? If I send in a transfer will they send me to one of the active units of the Leningrad Military District?" The commissar, one Dodyaev, replied: "It is doubtful. The Red Army will probably crush to powder the bandit gang of Whitefinns before you would arrive. If you expect to get there you must act at once, otherwise it will be too late."<sup>1</sup>

No doubt the Russian Soldier took much encouragement from the optimistic tone of the Soviet press concerning Finland on 2 December. In all probability the average Russian civilian also grew confident when he read the bold headlines that stalked across the pages of Stalin's main journals the very next day. For here for all to read were the terms of a "Peace Treaty" concluded on 2 December between the USSR and the "Democratic Republic of Finland." The terms of the peace were based upon the earlier Russian requests for naval bases and land settlements from Finland which had stalemated the November talks in Moscow. In return for these concessions the Kremlin transferred a large part of northeast Karelia to the new "Peoples' Republic" and agreed to pay about 420 million Finmarks for railroad property and leases involved

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<sup>1</sup>L. Valfouskii, "Za Tesnou Drusjbu s Finlyandskim Narodom" (For Correct Friendship with the Finnish People), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.



in the transfer. The Soviets also promised to help the new government organize an army and to negotiate a trade treaty in the near future.

This treaty in all likelihood intended to demonstrate that the "Peoples' Government of Finland" was a sovereign power and that the Soviet Union would treat it as such. There were indications, however, that the Kremlin leaders in Moscow had a more realistic impression of the situation than might be indicated by the body of this treaty. The last paragraph pointed out that "the present agreement will be in force from the date of signature, depending upon ratification." It went on to add: "Both ratification acts will take place in perhaps briefer terms in the capital of Finland, the city of Helsinki."<sup>1</sup> In diplomatic language this meant that the treaty would not come into effect until that "bourgeoisie government" in Helsinki had been overcome and the "Terioki Regime" could act as the legitimate authority for all of Finland.

Soldiers' and workers' meetings of this day all supported the Treaty and predicted once more an early end of the "Helsinki robber-capitalists." The necessity for final ratification of the Peace Treaty in Helsinki was utilized to demonstrate that the days of the "Whitefinn gang" were coming to an end. As one comrade Ivanov announced: "The important

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<sup>1</sup>"Dogovor o Vzaimopomoshchi i Drusjbe Mesjdu Sovetskim Souzom i Finlyandskoi Demokraticheskoi Respublikoi" (The Treaty of Mutual Aid and Friendship Between the Soviet Union and the Finnish Democratic Republic), Izvestiya, p. 1.



point of the treaty is the declaration that both ratifying documents will be completed in the city of Helsinki . . . The day of the ratification of these documents," he went on to predict, "will come very soon. The Peoples' Army of Finland, supported by all the Finnish working people, will win with the aid of our Red Army."<sup>1</sup>

Other reports of such meetings also emphasized the theme of an early downfall for the government of the Finnish reactionaries. After all, how long could they resist when, as the stakhanovite-brigadier, comrade Artamonova, remarked: "The workers and peasants of Finland welcome our Red Army with as much enthusiasm as did the workers of the Western Ukraine and Western White Russia."<sup>2</sup>

Other workers observed that "a unit of soldiers from the Finnish Army has already come over to the side of the new government, which is supported by the people."<sup>3</sup> As a result the Russian people were all convinced "that the armed Finnish people and the Red Army will quickly destroy the incompetent Finnish generals."<sup>4</sup> Nor was that all according

<sup>1</sup>"Nerushima Druzjba Mesjdu Sovetskim i Finskim Narodami" (Permanent Friendship between the Soviet and Finnish Peoples), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Novaya Pobeda Mudroi Politiki Mira" (The New Victory of Our Wise Peace Policy), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Sovetskii Souz--Velikii Drug Finlyandskovo Naroda" (The Soviet Union--the Great Friend of the Finnish People), Trud, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>"Sjelaem Uspehov Narodnomu Pravitel'stva" (We Wish Success to the Peoples' Government), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

to the Soviet press:

The Finnish people were always our best friends and the present leaders of Finland have vainly tried to incite them against the Soviet Union. The mean provokers of war have erred! On their heads has fallen the anger and indignation of the people.<sup>1</sup>

In various "editorials" which appeared in the newspapers of 3 December inequities of the "bourgeoisie rulers" of Finland were recounted in great detail. On the matter of national wealth it appeared that the "economic lackeys of the west" had consistently bled the Finnish people in order to enrich their capitalistic masters and thus held up the vital development of their nation.<sup>2</sup> From the standpoint of law, on the other hand, the history of Finland since 1918 has been one of every sort of legal crime against the workers. The whole period evidently had been replete with injustice, illegal procedures and unjustified sentences against the "revolutionary proletariat" and its leaders.<sup>3</sup> With all these stories of corruption and injustice it was no wonder that Soviet editors could conclude:

During the past twenty years Finland was the plaything of imperialistic thieves, due to the fact that its reactionary bourgeoisie leaders, the hangmen of the Finnish people, did not want to rule alone. Opposed to everything, blind with class hatred towards the state of the Soviets, submissively acting at the

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<sup>1</sup>"Privet Drusjstvennomu Finlyandskomu Narodu" (Welcome to the Friendly Finnish People), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Finlyandiya (Spravka)" (Finland (Information)), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>A. Botkin, "Prestupleniya Belofinnskih Banditov" (The Crimes of the Whitefinn Bandits), Trud, p. 4.

orders of antisoviet capitalistic powers, they firmly created in Finland a dangerous focus of war.<sup>1</sup>

Interesting reports which began their appearance in the Soviet press on 3 December came in a series of articles which, from their datelines, had been written by a number of correspondents traveling with the invading Red Army. These stories contain a good deal of description of the combat conditions and a little of the attitude of the soldiers, sailors and airmen taking part in the war. They also contain a good deal of flowery patriotic expostulations which were obviously designed to picture the Russian soldier as a fine, brave fellow who was determined to die in defense of his "beloved fatherland." Of course in most of these accounts the "cowardly Finns" are defeated and the Red Army, in spite of many difficulties, presses on to greater triumphs.

A good example was the account of an aerial bombing mission over Finland on the first day of the war. After being addressed by their commissar who urged them to make every effort to defeat the forces of "international capitalism," the Red airmen leaped into their planes and roared into the sky. Despite heavy fog and rain over the Baltic, the bombers hit their targets and in a few minutes completely demolished them. They then returned to a triumphant welcome back at their base and immediately prepared for another raid. In this way the Finns were defeated and

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<sup>1</sup>L. Lyanonen, "Likvidatziya Opasneishevo Ochaga Voinie" (The Liquidation of a Dangerous Focus of War), Izvestiya, p. 4.



the Red Air Force displayed its superiority over the enemy.<sup>1</sup>

Most of the front-line releases recounted the first hours of the ground attack into Finland. Many of these stories contained some very realistic pictures of the effective Finnish defense measures which plagued the Red Army during the initial period of the war. On one of these a senior political officer of a borderguard post, one comrade Pyantzev, evaluated the fighting methods of the Finnish defenders:

At night they creep into the lines and at daybreak return. . . . They do not fall into the eye, they hide like a werewolf in the bush . . . It tells you that the Whitefinns practice all the time to fight with bandit methods. They again and again, fire from trees, scatter in small groups, plant mines and booby traps.<sup>2</sup>

In yet another story about the early hours of the attack on 30 November, the defense presented an interesting scene:

They (the Finns) had retreated, leaving in the straths, in the wood piles, in the very folds of the ground machine gunners and skillfully hidden snipers. The enemy, while retreating, left hundreds of mines and booby traps on the main roads covered by heaps of straw or snow, and in the quiet, solitary houses, on the shoulders of turnpikes, in sheds, in stables. Across the roads and foot paths were stretched treacherous wires and threads connected to explosives.<sup>3</sup>

Of course the authors pointed out that in spite of all these difficulties the Red Army pressed on to new successes. Thus it can be said that 3 December was a day of continued victory for the Red Army, at least within the pages of the

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<sup>1</sup>N. Mihailovski, "Glubokii Reid" (The Great Raid), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Nicholai Virta, "Perviei Tri Chasa" (The First Three Hours), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>S. Dikovski and B. Levin, "Na Komandnom Punkte" (At the Command Point), Pravda, p. 2.

Soviet newspapers. Despite some accurate pictures of the stubborn resistance of the Finns, the average Russian soldier or civilian could still imagine that this war would certainly end in a relatively short time.

The "Winter War" continued to dominate the front pages of the Russian press on 4 December. Even articles from foreign sources, normally relegated to the back pages, appeared on page one. All of these stories supported the Soviet position and helped to give the impression that there was wide support both inside and outside Russia for their attack on the "Whitefinns." The principle stories of the 4th concentrated on reviewing the events which led to the "present difficulties" and "proving" again that the Soviet Union and her puppet "Finnish Peoples' Government" actually had the support of the majority of the Finnish proletariat.

As for the present "Helsinki reactionaries" the Kremlin news writers pointed out that they had "not for a minute ended the underground antisoviet activity which was a direct violation of the (1934 nonaggression) pact." There was also "the sending into the USSR of spies and diversionists, the provocative shooting at our border guards, the antisoviet intrigues in Geneva's halls and in the ministerial offices of any imperialistic nation." All this had "made a mockery of the paper pact of nonaggression."<sup>1</sup>

According to another article in Krasnaya Zvezda, there

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<sup>1</sup>"Istoricheskii Dogorov" (A Historic Treaty), Izvestiya, p. 1.

had always been considerable desire for war among the Finnish "military clique." It seemed that these "militaristic adventurers" in answer to critics who spoke of the difference in strength between Finland and the USSR "argued that a 'slowing resistance' to the Soviet troops in time would cause changes in the international situation and Finland would gain foreign support." Thus "trusting in this 'support' the Finnish warmongers have provoked war with the Soviet Union."<sup>1</sup>

The Red press bosses in an article in Pravda editorialized that despite all the hopes of the Finnish bourgeoisie government and its military leaders, their hour of doom was fast approaching:

The strong blows of the Red Army in answer to the provocative incidents on the Soviet border has caused panic and confusion among the bankrupted politicians of the Finnish bourgeoisie. One government has tumbled, and the other is vainly reaching to their foreign patron-instigators. But in liberated Finland has arisen the voice of the real working people. The Government of the Finnish Democratic Republic has called all of its people to join with the Red Army to fight against the warmongers and suppressors of the Finnish people.<sup>2</sup>

The "Peoples' Meetings" of the 4th roared with enthusiasm over the "Peace Treaty" and were confident of a relatively speedy victory over the "Finnish dogs of international capitalism." The Treaty with the Terioki

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<sup>1</sup>"Drusjba i Mir" (Friendship and Peace), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Pakt o Vzaimopomoshchi i Drusjbe Mesjdu SSSR i Finlyandskoi Demokraticheskoi Respublikoi" (The Pact of Mutual Aid and Friendship between the USSR and the Finnish Democratic Republic), Pravda, p. 1.



Government, according to one resolution in a workers' meeting "will liquidate still another focus of war which was lighted by the unlucky leaders of Finland: Kayander, Erkkko, Tanner and others."<sup>1</sup> With the reported successes of the Red Army and the "First Finnish Corps" there obviously could have been no doubt that the ". . . treaty of mutual aid and friendship between the Soviet Union and the Finnish Democratic Republic will be ratified in the capital of Finland, the city of Helsinki, in a short time!"<sup>2</sup>

A soldier's speech reported in the army newspaper summed up the situation as it might well have appeared to the readers of Russian news releases:

The crafty plans of the sick Finnish rulers have fallen like a house of cards. They aimed at a campaign of conquest against the USSR. The bandits have erred. The Finnish people have accepted the brotherly help of the Red Army and will destroy the Kayanders and Erkkos like mad dogs.<sup>3</sup>

As if to demonstrate the widespread international support for Soviet actions, stories from foreign sources which, of course, backed up the Communist version of the "Finnish incident" appeared on the front pages of the Red press. A good example of this support was a news release from the New York Daily Worker which announced that an

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<sup>1</sup>"Istoricheskii Dokument" (A Historic Document), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Dokument Velichaishevo Mirolubiya" (A Document of Great Peacefulness), Trud, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Ischeznet Ochag Voinie Na Severozapadnieh Granitzah SSSR" (The Disappearance of a Focus of War from the Northwestern Border of the USSR), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.

organization known as the "Federation of Finnish Workers" had acclaimed the "entrance of Soviet troops into Finland" since the USSR was only trying to "arrange such relations as is necessary between two countries which economically and geographically are as close as the USSR and Finland."<sup>1</sup>

In another item of this sort George Bernard Shaw, in an interview, remarked that the Finns had acted foolishly in not accepting the Soviet terms in November. He reasoned that the Russians had been worried because the Finns had acted not like a relatively weak neighbor but more like a potentially strong aggressor. Mr. Shaw then came to the rather strange conclusion that the United States must have promised to help the Finnish Government in their fight against the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> Strangely enough, from this time forward the Kremlin news bosses linked American business with those western capitalistic rulers whose encouragement had brought about the present "Finnish aggressions."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Finskie Rabochie N'yu-Yorka o SSSR" (The Finnish Workers of New York about the USSR), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>"Bernard Shaw' o Finsko-Sovetskih Otnosheniyah" ('Bernard Shaw' about the Finnish-Soviet Agreement), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Kto Oni?" (Who Are They?), Trud, 14 December 1939, p. 2; "Imperialisticheskie Interesie v Finlyandii" (Imperialistic Interests in Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, 26 December 1939, p. 4; "Kto Pomogaet Mannergeimu?" (Who Helps Mannerheim?), Izvestiya, 6 January 1940, p. 4; "General Sikorski Speshit Na Pomoshch" (General Sikorsky Hurries to Help), Krasnaya Zvezda, 12 January 1940, p. 4; The Observer, "Drusjba i Vragov Finskih Narodi" (The Friends and Enemies of the Finnish People) Komsomolskaya Pravda, 10 February 1940, p. 4.



New items which came directly from the "Finnish Peoples' Government" provided another encouraging note for Soviet newspaper readers. In various meetings held in villages and towns of "liberated" Finland the citizens ratified their support for their "Democratic Republic."

As an example of the determination to help their new government the inhabitants of the village of Karka called on "all the people who were involuntarily evacuated from certain villages by Finnish troops to return home."<sup>1</sup> The burghers of Terioki also pledged themselves to "support with all force the new Peoples' Government and help it in a short time destroy the power of the hateful government of Tanner and place in the territories of all Finland the Democratic Peoples' Republic."<sup>2</sup>

Apparently encouraged by the "enthusiastic support" of the local population, the soldiers of the "First Corps of the Finnish Peoples' Army" swore that they would not rest until they had:

destroyed the remains of the ruling (group) of Kayander and the government of Tanner, who always sold and are still selling the interests of the Finnish people to foreign imperialists and, for their own satisfaction, has involved the Finnish people in a criminal war with the USSR.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Naselenie Finlyandii Radost'u Vstrechaet Ves Ob Obrazovanii Narodnovo Pravitel'stva Finlyandii" (The Population of Finland Joyfully Greet the News of the Formation of the Peoples' Government of Finland), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Obshee Sobranie Grasjdan Goroda Terioki" (A General Session of the Burghers of the City of Terioki), Pravda, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Rezolutziya Pervovo Korpusa Narodnoi Armii Finlyandii" (A Resolution of the First Corps of the Peoples' Army of Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.



With the evidence of such enthusiasm on the part of the "freedom-loving" Finns, led by Otto Kuusinen, there should not have been much doubt in the minds of the Soviet man-in-the-street that the "liberating armies of socialism" would soon drive the "warmongers" out of Helsinki.

To reinforce the impression that the "Whitefinns" were beaten and broken, there appeared in the Russian press a small item from the German Information Bureau in Riga:

. . . as received from Helsinki, the battle activity on the Soviet-Finnish front has weakened. The official organ ordered the urgent evacuation from Helsinki of all the civil population. The "Prime Minister" Ryti together with the whole "government" has left the capital to an unknown place. They say that the residence of the "government" has been transferred to Vasa. The diplomatic corps were given time to move to a small town near Helsinki.<sup>1</sup>

This was the type of news which would have made the Russian civilian and soldier feel that the war could be won on schedule. Of course it also agreed in manner and tone with the other news items of the past four days.

Dispatches from correspondents at or near the front lines continued to receive prominent display. The Red Army was still advancing from victory to victory. Even the admittedly difficult terrain did not seem to present any obstacle to the forward movement of Russian troops.<sup>2</sup> In spite of the claims of Finnish military experts that the

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<sup>1</sup>"Pravitel'stvo Ryti Besjalo Iz Hel'sinki" (The Government of Ryti Has Fled from Helsinki), Pravda, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>A. Parfenov and G. Men'shikov, "Shkval Voroshilovskih Zalpov" (The Storm of Voroshilov's Volleys), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

natural defenses of Finland, the lakes, swamps, forests and rivers would impede the advance of any army, one correspondent revealed that "our troops on the first day have demonstrated that for them there exists no barriers. Our tanks broke through wide gaps in the forests and overcame the marshes of the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, other newspaper reporters were outraged by the "underhandedness" of the methods used by the "Whitefinns" to defend their country. These included floating logs bound by steel wire which were set in the narrow fjord above Petsamo to trap Red warships<sup>2</sup> and the construction of hidden fire points in apparently abandoned village houses. In the latter case when the Russian soldiers would enter these "uninhabited" areas "the Finnish Jaegers would shoot our troops in the back with explosive bullets."<sup>3</sup>

Other descriptions confirmed the "bandit-like methods" of the Finnish troops. For instance this report on the favorite tricks of the "White-bandits":

Finnish snipers at night would crawl into the thick forests like wolves, come up to the roads near our armies and with two or three bursts from a submachine gun try

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<sup>1</sup>An. Kalinen, "Utro Na Paresheike" (Morning on the Isthmus), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>S. Akif'ev and S. Bronfman, "Reid Korablya 'Groza'" (The Voyage of the Ship "Groza"), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>M. Gordon and G. Mishulovin, "Kovarstvo Vraga" (The Craftiness of the Enemy), Izvestiya, p. 1.

to spread panic among the columns in order to block the roads which supply our battle units.<sup>1</sup>

This evaluation of the fighting methods of the small, but dedicated Finnish army has been confirmed by a former Soviet officer who served in the war. In part this officer had this to say:

The Finns fought in small groups of quick, well-trained skiers . . . They would suddenly appear in the rear and on the flanks of our troops. They were skilled night-fighters, attacking without firing a shot and using their native knives to spread panic among the Soviet troops.<sup>2</sup>

In spite of the discrepancy concerning the weapons used, it is obvious that both witnesses were describing the same method of combat. This, in a way, confirms the accuracy of Soviet newspaper correspondents when they complained about conditions at the front.

In spite of their criticism of "frankly diversionist tactics," the chief complaint of the Russian reporters was reserved for the manner in which the Finns had mined everything ahead of the Red Army advance. As in the stories of the day before, the defenders were berated for putting mines in quiet places such as hayracks, small huts, summer homes and other shelters.<sup>3</sup> Even outdoors one apparently had to be very careful for almost any object could be connected to an explosive

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<sup>1</sup>R. Pavlenko, "Kovarnie Metodi Belofinnov" (The Tricky Methods of the Whitefinns), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>G. I. Antonov, "The Red Army in the Finnish War: From the Soviet Side," Basil Henry Liddel-Hart (ed.), The Red Army (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Gordon and Mishulovin, loc. cit.



charge. One of the trickiest means that the "White-bandits" devised to "strike the Red Army man in the spine" was to "mine the small village stores, calculating, it seems, that the soldiers of the Red Army would be caught on this bait."<sup>1</sup>

As to the effectiveness of Finnish mines there were two stories from Soviet correspondents which mentioned that, at least in one case, a tank had been put out of commission by a mine<sup>2</sup> and in another, an armored train had been blown up attempting to cross a railroad bridge on the Russo-Finnish border.<sup>3</sup>

The final items of some interest which appeared on the 4th were a series of "eyewitness" stories about the difficulties of the Finnish civilians and soldiers in the war areas. All of these articles were found in the Red Army's own newspaper and they must have caused the Russian soldier to imagine that, in spite of the "bloody terror" of the Schutzcorps,<sup>4</sup> the population of Finland would come over to the side of their "liberators" at the first opportunity.

The observers who wrote about the "liberated" villages emphasized the point that the "Whitefinn gangs" had forcibly evacuated the inhabitants and had shot those who would not

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<sup>1</sup>Pavlenko, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>N. Rakovski and N. Golshev, "Musjestvo" (Courage), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>V. Chernieshev, "Pogranichniki" (The Borderguards), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Special reserve units of the Finnish Army trained to act as riot police as well as soldiers.

leave. In one Communist news release the peasants who had managed to remain behind characterized the Schutzcorps as: "butchers, the damned butchers. There is no other name for them" and, in order to get even with their "bourgeoisie oppressors" told of "changing the mines of the bandits to those paths that the Finns would have to use."<sup>1</sup> With such an attitude on the part of these homeless Finns, there seems to have been little doubt that, as one Soviet correspondent reported: "The Finnish people are receiving the Red Army as their own liberators."<sup>2</sup>

As for the morale of the Finnish military prisoners, these men had been treated even worse than the civilians by their officers. Most of the prisoners interviewed by a Soviet reporter seemed to have been recently drafted and therefore were badly clothed and equipped for war. It seems that they were fed only once a day and if they objected, their officers beat them. They had not been told why they must go to war against the Soviet Union since their officers normally did not speak to them. The only instruction they received was an evening sermon by a "priest." The "priests" had told them that the Russian soldiers were barbarians and that they torture and even shoot their prisoners. Of course, now the

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<sup>1</sup>P. Nesterov and S. Solodovnikov, "Vragi Svoevo Naroda" (The Enemy of Our People), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>B. Korol, "Tzena Mannerheimovoi Klyatvi" (The Cost of the Mannerheim Oath), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

prisoners had discovered that all this was a lie and had lost all confidence in their former leaders.<sup>1</sup>

The insidious thing about these articles was the fact that they probably helped to convince many Russian soldiers that a large body of Finns would respond to an appeal such as: "leave the ranks of the Whitefinn Army! Come over with a weapon in hand to the Peoples' Army which . . . carries liberation and a happy life to the Finnish people!"<sup>2</sup> This erroneous reporting very likely led the average Soviet soldier to believe that whatever the difficulties of weather and terrain there could not be any real resistance from a population which was separated from their leaders by such a wide gulf of class hatred.

The triumphant picture presented by the Soviet press during these first four days of the Winter War was based upon Marxist-Leninist theory bolstered by an almost grotesque misinterpretation of the situation within Finland. The key impression gleaned from the pages of Russia's newspapers was that the Finnish people, opposed to the war policy of their political and military leaders, were prepared to join the "liberating armies" and sweep their "bourgeoisie government" from the country. This assumption flew in the face of all

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<sup>1</sup>A. Parfenov, "Beseda s Plennimi Finskimi Soldatami" (Conversations with Captured Finnish Soldiers), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Plenniei Soldatie Prizievaut Svoih Tovarishchei Vatupat v Ryadie" (The Captured Soldiers Summon Their Comrades to Enter the Ranks of the Peoples' Army), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.



known facts and was certainly not based upon actual conditions in Finland where the great majority of the population was resolutely prepared to defend their country against the threat of Soviet aggression.

In considering the way Soviet writers reported the first few days of the Winter War, it would be well to remember that they had to use the information at their disposal and that they were compelled to make the "facts" come as close to the official line as possible. With these thoughts in mind, there may have been some reasons for their feeling of overconfidence. After all, this early period was one of almost unbroken triumph for Soviet arms and diplomacy. The various Red Armies had not yet met any serious opposition, the Red Baltic Fleet had occupied the islands in the Gulf of Finland and had captured the only Finnish warm-water port, Petsamo. A number of exiled Finnish communists had erected a "Peoples' Government" at Terloki which had called on the Finnish proletariat to rise up against their "bourgeoisie rulers." These Terloki leaders had begun to form an army of disgruntled Finns to aid the Russian forces and had signed a "Peace Treaty" with the Soviet Union which met all the Kremlin's demands for bases and border rectifications.

Then, too, the Finnish Government in Helsinki had no allies, and with the oncoming winter would have all its Baltic ports closed. Because of the opposition of Nazi Germany there was little prospect that any real military aid from the west could reach the Finns in time to save them. The desperate

straits of the Helsinki leaders were further heightened by the report that the government had fled from its capitol. In short, the facts indicated that the Russians had made a very good start in their campaign to reduce Finland to the status of a "sphere of influence" and the Kremlin-dominated newspapers merely reflected this confidence. With all this in mind it is easy to see why Soviet writers believed that victory over Finland would come in a relatively short time.

MAP III  
INITIAL ATTACKS OF THE SOVIET UNION ON THE  
KARELIAN ISTHMUS  
(30 November 1939--16 December 1939)







This map shows the advance of various Soviet units during the first two weeks of the Winter War. There has been no effort to reproduce every tactical maneuver of the Red Army or the Red Fleet but only the main lines of advance. Although the Soviet infantry divisions are marked as to their location on 16 December 1939, division units, especially armor, were rather freely transferred from one area of the front to another.

No attempt has been made to locate the various Finnish field units. There was so much shifting of Finnish divisions and even the detachment of units to other fronts that it is almost impossible to determine their locations on the Karelian Isthmus until the end of January 1940.

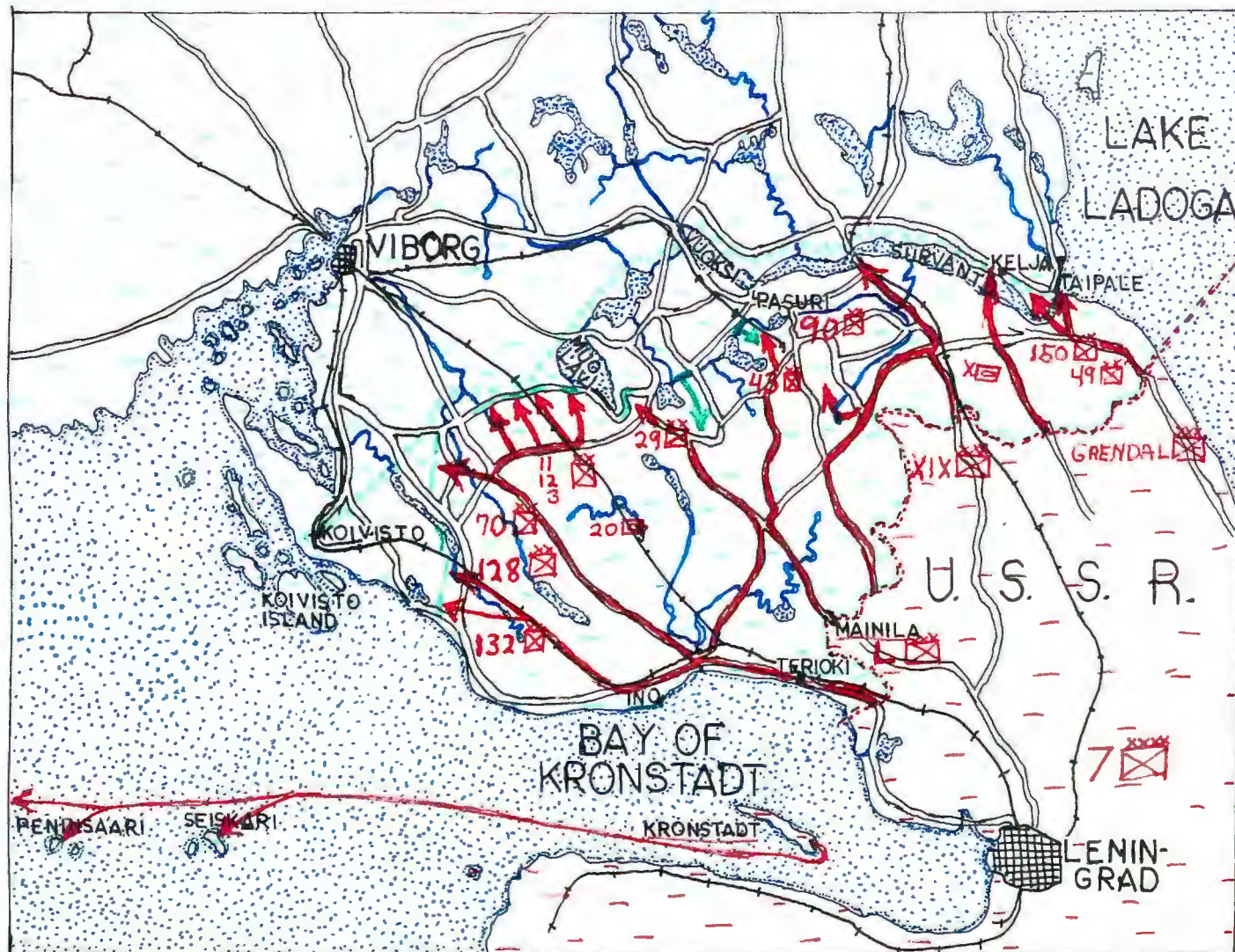
An interesting point to be observed here was the widespread nature of the Soviet attacks, all the way from one side of the Isthmus to the other. This resulted in a weak effort at important points and, as the map shows, in many regions the Red Army did not even succeed in breaking through the Finnish field forces to the main defenses of the Mannerheim Line. In areas such as Hoitinen (Summa) and Kelja-Taipale where Soviet forces did manage to contact the principal Finnish defense positions, they were decisively repulsed with heavy losses.

The naval action here illustrated consisted of the movement of the naval expedition from Kronstadt on 30 November 1939 to occupy the Finnish islands in the Gulf of Finland. Since the regular bombardment of the coastal defenses in the Viborg area were not undertaken by the Soviet fleet until 18-19 December 1939, these maneuvers have not been included on this map.

SYMBOLS:

	Political boundaries
	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet infantry division
	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet armored division
	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet infantry corps
KELJA	Important centers and islands
	Territory of the Republic of Finland
	Territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics





THE KARELIAN ISTHMUS

SOVIET FORCES: —  
FINNISH FORCES: —

0 15 30 45 60 75 KM

## CHAPTER V

### THE FINNISH DEFENSES STIFFENED

(5 December 1939--11 December 1939)

The second week of the war in Finland saw a gradual change in the fortunes of the Red Army. It was during this period that the Kremlin leaders seem to have become fully aware of the extent of their problems and received their earliest indication that the Finnish defenses were not so contemptible as had been thought at first. For example, although the 52nd Soviet Infantry Division, reinforced by special armored elements, was successfully driving local defense forces ahead of it across the tundra from Petsamo down the Winter Road towards Ivalo throughout this second week of fighting, already the extreme weather conditions had slowed their advance.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the efforts of the 122nd Soviet Infantry Division, some 300 kilometers further south, to break through in support had also run into the twin problem of greater distance and a gradual increase in Finnish resistance on their way from Salla to Pelkosinniemi.<sup>2</sup>

At Suomussalmi in central Finland the Red 163rd Infantry

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<sup>1</sup>Xylander (22 March 1940), p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 114.



Division had penetrated as far as the town by December. Once here, however, the increased Finnish resistance at the ferry-point of Aarsaari at the entrance of Lake Haukipera had halted their drive. By 10-11 December the Finns, bringing their reinforcements up by way of their newly constructed Kontiomali-Taibalkoski railroad, had succeeded in stabilizing the situation in this area which was bad news to the Red Army men of the 163rd Division.<sup>1</sup> Along with this the hoped-for flanking move of the 54th Ukrainian Infantry Division at Kuhmo was also meeting with increased resistance during the same period.<sup>2</sup>

The promising Red Army advances in eastern Karelia which threatened to outflank the defenses of the Karelian Isthmus from the east were also slowly being contained during this crucial second week of combat. The attacks of the Soviet 155th, 139th and 75th Infantry Divisions which were aimed at the Ilomantsi-Tolvajarvi area were thrown back by a counterattack of the 9th Finnish Infantry Division<sup>3</sup> and a great battle for the so-called Tolvajarvi ridges was shaping up as the Finns hurried all available reinforcements into the area.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, p. 338.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 175-176.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 338.

<sup>4</sup>Xylander (5 April 1940), p. 201.



To the south in eastern Karelia the efforts of the Soviet 18th Infantry Division to drive in upon Suislama from Suojärvi was halted at Kollaa by 9 December in a really desperate Finnish defensive effort.<sup>1</sup> The attempts of the 168th Soviet Infantry Division to drive in along the Lake Ladoga shore road during the same period was slowed by Finnish fire from the islands of Volamo and Mantsinsaari. This plus the narrow front on which the Russians operated forced a slowdown when they reached Kitela.<sup>2</sup>

On the Karelian Isthmus the Soviet had arrived at the main defenses of the Mannerheim Line by 8-10 December after considerable resistance by the Finns. The Soviet 7th Army committed the 49th Infantry Division (of Corps Grendal) in a concentrated attack, not on the central Summa Lines as expected by the Finns, but upon the extreme eastern end of the Mannerheim Line at Taipale between 6-11 December.<sup>3</sup> This attack was an abject failure for this division was afterwards replaced by another for later attacks in this same sector.<sup>4</sup> The westward side of the line (Pasuri, Summa, Koivisto) was subjected to heavy artillery fire from land and sea plus local attacks near Punnisjärvi but serious Soviet advances

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<sup>1</sup>Palolampi, p. 53.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 106.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>4</sup>Mannerheim, p. 342.

in this sector were delayed until after mid-December.<sup>1</sup> It would seem that the Soviet plan during this second week did not envisage a frontal smash against the main Summa Lines but a concerted effort to outflank the Mannerheim defenses through Sortavala and a general Russian advance through eastern Finland.

On the diplomatic front the League of Nations on 9 December had, at the request of the Finnish Government, asked the Soviet Union to explain her conduct in Finland. The Kremlin leaders refused because they said they could not recognize the "Helsinki regime" as the legitimate government of the Finns. The USSR now considered only the Terioki puppet government as the legal and sovereign head of the Finnish people. The League, after some consultation, called on all members to aid the beleaguered Finns and condemned the Soviet Union for her aggressive actions. The Russian representatives then promptly left the League of Nations and denounced its action.<sup>2</sup> No matter how much the USSR deprecated the support of the League members, this action proved to be a moral victory for the Finns.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 343.

<sup>2</sup>For an excellent review of the entire Soviet position see: Potr Aleksevich Tisouskii, Liga Podzhigtelei Voiny (The League of the Warmongers) (Moscow: Government Literature Publications, 1940).

<sup>3</sup>William L. Shirer, Berlin Diary: The Journal of a Foreign Correspondent, 1934-1941 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), p. 253.

Although the Finnish "difficulty" more or less moved off the front pages of most Russian newspapers during this second week of the war, there was still many items about Finland, her leaders and the conflict in general. The articles from foreign sources especially continued to express approval of the Soviet invasion. Most of these justified the attack with the trite observation that the Finns must have been preparing to invade Russia since Finland refused to accept the "reasonable" Soviet terms which had been presented during the Moscow talks. This refusal to "do business," plus the many "border incidents," according to these writers, made necessary some action by the Red Army to safeguard the "state of socialism" and the "City of Lenin." As for the fear of Soviet aggression against the rest of Scandinavia, which had been expressed by some Swedish newspapers, this was labeled sheer lunacy by the left-wing foreign press, since there was no danger for these nations from such a "peace-loving" country as the USSR. Actually, they argued, it was the situation in Europe that made it necessary for Russia to defend itself from Finland.<sup>1</sup> This was, of course, merely the usual Soviet line dressed up in foreign clothes.

In other articles from abroad the leaders of Finland were attacked with great bitterness. The Finnish workers in New York, for instance, described the commander of the Finnish

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<sup>1</sup>"Turetzkii Sjurnalist o Finlyandii" (A Turkish Journalist about Finland), Pravda, 5 December 1939, p. 5.



Army, Marshall Mannerheim, as "high and fat, with his great belly he walks like a duck. His eyes are like the windows of a rubbish shop." This article went on to insist that, in reality, the laboring masses of Finland supported the Terioki "Peoples' Government" and the leaders of "White Finland" actually had no influence among the working people.<sup>1</sup>

In the same newspaper, Komsomolskaya Pravda, the Social-Democratic leader and Foreign Minister, Viano Tanner, was called a "Judas" to the working classes because he had "sold his nation to the capitalists . . . not for thirty shekels, but for five million Finmarks." The author then observed that Tanner would certainly not be so obliging as to hang himself like Judas but would soon have to be brought before a "Peoples' Tribunal" to answer for his crimes.<sup>2</sup>

It seemed strange that these two men, Mannerheim and Tanner, neither of whom was the formal head of the government, should have been picked out for such vilification by pro-Communist writers. It may well have meant, however, that these two were now recognized as the "strong men" of the Ryti Government. Certainly, from now on these two leaders were the main targets for most Communist attacks.

The Russian war correspondents of Krasnaya Zvezda

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<sup>1</sup>"Gazet Deili Uorker o Sozdanii Narodnovo Pravitel'stva v Finlyandii" (The Newspaper Daily Worker about the Formation of the Peoples' Government in Finland), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 5 December 1939, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Gennadi Fish, "Iuda Tanner" (The Judas Tanner), Komsomolskaya Pravda, p. 4.

moved closer to reality in their stories about the fighting on the various fronts. In one "eyewitness account," for instance, a bomber pilot, Upsin, was hit in the hand by a bullet from a Finnish pursuit plane. According to the story he managed to bind up his painful wound and fly the machine safely back to its base.<sup>1</sup> In another description two Red Army men were seriously wounded while on patrol because they happened to stumble upon a Finnish fire point. Luckily, however, they were rescued by their heroic comrades "from the embrasures of a concealed Whitefinn fire point."<sup>2</sup>

In a third tale the grim side of the struggle became clear. It told about the fate of a captured Russian soldier who was "questioned by the Whitefinn 'rabble-butchers.'" According to an old Finnish peasant woman who saw the whole scene, "The soldier with the red star was hit with a ramrod, stuck with a bayonet, had his belly ripped open while they demanded that he speak, but he was silent." After all this torture, she noted, "They then tied him with wire and put him into a burning house. The Red man died quietly."<sup>3</sup> Whether this tale was true or not, it was evident that Soviet reporters were putting a positive interpretation on

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<sup>1</sup>I. Riebakov, "Vozdieshnie Nalet" (Aerial Attack), Krasnaya Zvezda, 5 December 1939, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>"Tovarishcheskaya Vzaimopomoshch" (Comradely Mutual Aid), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>L. Shmonin, "Musjestvo i Otvage" (Courage and Daring), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

all matters pertaining to Red troops. But this was not all. The war had become much more brutal.

Many other stories about the Finnish people and the Finnish soldiers might have led anyone who regularly read Soviet news releases to suppose that the population was cracking under the strain. In one article the author observed that the cowardly Mannerheim forces were "frightened at open battle with the Red Army." He told too how the Finnish soldiers eagerly used torture to force the evacuation of the civil population.<sup>1</sup> Here is the way the people who were left behind by the "brutal Schutzcorps" felt about their leaders:

No, never will the Finnish people pardon the Kayander clique for all the evil which these lords of nothing have inflicted on an innocent people. Black memory, black curses will the people use on these murders in frockcoats.<sup>2</sup>

In yet another story about the sufferings of the civil population an old peasant couple who had refused to be evacuated by the Schutzcorps had their house burned to the ground and were forced to set mines by the officers. When the Russian reporter found them they were living in an old sewer pipe.<sup>3</sup> In this way, so the Soviet writers pointed out, did the Whitefinns treat their own people!

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<sup>1</sup>L. Los, "Zverstva Belofinnov" (The Brutality of the Whitefinns), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 5 December 1939, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>R. Bershadskii, "v Dereвне Na Viborgskom Shosse" (In a Village on the Viborg Road), Krasnaya Zvezda, 5 December 1939, p. 3.



In case the Russian reader imagined that the Finnish Army was still a factor to be feared, there was another account in Komsomolskaya Pravda about the morale of these "Mannerheim forces." The authors, in an interview with several captured Finnish reservists, discovered this state of affairs:

None of them were convinced by the "martial airs," the "preparation for self-sacrifice," the "natural hatred for the muscovite" which is at this very moment announced by means of radio, newspapers, posters and brochures of Mannerheim and Tanner. More than that, none of the soldiers know why they have been driven to war with the people of the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup>

With these unprepared Finnish reservists all surrendering, it seems obvious that Soviet writers wished to give the impression that Finnish forces were rapidly falling apart under the "hammer-blows" of the Red Army and the First Corps of the "Peoples' Army." This must have made strange reading to a Russian soldier who had been wounded trying to break through the Finnish lines in eastern Karelia the day before. Nevertheless this continued to be the attitude of the Soviet press for some time.

One of the most realistic descriptions of the difficulties of movement in the wilds of Finland appeared throughout Russian newspapers on 8 December. Pravda, for example, pictured the central border of Finland as "a wild, rough place, cut by high hills, innumerable lakes and rivers.

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<sup>1</sup>S. Gurin and M. Edel, "Vstrechi" (Meetings), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 5 December 1939, p. 4.

There are no roads!"<sup>1</sup> Of course the indomitable Red Army man, with his essential equipment on his back, the story continued, went right on "surmounting the difficult ridges, going through the terrible mountain rivers and lakes, crossing the valleys which were continuously clogged by boulders and small bushes" to attack the Whitefinn positions. Naturally, this unit "from which the boastful Whitefinn warriors run like cowards" managed to carry out its battle assignment successfully.<sup>2</sup> (The story understandably failed to mention that probably at this very moment the same "heroic unit" had been stalled by those same "Whitefinn cowards" in the forests of central Finland.) The description of this march was very convincing for it pictured the natural conditions in central Finland in precise detail. The analysis of the reaction of the "Whitefinns," however, proved to be erroneous even while this article was being set up in print.

Almost all the rest of the stories from Russian newspapers of 8 December concerned the popular support in Finland for the "Peoples' Government" and the difficulties of the "Whitefinns" in continuing the war against the "forces of liberation." A foreign news item pointed out that the reason the city of Helsinki had to be evacuated

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<sup>1</sup>"Geroicheski Marsh" (An Heroic March), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

was that the "bankrupted leaders hope their evacuation of the population will lengthen the time before the rapprochement of the people with the Finnish "Peoples' Army and the Red Army."<sup>1</sup>

This misinterpretation of the Finnish "scorched-earth" policy was reinforced by the resolutions of the numerous "meetings of the citizens of liberated Finland" which were evidently taking place in many of the towns that lay behind the Red Army's lines. According to these resolutions, the people of eastern Finland had joyfully greeted the news of the foundation of the "Peoples' Government of Finland" and the signing of the Treaty of Mutual Aid and Friendship between the "Peoples' Government" and the USSR. The enthusiastic welcome described in these stories demonstrated "the real popularity of the new government" and expressed "the real feelings of the people."<sup>2</sup>

The government of Ryti-Tanner was described, of course, as an "antipeople government." "It does not represent the Finnish people. It is an enemy of all the workers, a bankrupted gang of reactionary plutocrats and warmongers."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Prinuditel'naya Evakuatziya Naseleniya Iz Hel'sinki" (The Compulsory Evacuation of the Population from Helsinki), Izvestiya, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Finskii Narod Privetstvuet Svoe Pravitel'stvo" (The Finnish People Welcome Their Peoples' Government), Izvestiya, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Sobraniya Grasjdan Goroda Petsamo" (A Meeting of the Citizens of Petsamo), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.



These resolutions generally ended with instructions to the Finnish proletariat in uniform to turn their guns against the united enemies of their nation, against the "government of bankers and foreign imperialists." Sometimes this appeal was added: "Soldiers! Come over to the side of the Peoples' Government of Finland!"<sup>1</sup>

As if to support these resolutions, the Soviet newspapers printed numerous "eyewitness stories" of the atrocities of the "Whitefinn bandits" in enforcing the evacuation of the peasant population. In an article in *Trud* about the "liberated" islands in the Gulf of Finland it was observed that the peasants and fishermen who had managed to remain behind, had been left without food, and those that had been evacuated had been practically "kidnapped."<sup>2</sup> From the village of Parkino came another report of a "Whitefinn" officer who had become so enraged at the refusal of the villagers to leave the area that he had shot one of the peasants as an example to the rest.<sup>3</sup> Basing their conclusions on these stories, it would have seemed natural to the average Russian reader that the Finnish peasants would join the "liberating armies" as soon as possible.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>"Na Osvobodjennih Ostrovah" (In the Liberated Islands), Trud, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>"Belofinnie Ubivaut Krest'yan" (The Whitefinns are Killing the Peasants), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

On 9 December Soviet newspapers contained a minimum of articles concerning the Winter War. The only interesting news item was found in Krasnaya Zvezda, the army organ. In its "editorial" a Professor of Economics, one L. Ziman presented a long, detailed analysis of the economic history of Finland under the Republic. As expected, his ideas followed the typical party line. Finland had been transformed into a "semi-feudal landlordism" which had destroyed the forests, checked the growth of industry, misused the natural resources and contributed to the unequal distribution of the population. The country had been changed into a private preserve for exploiters who kept the nation "in bond to the foreign capitalists." But all this would now be changed for the Finnish workers had created the Finnish "Peoples' Republic" in order to utilize properly their natural resources, free their productive power and raise their standard of living. In view of all this the professor advised the Finnish people to help the Red Army gain the victory over their common enemy.<sup>1</sup>

More of the same blossomed from most journals on 10 December. Again there were "resolutions" of the "freed" citizens in favor of the "Democratic Republic" and "eye-witness accounts" of the brutality of the "Whitefinn Bands." The "patriotic workers of liberated Finland" once more accused

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<sup>1</sup>L. Ziman, "Plodie Hozyainichaniya Finskii Marionetok" (The Fruits of the Housekeeping of the Finnish Puppets), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

the "whiteguard bands of political adventurers" of ignoring the laboring people and provoking war "with our friend, the Soviet Union."<sup>1</sup> Moreover, this "band of landlords and capitalists" which "contrived a criminal war against the USSR" now had "shamefully run from the capital."<sup>2</sup> Therefore, these citizens announced in their meetings that they would "support again the created Peoples' Government under the leadership of Otto Kuusinen," for after all this government gave "protection and peace to the Finnish people."<sup>3</sup>

A new note was introduced in a resolution of the Russian Karelian collective of Kroshnozero. The inhabitants of this agricultural establishment announced that the "perpetual dream of the Finnish people for union with their national brothers, the Karelian people, had taken place." And just look at the results: "The present Finnish and Karelian people will begin to live as one family."<sup>4</sup> This effort, of course, was merely a renewal of earlier attempts to bribe the Finns into accepting Soviet terms with the promise of the reunion of eastern Karelia with Finland.

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<sup>1</sup>"Privetstvie Narodnomu Pravitel'stvu Finlyandii" (The Support for the Peoples' Government of Finland), Izvestiya, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Sobranie Sjitelei Ostrova Seiskaari" (A Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Island of Seiskaari), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>"Finskii i Karel'skii Narodie Budut Sjit Edinoi Sem'ei" (The Finnish and Karelian Peoples Will Live as One Family), Pravda, p. 2.



As for the somewhat nebulous "Peoples' Army" Krasnaya Zvezda reported that it looked very good: "The equipment was splendid. The relations among the soldiers and commanders are founded on good soldierly discipline," and as a result "every soldier knows for what he fights." Therefore, the Red Army man was reassured that this new fighting force would soon be able to help him "eliminate the focus of war in the Baltic."<sup>1</sup>

In the "eyewitness reports" of 10 December there were the usual accounts of "bourgeoisie brutality" which were such a familiar part of the newspaper accounts of this period. In one story a Finnish peasant who was sick of "Schutzcorp methods" had stayed behind and helped the Russian engineers find the mines left behind by the retreating "Whiteguards." In spite of his evident confidence in the ultimate victory of the Red armies, this "mine detector" refused to allow the Soviet war correspondent to reveal his family name. He did this because he said that he feared reprisals against his son in Helsinki. It seemed that by this time even pro-Russian Finns felt some doubt that the Soviet forces would "soon raise the banner of the Peoples' Republic over the capital of Finland."<sup>2</sup>

To heighten the impression of Finnish disintegration

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<sup>1</sup>"U Boitzov Narodnoi Armii Finlyandii" (By the Soldiers of the Peoples' Army), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Irii German, "Zabut'te Mou Familiu!" (Forget about My Family!), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

there were stories of Finnish soldiers who had either been captured or had deserted to the Russians. Most of these men, according to the news releases of Soviet reporters, were disgusted with conditions within Finland both in and out of the army. One Uho Hutsumen expressed the horror of the average Finnish soldier when ordered to destroy the small town of Suomussalmi in central Finland. According to Hutsumen, the inhabitants were evacuated by force, the domestic animals killed and, upon the approach of the Red Army, the houses were burned to the ground. As he pointed out, this was done "in order that the Red Army could not stop and feed itself." Hutsumen, and perhaps a good number of cold, hungry and disappointed Russian soldiers, called down "endless curses on the Schutzcorp barbarians and on the criminal Finnish Government and its leaders."<sup>1</sup>

In another article it was learned from a letter written to a wounded Finnish prisoner that the civilians in Finland were "forced by the war to work like horses while in the army, not a day passes that someone is not punished."<sup>2</sup> On all sides, according to this Russian newspaper release, the Finnish proletariat, both in and out of the army, had long been disgusted with conditions brought about by the war.

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<sup>1</sup>Uho Hutsumen, "Pis'mo Plennovo Finskovo Soldata" (A Letter of a Captured Finnish Soldier), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"V Lazarete" (In a Hospital), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.

In most of the Russian press on 11 December there was little mention of the Winter War outside of the foreign news items and the daily "Operations Reports." Besides one "editorial" in Trud which informed the reader that the capitalistic bosses of "White-Finland" had exploited the natural resources of that nation for the past twenty years,<sup>1</sup> there was no major news releases in the general press.

On the other hand, Krasnaya Zvezda, the Red Army's newspaper, contained three "eyewitness reports" which described in great detail the reactions of the Finnish population to the triumphant advance of the Soviet armies. In the village of Hautavara, for instance, when the Russian soldiers gave the surviving peasants food and drink, these people looked upon them with astonishment for the perplexed villagers had been told that the Red Army was "terrible and cruel" and were surprised that it "had not looted homes or seized the cattle."<sup>2</sup> According to the authors of this piece, a friendly attitude ensued between the Soviet troops and the local population which resulted in the enthusiastic welcome by the inhabitants of the news of the formation of a "Peoples' Government."<sup>3</sup> In all cases, this "correct action" of the Red Army, in contrast to the "brutality" of the Schutzcorps, created a

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<sup>1</sup>B. Mihailov, "Ograblenie Finlyandii Finansovim Kapitalom" (The Robbery of Finland by the Financial Capitalists), Trud, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>P. Ogini and S. Sapigo, "V Finskoi Dereвне" (In a Finnish Village), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



feeling of friendship between the peasants and the citizen-soldiers of the Soviet Union.

This feeling even seemed to have penetrated the ranks of the Finnish Army. A prisoner, one private Ukannen, revealed that "of one hundred Finnish soldiers, hardly any can be found who want war with the Soviet Union, and these consist chiefly of the Schutzcorps and Jaegers," consequently, "the rest do not want to fight with the Red Army."<sup>1</sup> Describing the conditions within the army, Ukannen continued:

With the approach of units of the Red Army, we ran from our officers to the rear, nearer home. The officers forced us to fire, threatening to kill us but this had very little effect on the troops. This is why even the select units of the Schutzcorps have retreated in such panic and disorganization. The Finnish Army does not exist any more. It has fallen into ruin and has become of no fighting value. In the forests exists only bands of Schutzcorps and Jaegers.<sup>2</sup>

This destruction of the main fighting elements of the Finnish Army so glibly announced by Private Ukannen was, to put it mildly, rather premature. Certainly, by the time this story appeared its conclusions may well have been disputed by Red Army men who had just been thrown back from Taipale, Haukiperi and the Tolvajarvi ridges by these same "bands of no fighting value."

In all justice to the Russian reporters, however, it

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<sup>1</sup>P. Nesterov and S. Solodovnikov, "Chelovek s Rusj'em" (Man with a Rifle), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

should be mentioned that these stories were probably from the earlier period of combat, before the Red Army had come up to the principal Finnish defense lines. Indeed, even the Finnish reports make mention of the hurried evacuation of positions which might well have been held, due apparently to mistaken orders.<sup>1</sup> Then, too, mixed-up civilian and military withdrawals before the initial Russian attacks in eastern Karelia had many of the aspects of a breakup in the organization.<sup>2</sup> Thus the careful reader cannot entirely dismiss even these apparently misleading accounts of the Russian advance into Finland.

The final "eyewitness story" of this early period told of the experiences of one of many Finnish "volunteers" who, according to the authors of this tale, were flocking to the banners of the "Peoples' Army" to help drive their "bourgeoisie oppressors" out of the country. This particular deserter-volunteer, one Matti Tolvonen, had evidently hidden in a cellar in Terioki on the first day of the war to await the arrival of the Red "liberators." When he came out of his hiding place he found that a newly-organized "Peoples' Government" had formed a "First Corps" to fight the "white-bandit regime." Since Tolvonen had been a "Red Guard" during the civil war in Karelia in 1919, he naturally wished to

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 327-328.

<sup>2</sup>Palolampi, p. 38.

destroy the capitalistic robbers who had kept him and his family in poverty for some twenty years. For these reasons he went immediately to the local military headquarters and enlisted to "break the heads of all bourgeoisie, priests and landlords, . . . so that in Finland one can live as in the Soviet Union."<sup>1</sup> The impression derived from this story was that there was a widespread movement of Finnish deserters swelling the ranks of the "armed forces of the Democratic Republic" which would gladly join in the fight to sweep the Ryti-Tanner Government into the "dustheap of history."<sup>2</sup>

A review of these past six days in the Russian press revealed several important points. In the first place the writers of these articles were reporting this war according to the tenants of Communist dogma. Any invasion of a capitalistic nation by a Communist army therefore naturally resulted in an "inevitable" uprising of the depressed proletariat. Thus it is understandable that Russian newspaper reporters would recount events that would support this thesis.

A second point, however, is that despite exaggerations, there was an unmistakable air of authenticity in the descriptions of fighting conditions in Finland. Indeed, it would have been strange if Soviet correspondents could not have

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<sup>1</sup>R. Bershadskii, P. Korzinkin and M. Lobanov, "V Narodnou Armiu" (In the Peoples' Army), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



found some pro-Russian peasants and workers to substantiate their contentions about Finnish morale. Also, as has been demonstrated, the hurried initial retreat of the Finnish defensive forces did lend some substance to the idea that the enemy was reluctant to come to grips with the Red Army. A good many of these erroneous articles were probably just the result of "selective" reporting, not exactly unknown to the present writer from his own experiences in the Korean War.




MAP IV  
THE VIBORG AREA  
(February--March 1940)

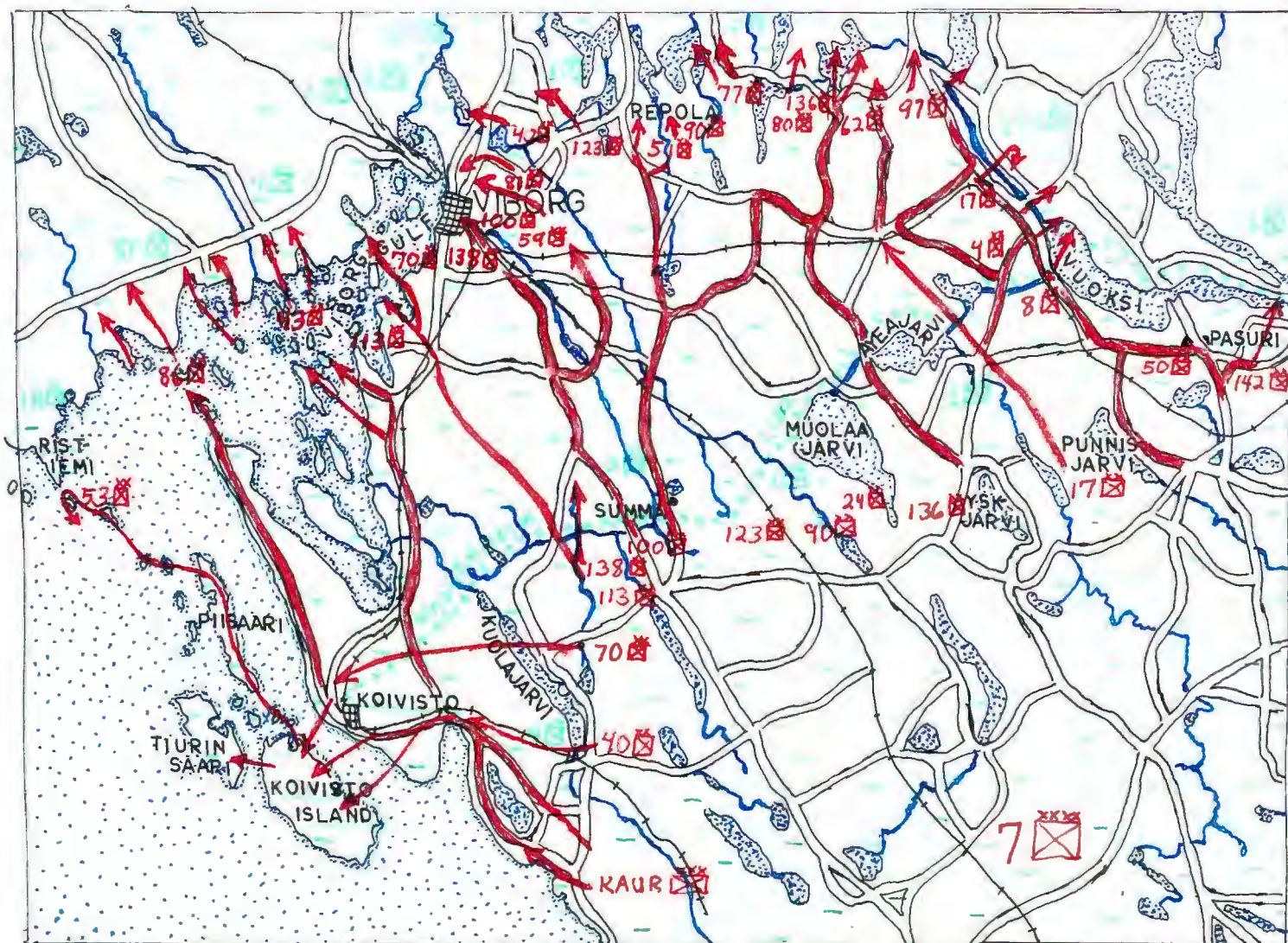
The illustrations on this map show the main outlines of the Red Army offensives of February--March 1940 which finally broke the right-center of the Mannerheim Line and virtually surrounded Viborg. The series of unit designations in the center of the map are the approximate locations of both the Finnish and Russian divisions as they were lined up in their positions at the beginning of February, before the Soviet attack began. The unit designations in the upper portion of the map show the approximate locations of the units at the end of the war.

An interesting point in this diagram was the concentration of Soviet military effort in the western part of the Karelian Isthmus. Of like importance was the developing ability of Soviet military leaders to deploy such a heavy weight of men and machines because inland lakes, the rivers, and even the Gulf of Finland had frozen solid enough to bear the weight of armored vehicles.

Only the main lines of the Soviet attacks are marked in red on this map. The tactical maneuvers on both sides were, of course, much more complicated than might be indicated by the relatively simple lines on this diagram. Particularly, there was a great deal of lateral movement among the Soviet units advancing through Summa and over the ice of the Gulf of Viborg.

SYMBOLS:

	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Finnish infantry division
	Approximate location of the headquarters of a Soviet infantry division
REPOLA	Important defense areas and island positions
	Territory of the Republic of Finland



THE VIBORG AREA, 1940

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 KM

SOVIET FORCES: — (Red line)  
FINNISH FORCES: — (Green line)



## CHAPTER VI

### DELAY AND DEFEAT--THE RED STEAMROLLER SLOWS DOWN

(12 December 1939--30 January 1940)

The middle two months of the Winter War saw little but frustration and defeat for the units of the Red Army. In the extreme north the 52nd Soviet Division continued its drive along the Winter Road south from the Petsamo area. By 19 December this unit had been "stabilized" along approximately 100 kilometers of this road while the Finns tried their favorite tactic of spot flank attacks along Soviet lines of communication.<sup>1</sup> The Soviet then brought up the 104th Division which on 23 December forced the Finnish defenders to fall back to a position just north of Ivalo.<sup>2</sup> But bad weather and continued flank attacks by small Finnish ski units forced the Russians to a halt which lasted throughout the remainder of the war.<sup>3</sup>

In the Salla-Pelkoseiniemi area of southern Lapland the Soviet 122nd Division's attack towards Pelkosenniemi was

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 124-125.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 192-193.

<sup>3</sup>Hudson Strobe, Finland Forever (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1941), p. 399.

defeated and thrown back by an outflanking thrust on 18-19 December,<sup>1</sup> while further Russian efforts towards Kemijoki were also crushed.<sup>2</sup> The 53rd Soviet Division, hurriedly brought up to reinforce the drive in this area was also smashed and both the remnants of the 122nd and the 53rd were forced to retreat into their defensive works at Salla by 4 January.<sup>3</sup> Here this front stabilized until the end of the war despite the replacement of Finnish units with about seven thousand Swedish and Norwegian volunteers<sup>4</sup> after 26 February to release Finnish units for the desperate combat on the Karelian Isthmus.<sup>5</sup>

Just to the south of the Salla area the Soviet 163rd Division in Suomussalmi was cut off from its Uhtka base and gradually broken into fragments by reinforced Finnish battalions. By 27 December the remnants of this unit were in full retreat to Jurhisranta while the last remaining "motti"<sup>6</sup> at Hulkonniemi was broken by the 30th of that

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, p. 341.

<sup>2</sup>Strode, p. 397.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 186-187.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Alexander Winston, Aces Wild (New York: Holiday House, 1941), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 188.

<sup>6</sup>Mottis are literally timber enclosures created by laying logs against two trees. Here they refer to the habit of the Finns of breaking the Red Army road columns into small segments in the deep forests of eastern Finland. See: "Motti Tactics," The Infantry Journal (January 1950), p. 8.

month.<sup>1</sup> The 44th Ukranian Guards Division which sought to support the 163rd by an advance to Suomussalmi from Raate due east of that town had also been halted, broken into "motti" and finally crushed by 7 January. This annihilation of the better part of two Soviet Divisions turned out to be one of the most complete victories of the war for the Finns.<sup>2</sup>

Further south in the Kuhmo sector the 54th Soviet Division, reinforced by "odd" regiments from other units, continued to try to break Finnish resistance and cut the Oulu Railroad. From 21 December to 29 January continued Finnish flanking attacks broke the rear communications of the 54th and began the inevitable splitting of this unit into isolated "mottis." On 31 January a new reinforced Soviet ski battalion attempted to break through to the beleaguered "mottis" near Kemijarvi but failed. It was the first attempt at this sort of action by the Red Army in the Winter War.<sup>3</sup>

In eastern Karelia the 139th Soviet Division which had been halted in the fierce fighting during the period from 10-12 December now came under direct attack by the reinforced Finnish defenders despite the presence of elements of the 75th Soviet Division in support and a new advance on

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, p. 339.

<sup>2</sup>John Langdon-Davis, Finland, the First Total War (London: G. Rutledge and Sons, 1940), pp. 14-15.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 180.



Ilomantsi by the 15th Soviet Division. From 14-16 December continual Finnish attacks cleared the Tolvajarvi ridges and pushed the Russians back to their positions at Aittijoki where the front was stabilized for the rest of the war.<sup>1</sup>

At the Kolla-Uomaa blockade the Finns held out against increased Soviet pressure even when the Reds had been reinforced by units of the 75th, 56th, 46th and 128th Soviet Divisions. The tremendous defensive effort around the so-called "Red House"<sup>2</sup> was especially bloody and long-lasting. Indeed, this defensive effort has been termed the "Verdun of the Finnish War."<sup>3</sup> There was also no doubt that the successful defense of this crucial position enabled the Finns to counter Soviet efforts to the south to seize the Sortavala positions.<sup>4</sup>

In the southern sector of eastern Karelia the 18th Soviet Division, reinforced by the 34th Tank Battalion and the 168th Soviet Division which had succeeded in linking up with the 18th at Kitela were subjected to persistent and increasing Finnish attacks during December and January.<sup>5</sup> By 20 January both Soviet Divisions had been halted and were

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 336-337.

<sup>2</sup>Palolampi, pp. 58-230.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 211.

<sup>4</sup>Mannerheim, p. 347.

<sup>5</sup>Strode, pp. 406-407.

being broken into "mottis."<sup>1</sup> On 21 January the Russian forces (principally the 20th Motorized Cavalry Division, the 60th, 72nd and 155th Infantry Divisions plus a ski battalion) were engaged in a two-pronged effort to relieve the surrounded units. But up to the end of January these efforts were unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup> However, the tenacious defenses of the Soviet troops in their "mottis" prevented the annihilation of the major parts of the 168th right up to the end of the war.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand most of the 18th Division and all of the 34th Tank Battalion were crushed by the Finns in January ski attacks.<sup>4</sup>

On the Karelian Isthmus the first Soviet moves after the mid-December period were a series of attacks from 14-18 December by the Grendal Corps on the eastern anchor of the Mannerheim Line at Taipale. Despite the temporary success of Russian forces in crossing Lake Suvanto at Kelja on 17 December, this area was soon cleared of Red units and further attacks on these positions during the 28th and 29th of the month were likewise unsuccessful.<sup>5</sup> In the middle of the Isthmus attacks were next made on the Punnisjarvi lines

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 199-200.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 201-202.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 348.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 208-209.

<sup>5</sup>Mannerheim, p. 342.

on 14 and 15 December but with no permanent result.<sup>1</sup> Then the major Soviet effort shifted to the Summa area where three Red divisions made a concerted attempt to crack the center of the Mannerheim Line between the 17th and 20th of the month. These efforts, despite initial penetration of the fortified belt, resulted in further Russian failures and the loss of some fifty-eight tanks.<sup>2</sup> All the Soviet efforts at breaching these defenses were closely supported by continual heavy artillery barrages plus fleet and aerial bombardments of Koivistox.<sup>3</sup> The failure of these moves was due partly to the strong defensive positions and the unfavorable ground which restricted the maneuver area available for armor.<sup>4</sup>

The Finns also mounted an attack of their own between Kuolemajarvi and Muolaanjarvi on 23 December in an effort to split the Russian forces before the Summa lines. However, due to poor planning, a lack of material and numbers plus the thorough Soviet defensive measures, this penetration was ultimately unsuccessful. On the other hand, the Finns seem to have felt that their failure had some results because the Russians apparently suspended active operations for some time

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, p. 343.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 169.

<sup>4</sup>"War on Land," Army, Navy Journal (30 December 1939), p. 388.



in the Summa sector.<sup>1</sup> Despite this evaluation, it was far more likely that Soviet military leaders suspended operations here because they wished to reorganize and re-evaluate their attempts to smash the main Finnish defenses.

This conclusion can be reinforced by the fact that Soviet leadership made several significant changes in their military command during the early part of January. The Chairman of the Leningrad Military District, General Kirill Meretzkov,<sup>2</sup> was replaced in overall command by the appointment of Marshal Siemon Timoshenko<sup>3</sup> to command the 7th Army with Boris Shaposhnikov<sup>4</sup> as his Chief of Staff.<sup>5</sup> The command of the 8th, 9th and 14th Armies was handed over to Marshal Gregory M. Stern, who previously had commanded the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerhaim, pp. 344-345.

<sup>2</sup>Kirill Afanas'evich Meretzkov (1897- ) joined the Red Army in 1918, graduate of Frunze Military Academy and had long career as staff officer. Originally commanded all the troops involved in the Finnish invasion until relieved in January 1940.

<sup>3</sup>Semion Konstantinovich Timoshenko (1895- ) joined the Bolsheviks in the Civil War and after specialized military training in 1920's was appointed commander of the Kiev Military District. Commanded the troops which entered Poland until called to command the 7th Army on the Karelian Isthmus in January 1940.

<sup>4</sup>Boris Nikhailovich Shaposhnikov (1882-1945) originally a Tzarist Staff Officer who joined the Bolsheviks during the Civil War. Held positions as head of the Frunze Military Academy and the Voroshilov Military Academy. In the 1930's became Chief of the General Staff and deputy peoples' commissar for defense. Appointed Chief of Staff of the 7th Army in January 1940.

<sup>5</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 216-217.

armies in eastern Siberia and was somewhat of a hero for his resistance to Japanese penetration into Mongolia.<sup>1</sup> These changes were apparently made to obtain closer control and coordination among field units than had been possible when all operations were directed from the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District. Then, too, the evident dissatisfaction with results so far in the war must have constituted a major reason for the change in field commanders at this time. Certainly there was an air of reorganization with the appearance of the newly-appointed leaders.

With the hardening of the ground and waterways in mid-January due to the continuation of clear, cold weather, operations reopened on the Karelian Isthmus.<sup>2</sup> The so-called "Voroshilov Offensive" which took place in the Summa and Pasuri areas from 22-30 January seems to have been a preliminary to the great February attacks which would break the Mannerheim Line.<sup>3</sup> The effect of these local moves and others at Taipale during the later period was to wear down the Finnish defenders and to help the Soviets to coordinate the activities of their various arms.<sup>4</sup>

In the field of diplomacy the tide of events also seemed to turn against Soviet leaders. During December and

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<sup>1</sup>Strode, p. 401.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 218.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 213.

<sup>4</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 350-351.

January the Russian Foreign Commissariat rebuffed all efforts by Finnish Foreign Minister Tanner to re-establish some sort of contact with the Soviet Government. Even Nazi Germany was unable or unwilling to use her good offices to transmit diplomatic correspondence which might have permitted a peaceful settlement of the "Finnish difficulty."<sup>1</sup> In the eyes of the Communists the Kuusinen "Terioki regime" continued to be the legitimate government of the Finnish people throughout the first month and a half of the war.<sup>2</sup> This continued during the period under discussion despite the very self-evident fact that, as the President of Finland said in a speech: "Herr Kuusinen's power in Finland has never extended farther than the bayonets and bullets of the Red Army, and it will not last one minute longer than the bayonets which surround him."<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, the prompt action by the League of Nations in condemning the Soviet Union as an aggressor and the calling on all member nations to aid the beleaguered Finns<sup>4</sup> nullified much of the earlier diplomatic success of

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<sup>1</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, pp. 117-118.

<sup>2</sup>Max Jakobsen, The Diplomacy of the Winter War: An Account of the Russo-Finnish War, 1939-1940 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 169-170.

<sup>3</sup>Risto Heikki Ryti, Stunden der Entscheidung; Reden des Finnischen Staatspraesidenten Risto Ryti (Leipzig: Lihe-Verlag, 1944), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup>League of Nations, 20th Assembly, 1939. Appeal by the Finnish Government. Report of the Assembly (Geneva, 1939), p. 10.



the Soviet Government. Thus the continued resistance of the Finns might give the League powers time to organize aid for the valiant defenders of that little nation.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the temporary stalemate in combat during December and January resulted in consultation between Finland and the western Allies which looked towards the possibility of arms aid and troop reinforcement to bolster the tiring Finnish defenders.<sup>2</sup>

The obvious miscalculations of Soviet leaders reverberated upon the diplomatic situation. The initial diplomatic "blockade" which the Russians had thrown up around Finland could not last long without substantial military success by the Red Army. When the expected "swift victory over the forces of Finnish reaction" failed, the early advantage of Soviet diplomacy was lost and the Kremlin leaders were forced to take a new tack before possible outside intervention might increase the danger to Leningrad.<sup>3</sup>

By early February a tentative link of communication between the Soviet and Finnish Foreign Offices had been established through the Soviet Ambassador to Sweden, Madame Alexandra Kollontai.<sup>4</sup> While no serious negotiation was attempted during January, it was obviously a great breakthrough

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<sup>1</sup>"Service News and Gossip," Army, Navy Journal (16 December 1939), p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, pp. 133-134.

<sup>3</sup>"What Russia is Reaching For," Business Week (9 December 1939), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 125.

for the Finns when the Kremlin consented to recognize the Helsinki Government as the legal ruler of Finland. From these rather small beginnings would come the later peace negotiations and the Treaty of Moscow which would end the Winter War. Of course the question of why the Kremlin leaders decided to make such a complete change about is still not entirely clear. Perhaps the best summation has been made by one authority on Russia who gave as his opinion that the move was:

. . . prompted not so much by direct consideration of military strategy as by the general political situation in Europe . . . the war had lasted longer than expected and had placed in jeopardy Russia's entire foreign policy. The problem of the Balkans was awaiting a solution, and this could not be possibly solved so long as Russia was involved in war. What was more important, Moscow was receiving concrete information from London and Paris to the effect that the Allies were seriously considering coming to the aid of the Finns. . . . Moscow began to realize that what was to have been a local war, lasting at most a week, was in danger of becoming a general European war against Russia. A big war in which Russia would have to fight on the side of Germany was something which Stalin did not relish.<sup>1</sup>

Here anyone who might look through the Russian newspapers of the period would discover that their coverage of the Winter War had been much reduced from the earlier period of the conflict. Except for the "Operations Reports of the Leningrad Military District" (printed in a small box) the "disturbances on Russia's northwestern frontiers" remained virtually absent from the front pages of the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup>Dallin, p. 182.

press. Major articles which described the fighting, the character of the enemy forces and the Helsinki Government were greatly reduced in number. Only on those pages devoted to stories from foreign sources was there any continuous mention of the struggle to "free the Finnish workers and peasants from their bourgeoisie masters." It would seem that the Soviet leadership was by this time determined to focus the attention of their people on the more successful aspects of Russian news and forget the earlier hopes for a swift victory over the "bandit gangs of Mannerheim."

The lessening of Soviet press efforts against the Finns might lead one to suppose that Russian leaders had changed their picture of the Finnish situation. A careful analysis of the articles which did appear concerning the Finnish problem, however, reveals that such was not the case. In a story on 12 December in Izvestiya a Soviet writer repeated all the old arguments concerning Finland and wound up by saying that after twenty years of "pacifistic and woman-like bourgeoisie democracy" the masses of Finland hoped for a long-awaited delivery "from the oppressive hand of the reactionary bourgeoisie."<sup>1</sup> One also reads that the "bourgeoisie regime" of Finland had always opposed the liberalism of the Finnish working people. "For twenty years the lords of the Finnish plutocracy made sure unemployment, hunger, poverty and injustice would be the constant

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<sup>1</sup>E. Levin, "Konstitutziya Beloi Finlyandii" (The Constitution of White Finland), Izvestiya, p. 2.



fellow-travelers of the Finnish workers."<sup>1</sup>

Izvestiya also supplied the following "editorial" picture of the "bearable" living conditions in wartime Finland:

In the factories and plants a 10 hour working day has been instituted; on the shoulders of the workers is laid the burden of oppressive taxes (on coffee, sugar, watches, and so forth). Income taxes even on very small incomes, and in this case on the half-hungry wages of the workers has been raised to 20% although shortly before this there had already been an important increase in this tax. In the enterprises production had increased incredibly. The factory owners refuse to increase the workers' wages and compensation for overtime. The landlords throw out into the street the families of reservists who have been taken into the army.<sup>2</sup>

Of course the "Whitefinn Government," so the party line continued, concealed all this from the soldiers and workers by paying journalists to write stories of imaginary victories in the fighting with the Red Army. These mercenary "creaking ravens" of Mannerheim weaved their "restless lies" so well that even the "Munchausen adventures simply decay before the fairy tales which come from the pens of the Whitefinn scribblers and their fellow champions who are zealously executing the literary orders of baron Mannerheim."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>A. Makarov, "Pod Onetom Finskoi Plutokratii" (Under the Oppression of the Finnish Plutocrats), Krasnaya Zvezda, 24 December 1939, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>A. Lisin, "Belaya Finlyandiya Pered Kontzom" (White Finland Approaches the End), Izvestiya, 27 December 1939, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>A. Lisin, "Besshabashoe Vran'e 'Literatorov' Rabotaushchih Na Barona Mannergeima" (The Croaking Raven 'Writers' of the Workers in Mannerheim's Barony), Krasnaya Zvezda, 30 December 1939, p. 4.

In this way the Finnish people were distracted from their plight and encouraged to fight against the "liberation forces of the state of socialism."<sup>1</sup> Here was an oblique admission that the Russians were meeting opposition in Finland and the Finnish workers were not greeting their "red brothers" as liberators.

A relatively new subject which appeared in the Soviet press during the latter part of December was the much repeated point that the "Whitefinns" were being supported in their "aggressions" by a combination of western imperialistic countries. This was particularly evident in a series of articles concerning the expulsion of the Soviet Union from the League of Nations. The decision of the League's "Committee of Thirteen" to ask the Red Army to withdraw from Finnish Territory or, failing that, to leave the League was represented by Pravda as a plot by the Anglo-French imperialists to prevent a peaceful settlement of the Baltic problem.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the action of the League of Nations against the Soviet Union was described as a distinct advantage since henceforth the USSR would not be bound by the pact of the League and would have a free

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>"Na Assamblie Ligi Natzii" (In the Assembly of the League of Nations), Pravda, 14 December 1939, p. 5.

hand in solving its problems.<sup>1</sup> This alleged connection between the western Allies and the "bankrupted Mannerheim clique" remained a mainstay of Communist press reporting throughout the remainder of the war.

Most of the articles from foreign sources which appeared in the Russian press consisted of variations on this theme. Thus there was a report of a workers' meeting in Hyde Park, London, the purpose of which was to pledge support for the "peoples' Government of Finland" and to protest against aid to "White Finland" by the so-called imperialists. The action of the USSR, according to this report, was "directed at the liberation of the Finnish people and the destruction of the plans of the imperialists to employ Finland as a type of armed camp for a war against the nation of socialism."<sup>2</sup>

Another characteristic feature of the Soviet press during the middle period of the Winter War was its more realistic approach to conditions in Finland and the conflict in general. All of a sudden the Russian readers learned that the economic situation in Finland was not so bad as it had been previously reported. There were fewer references to foreign exploitation and the exhaustion of natural

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<sup>1</sup>"Poslednii Resheniye Ligi Natsii" (The Last Decision of the League of Nations), Izvestiya, 16 December 1939, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>"Mitng Solidarnosti s Finlyandskim Narodniem Pravitel'stvom" (A Meeting of Solidarity with the Finnish Peoples' Government), Krasnaya Zvezda, 12 December 1939, p. 4.



resources by local capitalists. Indeed, Ivan learned that Finland's economy after World War I continued to grow and prosper rather than decline.<sup>1</sup>

The purpose behind such an objective view becomes clear if one studies another story which appeared throughout the Soviet press on 23 December. This was a review of the previous three weeks of fighting as released by the Headquarters of the Leningrad Military District. This article showed that Soviet military leaders were desperately trying to excuse their failure to overcome the Finnish defenses during the three weeks since the Red Army had first entered Finland. The account denounced the foreign press which had intimated that the failure of the Red Army to conquer Finland quickly was due to the "lower fighting potential" of the Russian soldier. It then went on to announce that the natural conditions of Finland, the extensive fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus and the aid sent by the imperialistic Anglo-French had created obstacles which made the "Mannerheim Lines" in no way inferior to those of the Siegfried Line in Germany."<sup>2</sup>

After all, the review continued, the Anglo-French forces had not made as much progress against the German

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<sup>1</sup>"Ekonomicheskiiye Resursy Finlyandii" (The Economic Resources of Finland), Pravda, 27 December 1939, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>"Trehnedel'nie Itog Boevykh Deistvii v Finlyandii" (A Three-Week Summary of War Activity in Finland), Izvestiya, p. 1.

fortifications in three months as the Red Army advance into the Mannerheim Line in three weeks.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore ridiculous for anyone to expect that the Red Army would overcome the Whitefinn resistance in one week. From this article it was obvious that the Russians had made a decision to stop downgrading "Whitefinn" defensive efforts and build up their power as an excuse for the poor showing of the Soviet troops during this period. From this time on, Russian newspapers time and again pointed out the natural and man-made difficulties in overcoming Whitefinn resistance.

On the other hand, as the press proceeded into the year 1940, it can be demonstrated that the Kremlin's basic line had not changed, just the predictions of a speedy end to the "focus of war in the Baltic." While Soviet journalists desisted in their efforts to convince the Russian people that any large number of Finnish soldiers were joining the Red Army, they continued to describe the Helsinki Government as the enemy and oppressor of the Finnish working classes. Evidently to excuse the failure of the expected "proletarian revolt" the Red "myth-makers" continued to make a case against the Finnish Government. Here is an account from Trud:

The bankrupt clique of Helsingfors have managed to arrest thousands of Finnish citizens, have shot honest patriots who were not willing to spill their blood for the hated Mannerheim gangs. In the towns and villages of Finland the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

contemptible Mannerheim and Tanner kill the workers, burn houses, forcibly evacuate the peaceful inhabitants. The fierce terror of the Whitefinns knows no bounds.<sup>1</sup>

The same line was found in Izvestiya:

Now the end approaches for these hangmen of the Finnish people. The historic declaration of the People's Government of Finland which announced the confiscation of the landlords' property and the parceling of it among the landless and the small-holding peasants has been received with great enthusiasm. Against the whiteguard dictates of the Finnish plutocrats and against the colonial lords of the foreign imperialists now will rise all the working people of Finland.<sup>2</sup>

Of course in "liberated" Finland the people were no longer oppressed and frightened but had begun to elect committees to govern themselves and lead a life free from terror, according to one article. Food and clothing, which had been in short supply, appeared again on the shelves of the village stores. All this was compared to the relative austerity in "Mannerheim Finland."<sup>3</sup>

To be sure Russian writers made it very clear that the contrast between life under the "Democratic Republic of Finland" and the "Whiteguard terror" was kept from the Finnish people. The Soviets charged that well-paid journalists of both the bourgeoisie and Social-Democratic press in

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<sup>1</sup>"Zverstva Belofinnov" (The Brutality of the Whitefinns), Trud, 3 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>B. Posnikov, "Krest'yanstvo v Beloi Finlyandii" (The Peasantry in White Finland), Izvestiya, 4 January 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Suoyarvi, "V Vostochoi Finlyandii" (In Eastern Finland), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9 January 1940, p. 4.



Finland withheld the true facts from the Finnish people.<sup>1</sup> Worse than that, these same "scribblers firmly preached to the working masses of Finland the idea of the necessity of a continual fight with the historic enemy, the Russians and their assistants, the Finnish Communists."<sup>2</sup>

In the eyes of the Communist press apparatus all this mythology and "Munchausen-like" lying had not prevented the Finnish proletariat from learning the true facts. As late as 10 February an article in Komsomolskaya Pravda reported the following:

The Finnish people have risen against the agents of the provokers of war from the clique of Mannerheim-Ryti-Tanner. The people of Finland have created a Democratic Republic. A Treaty of Mutual Aid and Friendship concluded by the young Democratic Republic with the great Soviet Union guarantees the growth of solid friendly relations between both nations. On the basis of this treaty the Finnish people will take determined measures to liquidate the Whitefinn focus of war.<sup>3</sup>

From the above review it becomes apparent that the Red press mills were still operating under the ridiculous assumption that the Finnish working classes were burning to overthrow their bourgeois masters. The one necessary addition to this myth was the factor of "Whitefinn terror" which

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<sup>1</sup>R. Raskinen, "'Demokratiya' Palacha Mannergeima" (The 'Democracy' of the Hangman Mannerheim), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 26 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>G. Tverskoi, "National'nii Gnet v Beloi Finlyandii" (National Hatred in White Finland), Trud, 28 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Observer, "Sweden's Dilemma," Contemporary Review (April 1940), pp. 410-417.

prevented the proletariat from expressing its wishes. Evidently the Soviet press felt it had to explain the failure of a popular uprising in Finland to the civilians and soldiers of their nation.

In the field of military reporting, the Red Army communiques which still appeared on the front pages of all Russian newspapers, turned more and more to realistic accounts of the fighting in Finland. Since 26 December these "Operations Reports" had monotonously stated that "nothing of consequence had happened on any front." This seemed especially strange during a period when the Red Army was losing men and material in central and southeastern Finland. However, this could be explained by the natural reluctance of the Russian military commanders to admit their failures. In the "Operations Report" of 9 January the Red Army felt compelled to state that "on the Uhtinsk front there were infantry clashes, as a result of which our units were withdrawn several kilometers to the east of Suomussalmi."<sup>1</sup> With this cryptic line the Soviet High Command summed up the virtual destruction of the major parts of three divisions and the abandonment of its advance position some 50-100 kilometers deep in central Finland. On the other hand, considering the usual exaggerations contained in the Soviet press, this report might be thought of as a model of candor and

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<sup>1</sup>"Operativnaya Suodka, Staba Leningradskovo Voennovo Okruga" (The Operations Report of the Staff of the Leningrad Military District), Pravda, p. 1.

truthfulness.

From this point during January the "Operations Reports" continued to announce that only minor patrol clashes and artillery duels were taking place on all fronts. From 16 January, however, the Red Army communiques also ominously contained references to the unbroken activity of the Red Air Corps, which was symptomatic of the clear, cold weather conditions that prevailed for the remainder of this month.<sup>1</sup> Finally, on 8 February came the first announcement of the renewed drive to break the Mannerheim Line. These "Operations Reports" which were issued daily until the end of the war, not only contained a detailed list of the towns and railroad stations captured but even the number and types of fortifications which had been seized. It would seem that this feature was added to bolster the Soviet claim that the so-called Mannerheim Line was indeed "extremely strong and the capture of such a fortified area was a glorious success for Russian arms."<sup>2</sup>

One of the most unusual features of the January-February period in the Russian press was the appearance of the so-called "Stories of the Heroes of the Battle with the Whitefinns" which became a more-or-less regular part of each issue from 16 January to 18 February 1940. These

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<sup>1</sup>Kournakoff, p. 129.

<sup>2</sup>Milton Howard, "Soviet Cracking of Mannerheim Line Startles Military Experts," New York Daily Worker, 27 February 1940, p. 1.



articles recounted the heroic deeds of Red Army soldiers, sailors and airmen who had been awarded the medal "Hero of the Soviet Union" in early January. While the Russian forces always won over the "cowardly whitebandits," the descriptions of battle action were very good and illustrate just what difficulties the Red Army, Fleet and Air Force encountered in their invasion of Finland.<sup>1</sup>

In the first of these articles which appeared in Krasnaya Zvezda there were three heroes whose stories were told. One of them was a Second Lieutenant, one Nikolai Kichigin. When his tank was blown up by a mine he continued to fight the attacking "Whitefinns" with machine gun and grenades until ordered to the rear by the unit commissar because of his wounds. Another was an heroic artilleryman, one Grigorii Laptex, who valiantly defended his battery from the attacks of encircling Finnish forces. The last hero, one Ivan Komarov, merely took five prisoners and defended his position with machine gun fire.<sup>2</sup>

In still another of these interesting "hero stories" a driver, one Anatole Koida, found himself at a temporary headquarters of his unit. During the night this headquarters

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<sup>1</sup>In determining just what is true or false in the descriptions of combat one must rely on one's own experiences. Modern combat is approximately the same in any army and so this writer has had to depend on his own experience in this area to make a decision as to the truth or falsity of any account.

<sup>2</sup>"Geroi Boev s Finskoi Belogvardeishchnoi" (The Heroes of Battles with the Finnish Whiteguards), Krasnaya Zvezda, 26 January 1940, p. 1.

was attacked by an enemy battalion on skis. The brave driver organized a defense and, aided by the fact that the Finns attacked the wrong buildings, was able to prevent the enemy force from capturing the area.<sup>1</sup> In this way the "whiteguard" raiders were foiled and the staff of the unit saved.

To demonstrate the persistence of the Russian soldier there was the instance of a tank crew that fought on in spite of the fact that the Finns had knocked out their vehicle with artillery fire.<sup>2</sup> Finally there was the case of the political officer one Kapustin who died leading the men of his unit in a desperate attack to break out of an attempted encirclement of Finnish Schutzcorp troops.<sup>3</sup> Here again appeared the quality of stubborn courage and heroic efforts to continue the fight although the hero had been wounded three times.

What is significant about all these tales was the difficulties encountered by these heroes in their many battles against the "Whitebandits." A careful reading reveals that here were records of tanks destroyed, units surrounded, staff sections attacked by ski troopers and

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<sup>1</sup>L. Korobov, "Shofer Koida" (The Driver Koida), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 6 February 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>M. Larchenko, "Ekipasj Odinovo Tanka" (The Crew of One Tank), Pravda, 22 January 1940, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>G. Mokin and G. Ladisev, "Geroi Sovetskovo Souza, Politruk Kapustin" (Hero of the Soviet Union, Political Officer Kapustin), Krasnaya Zvezda, 14 February 1940, p. 3.

artillery batteries having to fight off Finnish ski patrols. The articles were singularly realistic and demonstrate the difficulties faced by the Red Army in this war; the clinging snow, the bitter cold, the impenetrable forests, the deep swamps, the icy, unbridged rivers, the harsh terrain and the always present threat of encirclement by the lightly-armed Finnish ski troopers. While the news value of these stories is self-evident, it can also be said that they presented a good picture of the combat conditions under which the Red Army operated in their early advance into Finland.

Towards the end of this period a curious article appeared simultaneously on the foreign news pages of virtually every Russian newspaper. Previously stories from foreign sources which had concerned Finland were obviously written to convince the Soviet population that the workers of the world were supporting the "Democratic Republic of Finland" in its efforts to "liberate" the Finnish people, and to condemn the "Whiteguard terror" which was preventing these same people from expressing their opposition to the "war-mongering policy of the bankrupt clique of Helsingfors."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For good examples see: "Dakskiei Rabochiei Protiv Pomoshchi Finskim Belogvardeitzam" (The Danish Workers Are Against Aid to the Finnish Whiteguards), Izvestiya, 17 January 1940, p. 4. "Rasskazie Finskih Besjenzev" (The Stories of Finnish Refugees, Pravda, 17 January 1940, p. 5; and "Dvisieniei v SShA Protiv Pomoshchi Beloginnam" (The Movement in the USA Against Help to the Whitefinns), Trud, 22 January 1940, p. 4.



This attitude had been relatively constant since the beginning of the Winter War.

On 10 February, however, there appeared on the foreign news pages something new in the line of articles from Communist groups outside the USSR. The article consisted of a letter sent to Finnish Foreign Minister Tanner by an old comrade, Mauri Ruem, who had evidently been a member of the Social-Democratic Party. In the letter the author berated Tanner for forgetting his old principles of the eternal battle against the bourgeois capitalists. Now, according to this "nonrevisionist" Marxist, Tanner himself had turned into a "capitalistic stooge." The author insisted that the "bourgeois" government was leading the Finnish workers into a bloody war against the Soviet Union which would result in the destruction of thousands of people who actually had no interest in such a slaughter. As a solution to this problem, this correspondent suggested that Tanner should "quickly leave the arena of history to cleanse the way for a more capable person," and thus help to heal the rift between the USSR and Finland.<sup>1</sup> It was this last point that made the article so important.

The Soviet press officials seemed to have permitted the release of this letter (which had actually been written before the outbreak of the war) as an effort towards

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<sup>1</sup>"Otkreitoie Pis'mo Tanneru Izvestnovo Finskovo Sotzial-Demokrata--Mauri Ruema" (An Open Letter to Tanner from a Famous Finnish Social-Democrat--Mauri Ruem), Pravda, p. 5.

conciliation. It opened the possibility of a negotiated peace provided the present leaders of the Finnish Government would resign and a new government selected which would be more acceptable to the Soviet Union. While it does not seem to be much, this concession loomed large after the almost iron-clad insistence of the Russian leaders that there was no legitimate government of Finland except the Kuusinen regime in Terioki. In short, the publication of this letter was the first public indication that the Kremlin might be willing to negotiate with the same "bankrupt clique of Helsingfors" which they had so long denounced as the "illegal colonial regime of the western imperialists."

These middle two months of the war reporting then emphasized the fact that in its own way the Soviet newspaper stories did respond to the conditions and events of the Winter War. As has been pointed out, the very fact that the press campaign against Finland was so abruptly reduced in mid-December showed that the Russian information chiefs were trying to becloud the earlier hopes of a swift victory over the "Whiteguard Finns." As has been noted, the Mannerheim-Ryti-Tanner Government was still described as an unpopular, reactionary regime supported only by the western imperialistic powers which wished to use Finland as a base to attack the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> While Moscow evidently still considered that

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<sup>1</sup>Alter Brody and others, War and Peace in Finland; a Documented Survey (New York: Soviet Russia Today, 1940), pp. 10-11.

the Finnish proletariat would rise and throw off their bourgeois rulers, the failure of such an uprising to materialize was explained by the actions of the "Whitefinn terror" which prevented any activity by the workers. In this way the virtual abandonment of hopes for a working class revolt within Finland was presented to the Russian people.

In connection with the suppression of Russian expectations for a leftist revolution among the "depressed laborers of Finland" came the gradual fading-away of references to that "great" organization the "Peoples' Republic of Finland." In spite of the fact that the "Democratic Republic" led by Otto Kuusinen was still mentioned as the "liberating vehicle of the Finnish people" in almost every article about the war, there can be little doubt that the Soviet leaders had lost a good deal of faith in its usefulness. As proof of this, it can be pointed out that the so-called "Finnish Peoples' Army" was almost never mentioned in any part of the Russian press after mid-December. Even a letter supposedly written by a Finnish deserter, one F. Koitamo, on 15 December made no reference to the "First Corps of the Peoples' Army" which had so prominently figured in the accounts of Finnish prisoners that had appeared the week before.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the "hero stories" of January and February contained no mention

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<sup>1</sup>P. Ogin and S. Sapigo, "Zapiski Finskovo Rezervista Koitamo" (The Letter of the Finnish Reservist Koitamo), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 2.



of this ephemeral body of troops. With its "action arm" virtually ignored by Soviet press masters, there could be little question that the "Peoples' Government of Finland" had been relegated to the position of an almost discredited puppet regime, even in the eyes of its Kremlin overlords.

In the reports of military action there was an immediate cessation of articles which pictured the Finnish armed forces as poorly armed and badly led. This move was undoubtedly dictated by the failure of the Red Army to overcome the "small remnant of Schutzcorps and Jaegers" left after the "great victories" of early December. Indeed the Russian press bent over backwards in order to present the conflict as a grim struggle against a well-armed and well-trained enemy who was fighting desperately in opposition to the "liberating forces of socialism." For instance, by 23 December Russian press bosses came to the interesting conclusion that anyone who had expected a "Blitzkrieg" by the Red Army in Finland must have acted from desire to discredit the Soviet Union and her fighting forces. From this point on the war was presented as a different struggle. Grim pictures of the problems in overcoming Finnish resistance became the mainstay of the descriptions of personal experiences in combat.

Finally the appearance of Mauri Ruem's letter illustrated another change in Soviet tactics. As has been shown, this particular article was a public hint that the Russian

Commissariat for Foreign Affairs was now prepared to begin tentative negotiations with the "bankrupted regime of Ryti-Tanner" in spite of their continued support of Kuusinen's "Peoples' Government." From this one can see that Soviet newspapers did, in their own way, respond to changes in the flow of events.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SOVIET TRIUMPH--A LIMITED VICTORY

(1 February 1940--12 March 1940)

The last forty days of the Winter War finally saw the triumph of Soviet arms. The Russian steam-roller at last began to move forward. On 1 February there began an all-out drive to crack the "Summa lines" which had kept the Red forces out of Viborg for more than two months. The weather aided the Soviets for the average temperature for the middle of January had remained at about -30 degrees F.<sup>1</sup> This long cold spell froze the lakes, swamps and rivers of Finnish Karelia and now allowed the Red Army to advance over a broad front which previously had only been a sink-hole for men and equipment.<sup>2</sup> As a prominent German reporter stated: "February, the month of the greatest cold was also the correct month for an offensive."<sup>3</sup>

The Soviets throughout January had reinforced their

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<sup>1</sup>Xylander, 3 May 1940, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup>Fredrick Ege, "Ein Finnischer Armeefuehrer ueber den Finnisch-Russischen Kriege; General Ohquist ueber die Erfahrungen und Lehren des Winterkrieges," Militaer Wochenblatt, 4 April 1940, p. 1660.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 219.



forces on the Karelian Isthmus. A new army, the 13th, was added to the force of the 7th Army under Marshal Timoshenko until there were approximately seven infantry divisions facing the western part of the Mannerheim Line with some fifteen divisions in reserve.<sup>1</sup> Far more ominous, however, was the fact that these troops were of better quality than the earlier Soviet units committed to the battle<sup>2</sup> and the cooperation between the various arms was far superior to what it had been in the previous two months of combat.<sup>3</sup> This was especially revealed in the preliminary offensives of early February with the formation of crack Soviet combat groups especially organized to reduce the larger iron-concrete fortifications of the Mannerheim Line.<sup>4</sup> Then, too, the Red Army began to use their newly-developed T-26 heavy tank in considerable numbers.<sup>5</sup> This tank was especially useful because it proved to be invulnerable to the lighter Finnish antitank weapons.<sup>6</sup> These vehicles plus the tremendous Soviet superiority in artillery, as a Finnish general reported: "Simply ate the (fortified) lines up in February."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ege, p. 1661.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>John Erickson, The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1942 (London: St. Martin's Press, 1962), p. 549.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 550.

<sup>5</sup>Andrononikov and Mostovenko, pp. 225-226.

<sup>6</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 225.

<sup>7</sup>Ege, p. 1662.

The preliminary attacks occupied the first eleven days of February 1940. The first major attempt at a breakthrough occurred on 6 February when three Soviet infantry divisions and one hundred tanks, in combination with an aerial attack by two hundred airplanes, began to probe for cracks in the Summa lines.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the 17th Soviet Division began to conduct the same type of operation near Punnusjarvi in the east.<sup>2</sup> In both cases lodgements were made in the Finnish defenses which could not be eliminated.<sup>3</sup> On 9 February the 49th and 150th Soviet Divisions attacked the Taipale area and made some penetrations which also could not be wiped out by Finnish counterattacks.<sup>4</sup> These successes set the stage for the next move of Marshal Timoshenko's combined armies which were to be directed against the western end of the Mannerheim Line.

On Sunday morning of 11 February the Red Army was poised with the 13th Army of five divisions at Antrea Junction, the 7th Army with nine divisions before Summa and Lahde plus two more divisions at Muula opposite Koivisto.<sup>5</sup> A usually reliable German reporter described the scene as

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<sup>1</sup>Joose Olavi Hannula, Finland Fights for Home, Faith and Country, 1939-1940 (Helsinki: Oy Suomen Kirja, 1940), pp. 78-79.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 223.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 354.

<sup>4</sup>Hannula, p. 81.

<sup>5</sup>Erickson, p. 549.

follows:

At 8:30 hours some three hundred and twenty cannons plus hundreds of mortars and light guns opened up on the whole front. . . . The tanks rolled forward with 100 meters between vehicles towing armored sleds containing 12 to 15 infantrymen. Other infantry followed in powered armored sleds.<sup>1</sup>

As one Finnish soldier remembered that day:

The attack was great and the artillery fire terrific. Over the front came the tanks spitting bullets and shells. The trees were blasted by the explosions, the automatic weapons rolled, the shrapnel whirred, the shells droned while the dull thud of the bombs resounded. Heaven and earth shivered. The infantrymen in close formation moved into the breach. Good god! What a battle.<sup>2</sup>

The first real break occurred east of Summa in the Lahde sector: "where the attack was more vigorous and better organized than any previous attack. . . . this time the onslaught was concentrated and all branches of arms worked together."<sup>3</sup> By the 14th the whole Lahde area was lost.<sup>4</sup> With the entire Mannerheim Line now broken and all the Finnish troops worn down by the constant fighting,<sup>5</sup> the Soviets began to push their way through to Viborg. A fortunate blizzard on 23 February allowed the Finns to withdraw

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 226.

<sup>2</sup>Viljo Saraja, Waffenbrueder, In der Originalausgabe, Preisgekroent als Beste Wirklichkeitsdarstellung aus dem Finnisch-Russischen Winterkriege 1939/40 (Leipzig: Paul List, 1942), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup>Hannula, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 355-356.

<sup>5</sup>Saraja, pp. 94-107.



most of their forces from various exposed positions<sup>1</sup> but at best this was only a temporary respite. During the last part of February and the first days of March, despite the desperate and effective attacks of Finnish airplanes and coastal artillery,<sup>2</sup> the reinforced left wing of the Soviet 7th Army managed to cross the ice of Viborg Gulf and effect a lodgement in the shore to the west of that city.<sup>3</sup> By this action they were able to cut the coastal supply road to Helsinki and threaten to surround all the men left on the Karelian Isthmus.<sup>4</sup> By 12 March Viborg itself was virtually surrounded by Soviet forces although as the Finns so proudly maintain: "the flag still flew over Viborg castle on 13 March 1940."<sup>5</sup>

However, the Reds had not been inactive on other fronts while concentrating their efforts on the Karelian Isthmus. Simultaneously with their attacks across Viborg Gulf (4-9 March) the Red Army had also driven over the ice of the Gulf of Finland from Hogland to the Kotka-Vederlake

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, p. 357.

<sup>2</sup>Erickson, p. 551.

<sup>3</sup>M. Mitrofanov, "V Snega Finlyandii" (In the Snows of Finland), Sergie Ivanovich Vashentsev (ed.), V Snega Finlyandii, Raskazii, Ochyerii, i Vespominaniya Oochastnikov (In the Snows of Finland. The Stories, Descriptions and Recollections of the Participants) (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Peoples' Literature, 1941), pp. 44-60.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 235-236.

<sup>5</sup>Ohquist, p. 29.

coastal sector. Although these attacks had little immediate success due to coastal artillery and air raids<sup>1</sup> on the exposed columns of Russian soldiers crossing the ice, yet they meant an even greater spread of the thin Finnish reserves and a more immediate threat to Helsinki than the imminent fall of Viborg.<sup>2</sup>

On other fronts the Red Army continued to be active throughout the last forty days of combat. On the Winter Road from Petsamo to Torino the Russians obtained reinforcement in the shape of tanks and two battalions of ski troopers and during February drove the Finns further south to the Kohiseva line north of Ivalo.<sup>3</sup> There were also limited moves in the Suomussalmi-Raati region which, however, came to nothing so far as any major advance was concerned.<sup>4</sup> In the Kuhmo area the Soviets utilized four freshly trained and organized ski battalions in order to break the 54th Soviet Division out of its "mottis" but with no success.<sup>5</sup> At the Kollaa barricade the Red Army leaders sent wave after wave of tanks, infantry and skiers to recover the trapped 168th

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<sup>1</sup>Eino Astera Luukkanen, Fighter over Finland; the Memoirs of a Fighter Pilot, trans. by Mauno A. Salo (London: Macdonald, 1963), pp. 69-70.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 362-363.

<sup>3</sup>Hannula, p. 98.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>5</sup>Firsoff, p. 132.

Soviet Division but again with virtually no gains.<sup>1</sup> Along the northeast shore of Lake Ladoga, however, a combined reinforcement of Red sailors, soldiers and marines was finally able to reduce the islands of Mantsi and Volamo which enabled the Soviet forces to move up the lake-shore road towards Sortavala.<sup>2</sup> Thus both Viborg and the eastern Karelian defenses were being squeezed between massive Soviet drives.

In the diplomatic area the Soviets could also congratulate themselves on an important success. In a public statement on 16 February the Swedish Prime Minister, Christian Hansson, announced that Sweden would remain strictly neutral in the Russo-Finnish Conflict and, more importantly, would not permit the transport of armed foreign military units across her territory.<sup>3</sup> This policy blocked any possibility of larger scale Allied troop reinforcements from reaching Finland. A glance at the map will show that the only practical routes of travel for any organized military units would have to be across Swedish territory at some point.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Palolampi, pp. 176-228.

<sup>2</sup>P. I. Zvonkov, V Boya Protiv Belofinnov na Baltikye, Voina, 1939-1940 (In Battle against the Whitefinns in the Baltic, War 1939-1940) (Moscow: State Publishing, 1941), p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 161.

<sup>4</sup>Tanner, "We Are Too Small," Current History (April 1940), p. 10; and "The Situation," The Nineteenth Century and After (March 1940), p. 265.



The reason for Sweden's attitude has engendered all sorts of speculation. The most common explanation was that the Germans had threatened to attack Sweden if she permitted any Allied troops to enter her territory.<sup>1</sup> However important this factor was (and the Germans denied that such an overt threat was ever made),<sup>2</sup> there was also more than a suspicion that Allied aid was likely to be too little and too late anyway.<sup>3</sup> To this was added the natural caution of the Swedes over the discrepancy in manpower between the whole of Scandinavia and the Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the reason, this Swedish attitude virtually ended all practical hopes of large-scale aid in the near future despite the promises of Allied representatives in Finland.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately for the Finns, delusory negotiations with Moscow had been going on since 6 February through the Soviet ambassadress in Stockholm, Madam Kollontai.<sup>6</sup> On 20 February the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, V. M.

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<sup>1</sup>Marquis W. Childs, "Sweden: Her Tragic Dilemma," Current History (April 1940), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Vol. VIII: The War Years, September 4, 1939--March 13, 1940 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 762.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 382.

<sup>4</sup>"Russia's Men of Fighting Age Outnumber Finland's 35 to 1," Science News Letter, XXXVI (April 1940), p. 406.

<sup>5</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 208.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-151.

Molotov, spoke to the Swedish Minister to Russia, Per Vilhelm Gustav Assarsen, about the need for peace in the north and for the first time specific terms were mentioned.<sup>1</sup> These terms included all that the Russians had asked for in the original negotiations of October-November 1939 plus the cession of all eastern Karelia.<sup>2</sup> Despite continued Finnish efforts to secure some commitment on Allied intervention<sup>3</sup> the military situation in March was, in the opinion of Marshal Mannerheim, too grave to take a chance on either an early thaw or the possibility of some sort of Franco-British expedition which might break the Russian blockade.<sup>4</sup> This opinion seems to have settled the problem and so negotiations began on 8 March 1940, were concluded on the 11th and the resultant treaty was ratified, despite considerable opposition, by the Finnish Government on the 12th.

The Treaty of Moscow called for the leasing of Hanko Cape and the islands for five kilometers around it as a naval base for the Soviet Union. The major islands in the Gulf of Finland were also ceded to Russia to protect the sea lanes to Leningrad. In eastern Karelia the line of "Peter the Great" was restored<sup>5</sup> with the area of Viborg, Sortavala and

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<sup>1</sup>Hannula, p. 128.

<sup>2</sup>Ohquist, p. 29.

<sup>3</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, p. 196.

<sup>4</sup>Mannerheim, p. 387.

<sup>5</sup>Hannula, p. 129.

Suojarvi passing into Soviet hands. Likewise the area of Salla in north-central Finland and the Ribachi (Fischer) Peninsula east of Petsamo also were retained by the Russians. In return Petsamo was given back to Finland although the rights of transit for Soviet citizens to Norway were reaffirmed. Another important item was the necessity of the Finns to cooperate with the Russians in building a railroad across Finland between Kandalaska and Kemijarvi to facilitate trade between the Soviet Union and Sweden. Probably the most important item for future relations between the two combatants was the pledge that neither would make any alliances or enter into any coalition which might be judged to be directed against the other.<sup>1</sup>

It would seem that the Finns and their western supporters were stunned by the Peace of Moscow although the negotiations had been reported for some time.<sup>2</sup> It was apparent that the "harsh demands" of the Russians, especially as regards the land cession in Karelia, was the item which caused the most consternation.<sup>3</sup> For the most part many Finns seemed to have considered that: "even if Viipuri (Viborg)

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<sup>1</sup>"Mirnie Dogovor Mesjdu Souzom Sovetskih Sotzialisticheskikh Respubliki i Finlyandskoi Respublikoi" (The Peace Treaty Between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Finnish Republic), Pravda, 13 March 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Harold Callender, "Sweden Mediating in Finnish War; With Reds Asking All of Karelia; Finns Weigh Truce," New York Times, 7 March 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Luukkanen, p. 74; and Palolampi, pp. 231-232.



fell . . . the reds would still be only 50 miles from the Russian border. They are still a long way from Helsinki . . . In April the ice would break and the spring thaws would incapacitate the motorized units (of the Red Army)."<sup>1</sup> There was also a general feeling that the Russians had obtained much more territory than they had been able to conquer with their vaunted "invincible" Red Army.<sup>2</sup> All this was further heightened by the difficulties attendant upon the mass migration of almost the total Finnish population from the ceded areas.<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, there was some feeling of relief among the Finns.<sup>4</sup> It was said: "Finland is (now) like a man with his toes cut off, he doesn't get around as well as he did before, but he still gets around."<sup>5</sup> Another observer pointed out: "still the peace terms did not seem to be those that would be imposed upon a small, defeated country by an overwhelmingly strong conqueror; these terms were too lenient."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, even in defeat there was some pride in

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<sup>1</sup>Strode, p. 413.

<sup>2</sup>Joseph I. Malloy, "Russo-Finnish War Ends," Catholic World (April 1940), p. 110; and Tanner, The Winter War, p. 251.

<sup>3</sup>Palolampi, pp. 242-243.

<sup>4</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, pp. 251-252; and Hannula, p. 142.

<sup>5</sup>"Soviet Victory Boon to Reich," Business Week (23 March 1940), p. 54.

<sup>6</sup>Winston, p. 113.

the long and difficult defense against overwhelming odds.

There was also some gain, according to one Finnish observer:

The pessimism in regard to defense (against the USSR), which had been apparent in many Finnish quarters before the war, the conception that it was hopeless to attempt resistance, had vanished and been replaced by the conviction that Finland can be defended if sufficient sacrifices are made in time on preparations for defense.<sup>1</sup>

Another encouraging note was the Soviet abandonment of the "Democratic Republic of Finland" as the only legitimate government of the nation. The fate of this first Soviet effort at establishing a popular puppet government was as follows:

Kuusinen (or any of his ministers) was not consulted during the Russo-Finnish peace conference nor invited to it. After the peace was concluded he was appointed editor of a small provincial newspaper. Four weeks later, on July 10, he was elected president of the new Karelo-Finnish Republic.<sup>2</sup>

Thus ended the government which had been described by the Soviets as the "unanimous choice of the working people of Finland."<sup>3</sup>

As to the results of the war in relation to the Soviet Union this is an even more complicated problem. In the face of the Red Army's military difficulties there was certainly a loss of some prestige,<sup>4</sup> especially on the part of their

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<sup>1</sup>Hannula, p. 144.

<sup>2</sup>Dallin, p. 194.

<sup>3</sup>"Privetstvie Narodnomu Pravitel'stva Finlyandii."

<sup>4</sup>Albert Parry, The Russian Cavalcade: A Military Record (New York: Washburn, 1944), p. 199.

German friends.<sup>1</sup> However, there is some evidence that the German Army already had a low opinion of the Red Army's capabilities and these were merely confirmed by the events of December 1939--January 1940.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, from both Finnish and western sources came reports that the Russian soldier was not nearly as poor as some of his detractors might imply.<sup>3</sup> For the most these sources blamed their apparent inferiority upon poor leadership, especially in units above the battalion level.<sup>4</sup> Almost all the critics of the Russian performance noted that the Soviet forces in the latter part of the war were far better trained, equipped and led than during the first two months.<sup>5</sup> As one of them said: "So much had the Russians learned during the conflict that we seemed (in February) to be fighting an entirely different enemy."<sup>6</sup> Thus, perhaps, it was true that the early defeats in Finland did at least provide a foundation on which the Red Army could strengthen its higher leadership, tactics and equipment and bring its faults into focus.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Laserson, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup>Erickson, p. 548.

<sup>3</sup>Langdon-Davis, p. 28; and Eliot, "Red Steam-Roller?" p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Citrine, p. 130; and "War on Land," Army, Navy Journal (9 March 1940), p. 639.

<sup>5</sup>Vallotton, p. 22; and Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 220.

<sup>6</sup>Luukkanen, p. 62.

<sup>7</sup>Erickson, p. 557; and O'Ballance, p. 155.



The tone of the Russian newspaper articles during February and March 1940 reflected the growing assurance that victory over the "Whitefinns" was just a matter of time. For the most part the few stories concerning the war which appeared during this period lost their semi hysterical ranting about the "leaders of the bankrupt Helsingfors regime" and began instead to laud the accomplishments of the Red Army in cracking the "great Mannerheim fortifications." The "news from foreign sources" also began to praise the success of Russian arms but still continued their old program of damning the "Whitefinns," emitting threats against those western nations who were "aiding the bloody Mannerheim clique," and applauding the "Democratic Republic of Finland."<sup>1</sup>

The Russian newspapers of 18 February carried two stories which concerned the diplomatic situation between Finland and Sweden. The Finns had been trying to persuade the Swedes either to support Finland with armed forces or to allow foreign "volunteer expeditions" to cross Sweden on their way to the fighting fronts. The first article in the Soviet press was Swedish Premier Hanssen's answer to the Finnish proposal. The gist of this announcement, which was released

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<sup>1</sup>"Kto Pomogaet Mannergeimu?" (Who Helps Mannerheim?), Pravda, 16 February 1940, p. 5; "Inostrannaya Pechat o Polosjenii v Belo-Finlyandii" (The Foreign Press about the Situation in White-Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, 21 February 1940, p. 4; "Norvesjskii Sjurnalist o Deistvijah Krasnoi Armii" (A Norwegian Journalist about the Activities of the Red Army), Trud, 23 February 1940, p. 2; "Trudyashchieisya Anglii Poddersjivaut Politiku Sovetskovo Souza" (The Workers of England Support the Policy of the Soviet Union), Izvestiya, 28 February 1940, p. 2.

on 16 February, was that the Swedish Government would under no circumstances join the war against the Soviet Union or allow the transport of foreign armed forces across Swedish territory.<sup>1</sup>

In the other article published on this day the above statement was carefully analysed. An editorial in Trud pointed out that the important part of the Stockholm policy statement was the refusal of the Swedes to permit the passage of western troops through Sweden. This, so the article reasoned, would certainly limit any military aid to the "Whitefinns" from the "imperialists." This Soviet analysis correctly observed that the neutrality policy of the Swedes was a notable diplomatic victory for the Soviet Union since the Finns now had almost no hope of direct military intervention from the Allied Powers.<sup>2</sup>

On the 19th and 20th of this month two articles from TASS appeared in the Soviet press. These warned the Russian people that the warmongers of both Sweden and Norway were trying to force a change in the neutralist policies of their nations and force them into the camp of the imperialist

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<sup>1</sup>"Zayavleniei Shvedskovo Prem'era" (A Statement of the Swedish Premier), Izvestiya, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>"Otkaz Shvetzii v Okazanii Voennoi Pomoshchi Belofinnam" (The Refusal of Sweden to Give War Aid to the Whitefinns), Trud, p. 2.

powers.<sup>1</sup> While these articles may have been printed to inform the Soviet people about the drift of international affairs, it was far more likely that they were published as a warning to the Scandinavian nations not to abandon their policy of neutrality in the face of possible Soviet retaliation. Here was indicated again that the Kremlin still feared, as it had in the past, the possibility of intervention by France and England.

By 23 February the Red Army was evidently confident enough of final victory to release a satirical article concerning the extent of Finnish "victories" as reported by the "Correspondents of the Associated and United Press." With well-written overstatements and exaggerations, this account attempted to demolish the tales of Finnish military superiority which apparently had seeped even into Russia itself. Although the military methods of the Finns were exaggerated for satirical purposes, some of the descriptions such as encirclement, snipers, freezing, mine laying and "scorched earth" were all too well known to the men of the Red Army who had been fighting in the frigid wastes of eastern Finland. The fact that such effective fighting methods could be laughed at by a story in the Red Army's own

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<sup>1</sup>"Nasjim Podsjigatelei Voinie na Shvetziu" (The Pressure of the Warmongers in Sweden), and "Provokatzionnaya Deyatel'nost Podsjigatelei Voinie v Norvegii" (The Provoking Activities of the Warmongers in Norway), Pravda, 19 February 1940, p. 5.



newspaper was a demonstration of the confidence felt by the Kremlin leaders in the ultimate victory of Soviet arms. Indeed, it was an admission as well that the Finns had been a tough and resourceful antagonist.<sup>1</sup>

Russian leaders were painfully aware of this--as aware too that the future might bring further difficulties for the Soviets from the so-called "western imperialists" or even from some other source. Thus the Russian press at the virtual end of the "Finnish difficulty" pointed to potential aggressors or invaders of the "holy state of socialism." Witness, for example, a lengthy article in Komsomolskaya Pravda which appeared on 24 February. Here is found the antisoviet intentions of the western Allies (England and France) unfolding before the eyes of the young citizens of the USSR. As a point of interest, however, during this philippic against the "imperialist west" it was pointed out that the Russian people and their government "are ready to join in an alliance with any fellow-traveler if he is ready to go in our direction; and we are ready to separate from any partner if he pulls us to the side of the road."<sup>2</sup> It may well be that the author intended this explanation as a justification for the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact (there was evidence of confusion

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<sup>1</sup>"Pobeda Putem Otstupleniya" (Victory through Retreat), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>A. Galin, "Mesjdunarodnie Karakter Finlyandskih Sobietii" (The International Character of the Finnish Difficulties), Komsomolskaya Pravda, pp. 3-4.

among the Russian people at this sudden reversal of policy in August 1939);<sup>1</sup> but it could have also been taken as an indication that the alliance with Germany would last only so long as the Soviet leaders felt it to be in their best interests. Then, too, the "article as a whole appeared to have been written primarily for internal consumption in an endeavor to persuade the Soviet people that the Red Army was not fighting Finland alone but rather the united forces of world reaction."<sup>2</sup>

Another important point in this particular article was the elaboration of the reasons behind the antisoviet actions of the Allied Powers. With some truth, the author explained that the "capitalistic exploiters" feared the possible revolutionary conditions which would follow the end of the European war. If the Soviet Union were untouched by the conflict, so the story ran, there was a good chance that revolutionary Communism would spread throughout the war-torn continent. Therefore it was imperative, in the eyes of the Allies, that Communist Russia must be involved in the holocaust or European civilization might go down in the inevitable post-war revolutions.<sup>3</sup> This observation was not too far out of line. Certainly this fear of a general proletarian

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<sup>1</sup>Sontag and Beddie, pp. 88-89.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence A. Steinhardt, State Department Telegram #210, 24 February 1940.

<sup>3</sup>Galin, loc. cit.

revolution, supported by a strong USSR, did haunt the dreams of some western leaders.<sup>1</sup>

For the most part Soviet news stories in this last period of the war did not compare in length or intensity with those during the first part of the conflict. Many items "from foreign sources" congratulated the Red Army on its "glorious accomplishments in breaking the Mannerheim fortifications."<sup>2</sup> Other articles from the same sources, which were largely made up of resolutions from various workers' meetings, revealed that large numbers of foreign proletarians were against aid to "Mannerheim Finland."<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the press coverage of the events of the Winter War

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<sup>1</sup>Jakobsen, p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>See: "Germanskaya Pechat Ob Uspehah Krasnoi Armii" (The German Press about the Successes of the Red Army), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 6 March 1940, p. 4; "Inostrannaya Pechat Ob Uspehah Krasnoi Armii Na Karel'skom Peresheike" (The Foreign Press about the Successes of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus), Trud, 1 March 1940, p. 2; "Bolgarskaya Pechat Ob Uspehah Krasnoi Armii v Finlyandii" (The Bulgarian Press about the Successes of the Red Army in Finland), Izvestiya, 5 March 1940, p. 2; and "Eliot o Porasjenii Belofinnov Na Karel'skom Perosheike" (Eliot about the Position of the Whitefinns on the Karelian Isthmus), Krasnaya Zvezda, 5 March 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>"Amerikanskii Narod Protiv Pomoshchi Belo-Finlyandii" (The American Peoples Are Against Help to White-Finland), Pravda, 1 March 1940, p. 5; "Trudyashchieisya Anglii Protiv Pomoshchi Belofinnom" (English Workers Are Against Help to the Whitefinns), Izvestiya, 8 March 1940, p. 4; "Norvesjskie Rabochie Protiv Voilie" (Norwegian Workers Are Against War), Krasnaya Zvezda, 9 March 1940, p. 4; and "Rabochaya Pechat Skandinavii Razoblachaet Podsjigateliei Voinie" (The Scandinavian Labor Press Unmasks the Provokers of War), Trud, 5 March 1940, p. 2.



during these last days was extremely light. One would never guess from the Soviet news releases that there was any serious fighting taking place on the vulnerable northwest border of the nation.

There is yet one more series of articles to be examined before this period of the Winter War is left behind. These were the "Operations Reports of the Leningrad Military District" which frequently were the only items concerning the military situation that appeared on the front pages of the Russian press during the final month of the war. As has been mentioned, these official communiques began to record the Red Army's advance through the Mannerheim Line in early February. The reason why some of these "Operations Reports" should be examined here is the fact that some western writers have called their accuracy into serious question.

It must be admitted that these communiques did exaggerate the numbers and strength of fortifications taken, the numbers of Finnish airplanes destroyed and, in a few instances, even the amount of material seized and prisoners captured. On the other hand, when Soviet military authorities claimed the occupation of towns and villages by name, a careful check of available sources reveals that these reports were almost always accurate. A factor that might tend to throw doubt on this observation was the refusal of the Red Army (possibly for perfectly good military reasons) to admit that they had been forced to retreat from some of their advance positions.

A good example of the accusation of inaccuracy leveled at the "Operations Reports" is found in the best contemporary English-language description of the Winter War, John Langdon-Davis' book Finland, the First Total War. In this work the author specifically challenged the validity of the Russian military communiques on two occasions. The first of these was the charge that "the Russians announced the capture by storm of Koivisto many days before the Finns made their strategic retreat from the island."<sup>1</sup> The most accurate Finnish record, found in the memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim, stated that the withdrawal from the island-fortress took place during a heavy blizzard on the early morning of 23 February.<sup>2</sup> Utilizing this statement as a basis, the two "Operations Reports" which contain reference to Koivisto should be re-examined.

The "Operations Report of 19 February announced: "We took the city and fort of Koivisto (Bjorki) and swept the enemy from the peninsula." This may well have been the "false report" referred to by Langdon-Davis. If a map of the area in question is examined, however, it can be noted that there was a town of Koivisto located on a peninsula across the channel from the island-fortress of the same name. The Soviet communique obviously referred to this area and not to the island opposite it. If any further proof

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<sup>1</sup>Langdon-Davis, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, pp. 356-357.

was needed that the Red Army had not claimed the fall of the great island-fort, this was supplied by the "Operations Report" of 23 February which stated that "on this day our units in battle took the great ferro-concrete position on the island of Koivisto (Bjorki)."<sup>1</sup>

The "capture in battle" announcement agrees completely with the facts as presented by Marshal Mannerheim concerning the complete evacuation of Koivisto on the 23rd. No doubt the Soviet forces immediately occupied the empty positions. While the inference in the Russian report that the place was captured by storm may be criticised, there can be no doubt that in the matter of the time of occupation of the great island-fort the Red Army's communique was entirely accurate.<sup>2</sup>

The second of Langdon-Davis' indictments of the Red Army's battle reports concerned the occupation of Viborg (Viipuri). He implied that the Russian headquarters claimed the capture of the port city many times but, in actual fact, the Finns retained possession of the center of Viborg until the end of the war.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The "Operations Report" appeared daily in a small block on the front pages of Russian newspapers throughout the war. The communiqués were always dated for the day before and covered all reports of combat in Finland.

<sup>2</sup>As a matter of fact it may well have been a bad translation that led Mr. John Langdon-Davis into this mistake. The Russian word for peninsula is pol'ostrov (literally half-island) so that a slipshod translation of the "Operations Report" for the 19th may have left the impression that the Soviets were claiming the capture of the island rather than the city and peninsula opposite it.

<sup>3</sup>Langdon-Davis, loc. cit.



A careful reading of every "Operations Report" from 28 February (when Viborg is first mentioned) to the end of hostilities reveals that the Leningrad Military District never proclaimed the fall of the city. Suburban areas were reported occupied and Viborg itself was almost completely surrounded but not once was there an announcement of the total surrender of the entire urban area. Here again one can only conclude that the Russian communiques were either misunderstood or poorly translated for the western journalists in Helsinki.

On 13 March 1940 the front page of Pravda, the only newspaper published on that day, was suddenly filled with articles about the situation in Finland. This extensive coverage was, of course, occasioned by the announcement of the Treaty of Moscow which ended the Winter War. The principal story contained the terms of the peace treaty. Other stories which appeared the next day throughout the Soviet press hailed the treaty as the final solution to the problem of the defense of Leningrad and a "great document which would insure the peace of the Baltic area."<sup>1</sup>

The text of the Treaty of Moscow contained all the old demands of the Soviet Government. The Russians received almost all of Finnish Karelia which solved the problem of the defense of Leningrad from land attack. In central Finland

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<sup>1</sup>"Mir Mesjdu SSSR i Finlyandiei" (Peace between the USSR and Finland), Krasnaya Zvezda, 14 March 1940, p. 1.

almost all of the Maan mountains passed into Soviet hands. The northern port of Petsamo was returned to the Finns but the Ribachi (Fischer) Peninsula was "returned" to the USSR. Hanko Cape with its surrounding islands was "temporarily" leased to the Soviet Union as a naval base. When these territories were occupied by Red forces it became obvious that almost all the geographic and man-made defenses of Finland were in the hands of the Kremlin.

The desire of the Soviet leaders to prevent the possible use of Finland as a "base for attack upon the nation of socialism" could be further verified by a study of paragraphs 6 and 7 of the Treaty of Moscow. Paragraph 6 provided that the Soviet Union would have free access rights across Petsamo province to Norway. Even more dangerous was the right given to the Russians in paragraph 7 to build and maintain a railroad across central Finland from Kandalaksha to Kemijarvi. While both these provisions can be explained by a desire for better commercial relations between the Soviet Union and the Scandinavian countries, these rights-of-ways, combined with the loss of the Maan mountains, would open all of central Finland to any new invasion by the Red Army.

The intentions of the Russian victors were further indicated by paragraph 3 which prohibited either party from joining any "coalition of nations which might be judged

detrimental to the other."<sup>1</sup> This, in effect, allowed the Soviet Government to have a virtual veto over any attempt by Finland to ally herself with any other nation, a right which the Kremlin leaders were not slow to exercise.<sup>2</sup> Prohibited from forming defensive alliances and with their only natural defenses in the hands of the Red forces, the Finns found themselves well within the Russian sphere of influence and, as subsequent events were to show, very much under the thumb of the Soviet leaders.<sup>3</sup>

The "meetings reports" which on 14 March occupied a major part of Soviet newspaper space, were properly enthusiastic about this "victory for the wise Stalin policy of peace." In at least one story the author enumerated all the economic riches of the Viborg district which had now been "returned" to "mother Russia."<sup>4</sup> Other articles congratulated the Soviet military forces on their victory. After all, they pointed out, the Red Army "for the first time in history conquered a ferro-concrete defense under harsh natural

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<sup>1</sup>"Mirnie Dogovor Mesjdu Souzom Sovetskih Sotzialisticheskikh Respublik i Finlyandskoi Respublikoi" (The Peace Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Finnish Republic), Trud, 14 March 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Tanner, The Winter War, pp. 260-261.

<sup>3</sup>David Hinshaw, Heroic Finland (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1952), pp. 202-206.

<sup>4</sup>L. Ziman, "Vieborg" (Viborg), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 4.



conditions."<sup>1</sup> "In a rapid campaign," another story eulogized, "it swept from its path all obstacles and destroyed enemy defenses comparable to those before which the armies of England and France have been halted for six months."<sup>2</sup>

In all this welter of self-congratulation there remained a note of caution. In spite of the "great victory" over the Finnish "menace," the Soviet people "intend still more to continue military and political preparations" so that "at any moment we will be ready with Voroshilov's volleys to destroy any enemy who might dare to disturb the quiet of the Soviet peoples."<sup>3</sup> This feeling of continued danger was probably best summarized by a foreman of the Kositskovo plant, one comrade Vaselov:

Political peace is now completed in a peace treaty with Finland that forms the remaining guarantee against the attacks of any power on our northwest borders. However, we should not for a moment forget about capitalistic encroachments. The international situation is very complicated. At any moment we must be prepared to oppose and repulse any enemy war threat, from wherever it may come.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Demonstratziya Nesokrushimoi Silie Sovetskovo Zouza" (A Demonstration of the Firm Force of the Soviet Union), Trud, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>"Viesokoe Dostoinstvo Sovetskoi Stranie" (The High Merit of the Soviet Nation), Pravda, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>"S Voodushevleniem Prohodyat Mitingi i Sobraniya" (With Enthusiasm Are Held Meetings and Rallies), Krasnaya Zvezda, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>"Bezopasnost Goroda Lenina Obespechena" (The Safety of Lenin's City is Guaranteed), Izvestiya, p. 3.

This fear of "attack" may well have been in response to possible Allied invasion of the Baku oil fields<sup>1</sup> but it was much more likely that the Kremlin leaders had their eyes on the open plains to the west. Certainly, Nazi Germany was in a much better position to "encroach" upon the borders of the "state of socialism" after the Winter War than were the western powers.

By the end of March the peace treaty with Finland had become "back-page news" in the Russian press. However, the Russian Government obviously felt that this late war had to be explained and justified for posterity. On 29 March V. M. Molotov, in a speech before the Supreme Soviet, finally brought the event into proper Communist perspective.

To begin with, according to the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the Red Army had achieved a great victory over a determined enemy, bad weather and many natural and man-made obstacles. While the Soviet Union had lost some soldiers, the Finns had lost even more and in the end the Kremlin was able to acquire the needed land and bases to make the northwest frontier secure. Actually, there would have been no trouble had not the Finnish leaders been encouraged to threaten Leningrad by their masters, the capitalistic bosses of the western nations. In Molotov's view the ratification of the peace treaty brought all trouble

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<sup>1</sup>Hooper, Through Soviet Russia and the Finnish Campaign, 1940, p. 99.

to an end. The Helsinki War Government of Ryti-Tanner had resigned and the Peoples' Democratic Republic in Terioki, having no further purpose, had also quietly dissolved itself. Thus an era of peace and good relations between Helsinki and Moscow, based upon the "wise Stalin peace policy" had replaced the atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue that for so long prevailed in the Baltic.<sup>1</sup>

With this speech all questions about the Winter War were settled as far as the Communist world was concerned. Russian arms had won a glorious victory and the "wretched Whitefinns" had been taught a bitter lesson. Despite the newspaper efforts of early December, the Kuusinen "Peoples' Government" was casually tossed aside when its founders had no further use of it.

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<sup>1</sup>V. M. Molotov, "Doklad o Vneshnei Politike Pravitel'stva," Krasnaya Zvezda, 30 March 1940, pp. 1-2. In English translation, see: V. M. Molotov, Soviet Foreign Policy: The Meaning of the War in Finland (New York: Workers' Library Publishers, 1940).



# MAP V FINLAND AFTER THE PEACE OF MOSCOW

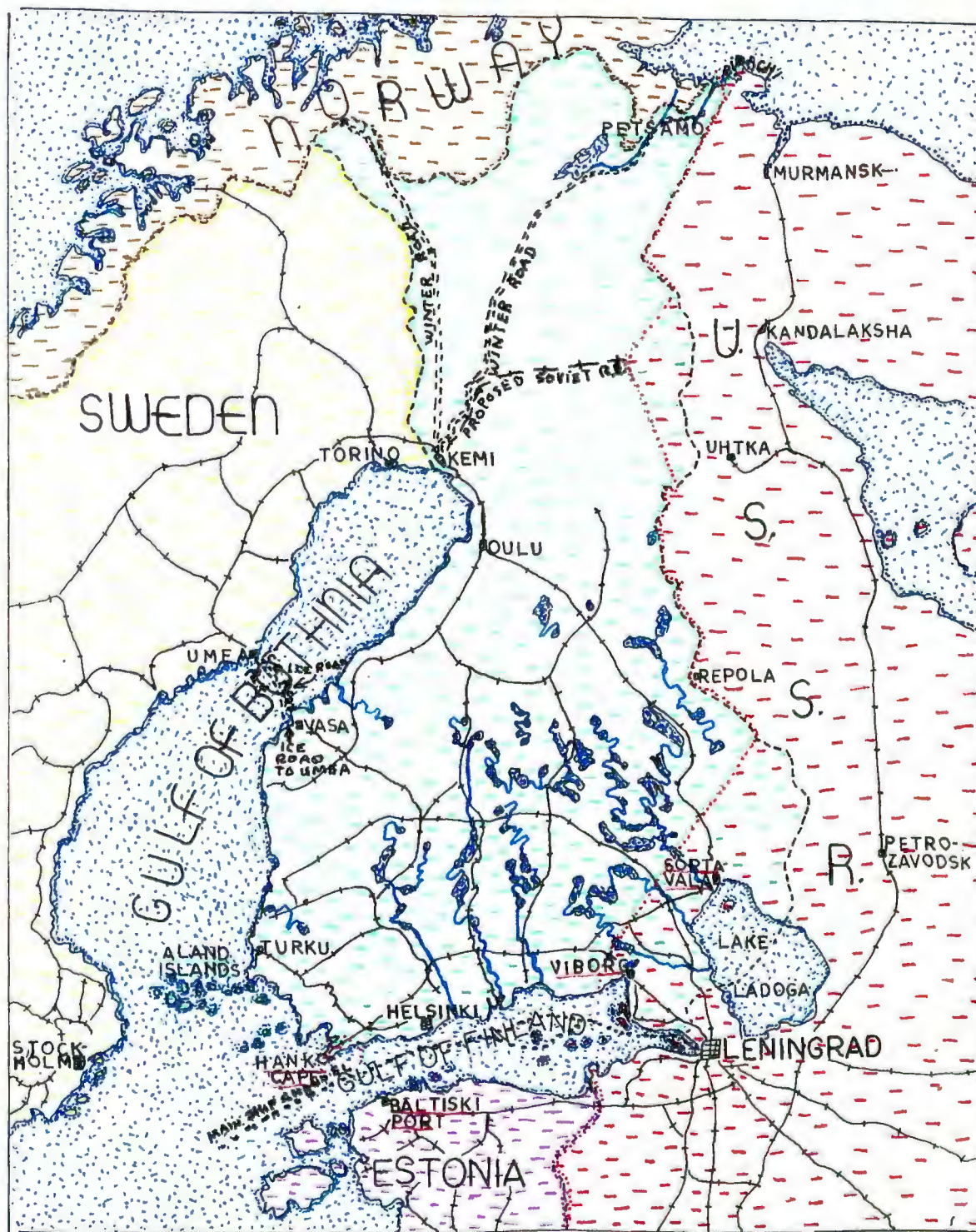
This map shows the changes in land area which followed the ratification of the Treaty of Moscow by Finland and the Soviet Union on 13 March 1940. From the map it can be seen that the Finns lost land in five principal areas; the Ribachi Peninsula above Petsamo Fjord, the eastern Saala district (opposite Kandalaska), eastern Karelia including the town of Sortavala and Viborg, the islands in the Gulf of Finland, and Hanko Peninsula in extreme southwestern Finland.

One of the important points to note about this peace settlement as revealed by the map was the manner in which the Soviet Union now controlled access to Finland by sea. Russian artillery and naval forces on the Ribachi Peninsula completely dominated the entrance to Petsamo Fjord. In central and northern Finland the Soviets could utilize their new railroad from Kandalasha to Kemi (had they completed it in time), as an all-weather supply route for their forces in an area where travel is limited to "winter roads." With this enormous advantage the Red Army could have driven across Finland, seized Kemi, and blocked any land transportation between Finland and Norway or Sweden.

The Soviet position in eastern Karelia, of course, gave them an excellent position from which to threaten southern Finland, while the Gulf islands enabled the Red Fleet to maneuver along the length of the north coast of the Gulf. The leasing of Hanko Cape as a naval base enabled the Soviet naval forces to block the mouth of the Gulf and, in conjunction with bases in the Baltic States, dominate the upper Baltic. If help came to Finland from the west, by land or by sea, the Soviets were, as can be observed, in an excellent position to prevent it.

## SYMBOLS:

=====	Winter or ice roads
.....	Ship channel
-----	Political boundaries
<u>HANKO</u>	Important positions or towns
-----	Territory of the Republic of Finland
-----	Territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
-----	Territory obtained by the USSR from Finland
-----	Territory of the Kingdom of Norway
-----	Territory of the Kingdom of Sweden
-----	Territory of the Republic of Estonia



FINLAND, 1939

SOVIET FORCES: —  
FINNISH FORCES: —

2 40 120 140 300

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE RED ARMY IN THE RUSSIAN RECORDS OF THE WINTER WAR

The vast majority of Soviet accounts of individual experiences during the Russo-Finnish War dealt with the advance on the Karelian Isthmus. Since the purpose of this chapter is to examine the changes which took place in the Red Army as reflected in these personal memoirs and stories, perforce our sources will limit us largely to the attacks which led eventually to the breaking of the Mannerheim Line.

The Soviet forces which were poised along the Finnish frontier on the Karelian Isthmus on 30 November comprised the 7th Army under Klementi Sjakovlev. This consisted of twelve infantry divisions, three tank brigades and a motorized corps, all organized into two combat corps. The Fifteenth Corps of five infantry divisions and two tank brigades was to strike along the western roads through Summa and envelop Viborg. The Nineteenth Corps of three infantry divisions and the Xth motorized corps was to move on the eastern roads to put pressure on the Vuoksi Water System, especially Taipale to spread the Finnish defenders out and



thus insure the success of the western wing of the 7th Army.<sup>1</sup>

An examination of a map of the Karelian Isthmus reveals that there are only three main transportation routes through the area. Of course the coastal highway and railroad through the town of Koivisto might be considered a fourth route but until the waters of the Gulf of Finland freeze solidly, the positions there could be so isolated from the main lines of advance as to make them virtually worthless. Thus it can be safely said that the Soviet advance during the early stages of the war on the Karelian Isthmus as it moved forward spread out like the fingers on a hand in search of a soft spot in the Finnish defenses.

The Soviet forces marched along their approach routes against minimal opposition and by the second week in December had come up against the so-called Mannerheim Line. Repeated attacks on this line, as we have seen, failed to dent it and so by the end of December the Red Army's offensive had ground to a halt before the system of earth-wood and iron-concrete fire positions which comprised the principal defenses on the Karelian Isthmus.

As a reader peruses the Soviet material about the early phase of the war, he is struck by the generally easygoing attitude of the officers and men both in their preparations for the attack and in their initial movements after crossing the Finnish border. For instance, one of the

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfalls, p. 65.

most heroic battalion commanders, Captain Nikolai Stepanovich Ugrumov, began his attack upon a Finnish position near the frontier without knowing anything about the terrain over which his unit had to move. He won a bridgehead over the Sestru River (which marked the Soviet-Finnish border in the western sector of the Karelian Isthmus) and pursued the enemy for eight kilometers without regard for his open flanks. As a result his scouts soon discovered that "the battalion was surrounded by a strong enemy force."<sup>1</sup> The heroic action of the story consisted of a number of men making their perilous way back through the encircling Finns to regimental headquarters for help. (Incidentally, another article about Captain Ugrumov contained a remark which must have galled the Soviet veterans of the Finnish war. It stated: "The Whitefinns feel safe only in concrete pillboxes. In an open fight they could not bear the rough, strong attacks of the Red soldiers.")<sup>2</sup>

In order to study further the initial period of the Kremlin attack on the Karelian Isthmus, it is useful to follow the actions of the "heroic" Captain Ugrumov because his unit was one of the few which can be definitely located in both time and position from internal evidence. It would seem that this "able" battalion commander led one of the

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<sup>1</sup>A. Molchanov and G. Mishulovin, "Komandir Geroicheskogo Batal'ona" (The Commander of a Heroic Battalion), Izvestiya, 27 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Vl. Stavskii, "Kapitan Ugrumov" (Captain Ugrumov), Krasnaya Zvezda, 26 January 1940, p. 3.

initial attack groups which crossed the Finnish border in the vicinity of the Sestru River mouth. His mission, according to these accounts, was to drive along the shore road and, if possible, to seize the resort town of Terioki. Since the objective was only some twenty kilometers away from the jumpoff position and could be approached by both a highway and a railroad line, this does not seem to have been beyond the capabilities of a crack infantry battalion, reinforced by a platoon of tanks.<sup>1</sup>

The Finns possessed, according to Soviet reconnaissance, a bicycle company, a cavalry squadron and some armored cars in this area. A reinforced battalion should have had little difficulty forcing its way through an enemy force rated, at best, as about two companies of special service troops. For this reason the Russian soldiers were feeling relatively confident as they set out on that wet cold (but for that latitude, relatively warm) morning of the 30 November 1939, especially since they had just witnessed the tremendous opening artillery barrage which prepared the way.<sup>2</sup>

From the very beginning, as we have seen, there seemed to be several difficulties. The author tells it this way:

Suddenly, from under the pines and birches,  
from the hills cracked shots. The Fourth Company

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<sup>1</sup>Vl. Stavskii, "Geroi Sovetskovo Souza, N. Ugrumov" (Hero of the Soviet Union, N. Ugrumov), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 57.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.



dropped down. The commander, Lieutenant Muhamedayanov, looked at the battalion commander with a question, Captain Ugrumov spoke:

"The troops will rise. Return to the task, move to the right, reconnoiter, find the enemy."<sup>1</sup>

As a matter of fact the Russians recovered well. One section immediately moved into the forest and apparently drove the Finns away. On the other hand, it is a little strange that this unit, composed of the crack troops of the Leningrad Military District, had had so little experience that they must turn to the battalion commander for orders in a situation which any well-trained company commander should have been able to handle with a minimum of trouble.

It is also interesting to note Captain Ugrumov's conclusions drawn from his first contact with the Finns: "The enemy is operating in small groups. He wants us to become tired. Well, I am stronger than he, and so I shall not tire!"<sup>2</sup> If true this was not too bad an interpretation of the situation on the road to Terioki.

Just how "elusive and treacherous" an enemy they were facing was soon discovered by the battalion before many minutes had passed. The story continues:

In the frontier settlement of Luptahartiya Privates Churimov and Aitvinenko, upon being fired on from a trench, sprang at it from both sides. However, the Whitefinn sniper was able to escape. . . The privates saw in the trench a smart officer's coat and a leather pouch for documents. They jumped into the trench.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

At once there was a great roar from treacherous Whitefinn wires.

Captain Ugrumov . . . called on the telephone to . . . watch out for mines underfoot.<sup>1</sup>

Despite all these problems, the battalion apparently moved well, if somewhat cautiously, along the shore road towards Terioki. Then news arrived that the bridge across the Sestru River had collapsed and reinforcements would be delayed. Instead of remaining where he was, Captain Ugrumov elected to continue his advance. He further decided to accompany a cavalry patrol in an effort to locate the principal Finnish defense positions. This patrol, however, quickly ran into an ambush which killed the cavalry commander and almost despatched Captain Ugrumov as well.<sup>2</sup>

This whole incident was indicative of the apparent Russian lack of concern for elemental security during the first few hours of the war in Finland. If Captain Ugrumov had possessed a reliable staff organization, he would not have had to accompany the cavalry patrol. Likewise, even elementary tactical lessons should have taught him that a cavalry patrol, by the very nature of its operation in wooded country, was liable to ambush. Added to this, the nature of the terrain severely limited the ability of cavalry to locate potential Finnish defense positions hidden in the thick underbrush.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

After accomplishing his initial objective which was to cut the railroad near Kukkola, the battalion continued its advance towards Terioki. During this advance Captain Ugrumov, after overcoming some minor resistance, remarked: "They certainly know how to use camouflage! Well, we must learn!"<sup>1</sup> A little later he observed the destruction of an earth-wood bunker by mortar fire and began to "look with great respect upon the mortars and the mortarmen."<sup>2</sup>

Again it seems strange that a battalion commander would not have had any idea of Finnish capabilities in a defensive position. Also, to be surprised at the capabilities of his own mortars was very strange in an army which, since its earliest period, had made great use of this particular weapon. However, more troubles were in store for this "heroic unit" before Terioki could be secured.

In the last surge towards their objective, the battalion discovered that the Finns were somewhere ahead in some strength and apparently still had artillery (mortars?) in operation. Also, as the story related: . . . no reinforcements had arrived, no tanks or artillery were to be seen either. It was now 1400 hours and the troops had not eaten since morning.<sup>3</sup> However, Captain Ugrumov elected to push on

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 60\_61.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 62.



against an enemy whose whereabouts he did not know, with no visible support on his right flank (his left rested on the Gulf of Finland) and with no tanks or artillery immediately present to back him up if he met a major obstacle. Fortunately, when his battalion became bogged down under Finnish fire in a minefield outside Terioki, he was saved by the unexpected approach of another Red battalion. The troops were finally able to move around the minefield and into Terioki itself. After most of the town had been secured, their assigned tank platoon finally showed up. They had come along the railroad embankment into Terioki, out of touch with the battalion and too late to take much part in the fight for the town.<sup>1</sup>

The later period of the "Ugrumov story" also has some interesting aspects. For instance, the good Captain's impetuosity arose again when he had to cross the Vistroi River near Herma on the Muulaa road. When an engineer officer who was to bridge the river came up to him, Ugrumov asked:

"How long will it take you to rebuild the bridge?"

"A day . . ."

"You can go to the regimental commander. I don't need you. I will not wait, even for one day."<sup>2</sup>

Later in this same operation, the author noted:

"Captain Ugrumov insisted that the commanders be sure of their

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 66.

orders so that a man might know what he was to do and could master his responsibilities well."<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the Captain's eagerness to close with the enemy had at least one bad effect. It seems that the battalion, after crossing the river, pushed too far ahead of the other Soviet units and the Finns were able to cut in behind it and almost surround the heroic troops. Fortunately, it would appear that Captain Ugrumov was able to place his men on the defensive and hold out against all the "Whitefinn" attacks. As a result of this heroic work, Nikolai Stepanovich was promoted to regimental commander.<sup>2</sup>

This whole episode, if acceptable as totally valid, reflected the Russian urge to advance at all costs, even risking the chances of encirclement. This type of maneuver demonstrated the defects in unit leadership so apparent during the month of December, when the Finns were so easily able to surround Red Army units deep within the forests of eastern Finland and even on the relatively open Karelian Isthmus.

Another interesting account from the same general source dealt with the experiences of the previously mentioned tank unit which had been assigned to Captain Ugrumov's battalion. There were several interesting details in this recollection. First, according to the tank commander, it would appear that after the initial border crossing Captain

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Ugrumov assigned the tanks to guard his flanks, a strange position for armored vehicles even in the deep woods. An explanation for this particular maneuver came from this somewhat cryptic comment: "We did not slow the infantry down."<sup>1</sup> Apparently the good Captain feared that the armored vehicles under his command would not be able to keep up with his fast-moving foot soldiers and thus he wished to be free of these encumbrances on his swift thrust towards Terioki.

The second account confirmed the events of the advance on Terioki as recounted in the first story when it told of the tanks having approached the town along the railroad embankment (to avoid possible mines). However, according to this recollection, the vehicles approached the seaside resort while it was being occupied by the infantry and were instrumental in consolidating the area.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the first story made it reasonably clear that the tanks arrived after the major part of Terioki had been cleared of the enemy, although they were extremely helpful in beating off a later Finnish counter-attack.<sup>3</sup> However, this may well have been a mixup so common to battle recollections in every war.

The rather bad military habit of Captain Ugrumov's

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<sup>1</sup>A. Ivanovich, "Zapiski Tankista" (Diary of a Tanker), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>3</sup>Stavskii, "Geroi Sovetskovo Souza, N. Ugrumov," p. 65.



battalion in advancing without waiting for the support of armored units or artillery was noted in this same article.<sup>1</sup> While there is no hint of direct criticism, this misuse of armored strength seems very strange, even for the Red Army. Either the tanks were not very effective or there just was not good coordination between the two arms. Very likely there was a little bit of both during the early phase of operations.

From another account the pattern of Finnish tactics against tank-infantry combination was revealed. As one "Hero of the Soviet Union" recalled:

Often the Whitefinns would allow our tanks to go ahead, not firing; but as soon as our infantry appeared they would open fire from machine guns and submachine guns. Not once was our crew forced to turn back to take a passed enemy fire point and help defend the infantry.<sup>2</sup>

This is an interesting observation for apparently the event noted in the last lines above was the exception rather than the rule during these early days on the Karelian Isthmus. It should also be noted that despite great heroism and skill of the above-mentioned tank crew their vehicle was knocked out and the members of the crew killed when they got too far ahead (some fifteen kilometers) of their own infantry.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ivanovich, p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>K. Simonyan, "Voega Pomogat Tovarishcham!" (Always Help Comrades!), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 96.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 96-97.

Almost certainly this was the result of extremely poor tank-infantry coordination and was indicative of the defective command relationship recounted above.

This theme of being outflanked and/or surrounded ran through the Russian record of the early stages of the Winter War. In most of the accounts the Red Army units got into these situations because of their impetuous efforts to catch the retreating enemy. Typical was the experiences of Pavel Porosenko who advanced with his patrol into a Finnish defense position on the night of 3 December 1939. After knocking out three Finnish artillery pieces and destroying several enemy machine guns, his commander was wounded. Pavel then took command of the patrol and held out against the surrounding Finns until reinforcements arrived. After ten hours of defending his position with twenty-four men against seven hundred of the enemy, he reported to his commander with a creased helmet and an overcoat with six bullet holes in it.<sup>1</sup>

Even a female doctor, one Valentine Plushch, managed to get into this act. It seems she was at the front as a battalion physician and had to take over a command responsibility. "It appeared that the enemy was on our flank. Then it seemed that he was nowhere,"<sup>2</sup> she related. However,

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<sup>1</sup>S. Bank, "Pulemetchik Pavel Porosenkov" (Machine Gunner Pavel Porosenkov), Izvestiya, 11 February 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>P. Pavlenko, "Valentina Plushch" (Valentine Plushch), Pravda, 9 February 1940, p. 2.

according to the rest of the story, the unit soon formed a defensive position and Dr. Plushch was able to function as a physician once again.<sup>1</sup>

In yet another recollection, a whole company was surrounded on 9 December 1939 while trying to make a river crossing. As the situation developed, however, "To retreat was not possible. The enemy lay on all sides. One hundred men were resolved to die but not surrender."<sup>2</sup> Encouraged by their political officer, Afanas'evich Ershov, the men dug in and apparently held out until relieved. This reaction to being surrounded was characteristic of all the Russian material concerning the early part of the war. This material confirms various Finnish testimony about the Red Army's swift creation of defensive protection in response to sudden flank and rear attacks, even by lightly-armed ski troops.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Soviet units made almost no attempt to retreat. They stood their ground and fought.

Another story recounts the attacks of the "Whitefinns" on field artillery battery. Of course the attack was a failure because a heroic wireman wiped out the enemy machine gun crews and, utilizing their weapons, cut the "bandit-gang" down from the rear.<sup>4</sup> In another recollection with a similar

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>N. Krusjlov, "Odin Iz Mnogih Slavnyh" (One of the Many Honored Ones), Pravda, 7 February 1940, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 378; Vallotten, p. 87; and Hannula, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>I. Antzelovich, "Pyotr Losev" (Peter Losev), Trud, 15 February 1940, p. 4.



script, the field artillery pieces, in this case 122-mm (5 inch) cannons, were "operated like rifles" so that the artillerymen managed to drive the three hundred attacking Finns away.<sup>1</sup>

The interesting thing about this last account was the fact that a 122-mm artillery piece which has a range of 2-5 miles should have been located a considerable distance behind the lines. However, this battery position was organized and dug in for just such an attack as it ultimately repulsed.<sup>2</sup> It was quite apparent that the penetration of Finnish attack groups was not unexpected even in the rearmost areas of the Red Army. What probably was unexpected was the successful defense of such a position by unsupported artillerymen.<sup>3</sup>

These articles and recollections did not, of course, include any direct criticism of either the government or the Red Army. In such a monolithic state this cannot be expected. However, certain critical "evaluations" were often included in otherwise laudatory hero stories and memoirs. A short examination of these critical elements in the great mass of Russian material can be instructive in determining just what

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<sup>1</sup>G. Leptov, "Sjarkaya Shoalka" (A Hot Skirmish), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 245-246.

<sup>3</sup>Other examples of this same story can be found in: D. Margulis, "Pryanoi Navodkoi" (Direct Fire), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 20 January 1940, p. 3; S. Vashentzev, "Tri Svyazusta" (Three Wireman), Krasnaya Zvezda, 2 February 1940, p. 4.

went wrong during the early period of this war.

One of the earliest of these critical comments occurred in an article which appeared through the Soviet press during late December 1939. The "Three Week Summary of the War" was, as has been shown, a major revision of Soviet expectations. The phrase "Only ignorant people or those openly hostile to the Red Army could have expected to overcome the Finnish Army in one week"<sup>1</sup> indicated the spirit of criticism for earlier statements that this would be a short campaign. Although nominally a blast at "foreign military writers", it was equally a left-handed rap at the previous estimations found in the Russian press itself which had expected a rapid fall of the "Mannerheim gang" during the first week of the war. It is for this type of material that the reader must be especially alert, and it is here that the Russian writers were able to express some resentment and strike a few feeble blows of critical analysis in an otherwise heavily controlled information media.

In the matter of training the main deficiencies seem to have been in the field of tank-infantry coordination and the use of ski troops. The accounts of the earliest attacks on the Karelian Isthmus exposed the lack of coordination between armor and infantry. At least one observer noticed that the tanks consistently outran the infantry during the

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<sup>1</sup>"Trednedel'niei Itog Boevieh Deistviu v Filyandii," loc. cit.

first days of the attack.<sup>1</sup> That this sometimes caused difficulty was recorded by one writer when he told how one battalion commander had lost contact with his regiment and:

. . . had fallen into a fire trap under enemy machine gun fire and had had to organize a perimeter defense. The help of the tanks had been expected by him. The sudden reappearance of the tanks ended the enemy success.<sup>2</sup>

Another story, concerning a river crossing, told of a different lack of coordination:

Lieutenant Preobrasjenski's platoon located two fords. The infantry could cross but the artillery and tanks would have stuck in the mud. . . The regimental commander . . . decided to continue the attack without tanks or artillery. The battalion moved ahead and the tanks and artillery remained behind.

The tank crews were alarmed that the battalion had gone ahead without the tanks. Shots were heard in the direction of the Ino Station . . . The infantry must be supported. The tanks soon crossed the river by another route.

The tanks returned to their assembly point at the bridge . . . as shells came in from all sides. It was supposed that the enemy, passing the forward infantry, had decided to counterattack the rear.<sup>3</sup>

As further evidence of the lack of cooperation between Russian infantry and armor read this account by Division

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<sup>1</sup>Nikolai Tihonov, "Pervii Dzen" (First Day), S. I. Vashentsev (ed.), V Snega Finlyandii (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Peoples' Literature, 1941), p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>K. Kulik, "Zahvet Karvalie--Lentulie--Kirki Kivennapi" (The Areas of Karvali--Lintula--Kirk Kivennapi), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 44.

<sup>3</sup>Ivanovich, "Zapiski Tankista," pp. 75-76.



commander V. N. Kashuga:

The infantry started out ahead of the tanks in the initial attack. We had to overtake them to act together. However, this was only in the beginning. Soon this weakness was corrected and we kept up with the infantry.<sup>1</sup>

One can see that this weakness was prevalent within the Red Army. Indeed, through the opening phases of the action Division Commander V. N. Kashuga had to move about the battlefield continually to insure good communication between the armored elements and the infantry forces.<sup>2</sup>

In the matter of the use of ski troops in the Winter War, the Russian record reveals some rather sharp, indirect criticism. One author commented succinctly about the use of skiers in the beginning of the Finnish campaign: "We have not remembered the earlier traditions of the use of skis during the period of the heroic struggle with the Whitefinns."<sup>3</sup>

was there, in fact, any evidence, aside from numerous incidents from battle stories, which might help to substantiate the Red Army's lack of preparation in ski warfare? It is perhaps fortunate that we have two recollections which could lead to no other assumption. In the first story a member of the 70th Soviet Infantry Division, which occupied

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<sup>1</sup>L. Marshak and A. Tvardovskii, "Geroi i Evo Mat" (A Hero and His Mother), S. I. Vashestsev (ed.), V Snega Finlyandi (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Peoples' Literature, 1941), pp. 114-115.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 115-116.

<sup>3</sup>I. Solomonnikov, "Liesjnik Boetz" (Ski Soldier), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9 February 1940, p. 3.

the extreme left of the Karelian front throughout January, February and March of 1940, recalled that after the division had been on the line for a month:

. . . skis were issued. . . .We put them on. . . . I could see that my friends were reluctant and puzzled; they did not seem to understand the nature of skis.

"I will tell you a secret, boys," said Punin, "I have never been on skis."

"Why do you suppose that the Finns are so good on skis?" said the Company Commander. "It is because they are raised up under winter conditions, and we, who are city people, if we take part in winter sports, do it on ice skates, and we have forgotten about skis. However, we must now concentrate on them."<sup>1</sup>

In yet another account the difficulties encountered in training the Red Army man to handle his skis properly was underscored:

In between the fighting the men improved their skill on skis. Comrade Mirovonski insisted that he could do better in the snow without them.

"Skis are difficult, we can get the Whitefinns without them. Why must we practice?"

One evening I was dispatched with Mironovski on a patrol. An hour had not yet passed when, breathing hard, the red, robust soldier was asking for mercy.

"But how can you fire, comrade commander?"

"It is difficult to hit the enemy while standing, but lying down with skis is impossible."

I then taught him how to handle them.

Skis are very necessary on patrol, in action and on the roads.<sup>2</sup>

This testimony tends to confirm the belief that at

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<sup>1</sup>Mitrofanov, "V Snega Finlyandii," pp. 15-16.

<sup>2</sup>B. Timarov, "Zapishi Sopera" (An Engineer's Diary), S. I. Vashentsev (ed.), V Snega Finlyandii (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Peoples' Literature, 1941), p. 322.

least the majority of Leningrad troops had had little civilian experience with skis during the early part of the war. This lack of ski training in the Red Army units engaged in Finland should, therefore, not surprise us for of the twenty-eight infantry divisions identified as having been used in the war, some fifteen were from the Leningrad areas, and of these some five were from inside the city itself.<sup>1</sup> If all these were as poorly prepared for ski warfare as the 70th Soviet Division, then it would have been small wonder that the average Red Army man not only had no skis until late in the conflict but was relatively untrained in their use. However, there is some evidence that even during the campaign the Russians did make up for lost time. A pro-Finnish writer observed:

. . . skiing in the Soviet Army, after the 1939-40 war in Finland . . . became the subject for international ridicule; which, however, was only partly justified and has certainly been greatly overdone.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, there would seem to be little doubt from an examination of Soviet records that the Red military commanders made every effort to acquaint their troops with skis and their uses in the latter part of the war. Stories appeared in the Soviet records of the Winter War which glorified the activities of the ski troopers as scouts<sup>3</sup> and

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfalls, pp. 305-306.

<sup>2</sup>Firsoff, p. 93.

<sup>3</sup>A. Beziemski, "Molodesj v Boyah" (The Young Man in Action), S. I. Vashentsev (ed.), V Snega Finlyandii (Moscow: State Publishing House of the Peoples' Literature, 1941), pp. 201-205.



in their ability to make telling blows behind enemy lines, or merely establish communications between units which had become temporarily isolated from one another.<sup>1</sup>

However effective this training was for the continued Russian military operations, the Soviet records also indicate that Finnish ski troopers managed to attack wagon trains,<sup>2</sup> artillery positions,<sup>3</sup> and staff headquarters.<sup>4</sup> As the war progressed the Russian skiers seemed (at least in Soviet documents) to gain experience for in a later article a Finnish scouting detachment on skis was trailed and destroyed by a Russian ski patrol.<sup>5</sup> There would seem to be little doubt that the Soviet military leadership worked throughout the conflict to train their men in the use of skis.<sup>6</sup>

Another point which stands out in the Russian accounts of the Russo-Finnish campaign was the rapid development of

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<sup>1</sup>G. Zavarin, "Na Liesjah" (On Skis), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 355-356.

<sup>2</sup>Z. Hiren, "Mladskii Komandir Skochnyagin" (Corporal Skochnyagin), Krasnaya Zvezda, 28 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Antzelovich, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Korobov, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>V. Vavashkin, "Liesjnie Otryad" (Ski Patrol), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 366-368.

<sup>6</sup>P. Pavlenko, "Geroicheskie 81-i Polk" (The Heroic 81st Regiment), Krasnaya Zvezda, 27 January 1940, p. 4; and M. Vistinetskii, "Mladshii Leitenant Bogatierov" (Second Lieutenant Bogatierov), Krasnaya Zvezda, 29 January 1940, p. 2.

scouting and patrolling techniques in the Red Army. As most of the early combat recollections reveal, the Soviet attacks on the Karelian Isthmus seem to have had no good idea of what the enemy might have prepared for them when they penetrated into the lakes, swamps and forests of eastern Finland. As we have seen, such a "heroic" battalion commander as Captain Ugrumov continually pushed ahead with no real conception of what kind of opposition he might run into at any moment.<sup>1</sup> Also many of the articles and memoirs of the earlier battle contacts contained such phrases as "which of the enemy fire points were real and which were false, this was the real problem,"<sup>2</sup> "our artillery had a particularly difficult problem for the enemy was located in a thick forest with everything under cover and so observations could not be carried out,"<sup>3</sup> and "all future operations must be carefully planned and based upon reconnaissance."<sup>4</sup>

At least one recollection was, for a Russian account, relatively bitter about the lack of intelligent direction

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<sup>1</sup>Molchanov and Michulovin, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>S. S. Dsjigrei, "Poddersjali Svou Pehotu" (We Supported Our Infantry), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 133-134.

<sup>3</sup>N. hvankov, "Geroi Sovetskovo Souza, Leitenant Bol'shakov" (Hero of the Soviet Union, Lieutenant Bol'shakov), Krasnaya Zvezda, 30 January 1940, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>A. Fedunin, "Pereprava Cherez Reku Taipalen-Ioki" (The Crossing of the Taipalen-Ioki River), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 99.

of a "heroic advance." This was the attack of 17-19 December 1939 on the Railroad Station at Punnus to split the very center of the "Mannerheim Line" which ran across the Karelian Isthmus. Evidently the Soviet forces, tanks, artillery and infantry, having crossed the "Bezimyanni (Unknown) River," had advanced into a triangle formed by Lake Punnus-jarvi to the west, a railroad to the east and the river to the south. A single patrol was sent out to uncover the enemy and returned with only three out of the eighteen men and the news that the Russian units were in grave danger of being cut off from their lines by Finnish infantry and an armored train. Although the Soviet troops were able to withstand the encircling attacks of the Finns through the swift movement of their armor, it was obvious from the general tone of the story that there had been a definite failure of the staff to plan the attack on the basis of careful and sound reconnaissance.<sup>1</sup>

As even more disasterous example of the lack of Russian reconnaissance in the earlier phases of the war was the initial large-scale Soviet attack upon the "Hotinen Knot," the central position of the so-called "Summa Lines." The early combat patrols had apparently contented themselves with the breaking of lanes through the barbed wire and tank obstacles leading into the fortified areas. It was obvious that these patrols had done an inadequate job in locating

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<sup>1</sup>G. Radkov, "V Tiel Protivnika" (In the Enemy's Rear), Boi v Finlyandi (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 180-

all of the hidden Finnish machine gun and artillery positions on and about the dominant hill 65.5. In typical Gung-Ho fashion the Soviet tank-infantry teams then rushed through the gaps in the wire and tank "parapets" to attack the first line of enemy defenses. The Finns throughout the preliminary patrol actions had concealed their principal defensive positions from Russian observation. Thus when the Soviet units had been thoroughly committed, the Russian observer ruefully admitted:

. . . it was then when the two Russian battalions had reached hill 65.5 that the enemy brought into action all the fire power of the defensive area, all the machine guns, mortars and artillery. Bullets squealed as, with a rattling sound, they tore into the ditch and from there into the parapets.

We were in an iron-clad defense. The way out was covered by enemy cross-fire. A trap! The defenders were firing on prearranged lanes, so there was no escape route . . . the enemy was firing rapidly but not one fire point could be seen . . . All were well covered and camouflaged. The fire was devilish. The regiment rolled back across the strath and through the grove ("Zubov") to its departing positions. We left one-and-one-half companies in the trenches. Then twilight came. Hardly had we begun to make any effort to remove the men from the trenches when the deadly cross-fire from the invisible fire points blocked the exits . . . Only after five days of effort were we able to bring the troops from this area.<sup>1</sup>

This notable failure, along with other reports, led to a distinct effort by the Soviet army leaders to improve the quality of reconnaissance in the Red Army. Whereas the

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<sup>1</sup>I. Matoshin, "Pervie Dni Pered Liniei Mannergeima" (The First Days Before the Mannerheim Line), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 260-261.



earliest newspaper stories and memoirs had told about heroic artillerymen, tankers and infantry commanders, about halfway through the conflict the reconnaissance scout began to appear as a heroic figure. In these articles and memoirs he was described as a super-soldier who could overcome great obstacles to accomplish his mission of seeking out and sometimes even destroying enemy positions. The Soviet scout not only had to locate the enemy but also helped to clear roads and evacuate wounded as part of his duties.<sup>1</sup> In order to attract the enemy's attention and thus uncover the hidden fire points, false machine gun positions and cover fire were used.<sup>2</sup> The scouts also interviewed local Finnish peasants to discover the "inconspicuous paths" to the enemy forts.<sup>3</sup> In one account a heroic Russian scout even camouflaged himself in white and literally "swam" his way across an open, snow-covered field to observe the strength of a Finnish unit.<sup>4</sup>

This need for specialized reconnaissance work in the thick woods and complicated water course of the Karelian

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<sup>1</sup>E. Smorkalov, "Vozvedchik Berendeev" (The Scout Berendeev), Krasnaya Zvezda, 30 January 1940, p. 2; and A. Surkov, "Razvedchik Vasil'ev" (The Scout Vasil'ev), Krasnaya Zvezda, 27 January 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>T. Siechev, "Pervaya Razvedka" (The First Patrol), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 107-1

<sup>3</sup>T. Siechev, "V Razvedka" (On Patrol), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 4 February 1940, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>V. Il'enkov, "Korosjnik Alekseev" (The Scout Alexiev), Krasnaya Zvezda, 17 February 1940, p. 2.

Isthmus was soon recognized. One decorated Soviet commander remembered his experiences as follows:

During the battles for the Mannerheim Line, I asked to form a special unit of scouts which would be all volunteers . . . Here I organized my men as battle experience had shown. The section was divided into three groups . . . the 'holding group' was basic, it was . . . to obtain information; the 'diversion group' diverted the enemy's attention to itself in order to insure the success of the 'holding group'; and the 'cover group' covered the first two groups with its fire. As a result we began to get valuable information and losses began to drop.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted that while this organization was very good, it only involved one unit and was obviously intended to correct earlier mistakes in Soviet scouting and patrolling. It is impossible to discover how far this system spread throughout the Russian forces on the Karelian Isthmus but probably something very like this was undertaken in all Red Army units which had had scouting problems.

It is interesting to observe other suggestions made by a previous author for the improvement of scouting and patrolling by the Red Army:

Now . . . to the equipment of the soldier-scout. When we crossed the border, we were overloaded. In every rucksack there were, for instance, two pairs of reserve underwear, a kettle and messgear. why did we need all this? At that time it was necessary for a scout to possess only five grenades for a patrol. Actually a scout should drop his rucksack and carry a satchel of grenades.

He should also have no less than fifty to sixty rounds of ammunition, and the good scout

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<sup>1</sup>9I. Ulyanov, "Dorosjnik" (The Scout), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 149-150.

will have no less than one hundred and twenty to one hundred and fifty shells . . . . This is because a scout may be in action for two or three days. If you use all your cartridges, then you can only snap your teeth!

Revolvers are needed by the scouts. Knives are obligatory, of course; we all armed ourselves with Finnish knives.

Especially important to the scout are his skis. Felt boots do not suit the scout. They are a torment after they are wet and you will have no chance to dry them. Day after day, night after night, your feet can get cold from the frozen felt boots. I personally provided myself with leather boots with feet and soles of rubber. You then wear two pairs of woolen stockings--and wrap the feet further in a strip of linen--and the feet will stay as dry as though they were in an oven.

There are other necessities to remember about scouting. Fresh bread will not do. It congeals into ice and you cannot melt it. Also sausage when frozen will spoil as will fruit preserves.

A good food is galeti, chocolate and rye bread; it will not become tasteless. Rations are a necessity for a scout, he should possess not less than three days rations . . . A good scout should carry everything he might need.<sup>1</sup>

No matter what changes were made in the Red Army's scouting and patrolling procedures, there was little doubt from subsequent articles that the Finnish defenses, at least in the Summa region, were thoroughly investigated before the attacks of early February 1940. The Soviet leadership also became much more familiar with the tactics of the Finnish defenders. As one Russian observer pointed out about the Finns and their patrols, "they operated in small groups and are armed largely with submachine guns. These scouts move on skis . . . and presumably selected bad weather for their openings."<sup>2</sup> As a reference to Soviet

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>G. Akselrov, "Oznakomlenie s Taktikoi Protivnika" (Becoming Acquainted with the Enemy's Tactics), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 269.

scouting problems the author pointed out the following concerning the enemy:

In wooded areas that were hard to survey, they left hundreds of rifle and submachine gunners called 'cuckoos' who fired from the trees. Their task was, with unexpected flashes of fire, to panic the advancing troops . . . from the flanks and rear. Behind stones, which were located all about, were emplacements for Finnish machine gunners and cannons. These stones also served as cover for the submachine gunners as well. In the ravines they concealed mortar positions.<sup>1</sup>

As for the Finnish tactics in the relatively fixed positions of the Mannerheim Lines:

. . . at the first round of artillery they would abandon their defensive positions. . . , but as soon as our artillery began to fire on deeper targets, the Finns again would return to their places and direct a hurricane of fire at the advancing troops.<sup>2</sup>

The Red Army leadership was apparently aware of these problems for they republished several captured Finnish tactical manuals in Russian to distribute among their own troops.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, to penetrate the Finnish defensive positions so-called "blockading groups" were organized. These troops, operating as individual patrol units, would slip into the fortified zones, locate the main defensive positions and, if possible, carry out demolitions to destroy them or clear the way through the obstacles for larger

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 270.



attacking columns.<sup>1</sup> Apparently the success of the first of these groups was contagious for other units were hastily organized among the many divisions of the Red Army along the Karelian front.<sup>2</sup>

However, one may doubt that complete reliability of Soviet accounts of the Winter War, there would seem to be little doubt that the Red Army in February had much better information about the Mannerheim Line than they had had in December of the previous year. Despite continued Finnish efforts to cut off and destroy these "blockading groups,"<sup>3</sup> the sheer number of these patrols must have meant that the Soviets were becoming more skillful at scouting and patrolling under the pressure of necessity.

The fact that the Soviet military leaders throughout late December, January and early February were gathering more information about the Finnish fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus did not mean that they had solved the problems of breaking through these defenses. The large number of positions, their careful concealment and the large number of interlocking roads and trenches meant that any damage caused by the "blockading groups" was not likely to

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<sup>1</sup>A. Kosenko, "Troje Otvasjnieh" (The Three Brave Men), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 272-277.

<sup>2</sup>P. Rebenck, "Iz Boevoi Praktiki Razvedchika" (From the Combat Practices of the Scouts), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 280-282.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

be fatal to the defense in any particular sector.<sup>1</sup> Something must be done to destroy the larger concrete fortifications located by the "blockading groups" but which were too massive for them to damage or destroy by themselves. Massed artillery barrages would not do for multiplicity of exploding shells would make accurate observation almost impossible and would also tend to obscure the amount of damage done to any specific target. Then, too, as we have seen, the majority of Finnish positions apparently had no artillery emplacements so that all the artillery fire on the forts themselves would not prevent prompt counter-battery fire on Russian positions which would be directed from even partially wrecked positions. (It should also be noted that the scarcity of artillery fortifications in the Mannerheim Line made absurd the claim that massed Russian artillery "drum-fire" could "knock the Finn's artillery out of its delicate alignment,")<sup>2</sup> The Soviet problem was very basic: how to keep a constant rain of accurate fire on a major fort until it could be reduced to rubble in the face of possible Finnish counter-battery fire.<sup>3</sup>

It had been obvious from the first that tanks, while excellent for knocking out earth-wood machine gun positions

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 280.

<sup>2</sup>Parry, p. 239.

<sup>3</sup>V. Yakovlev, "Pryamoi Navodkoi po Dotam" (Direct Fire on the Forts), Boi v Finlyandi (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 310.

and trenches, could not be expected to destroy iron-concrete fortifications. Thus the major role would be in the hands of the artillery. For the most part, the artillery must depend upon careful scouting to locate the principal positions.<sup>1</sup> Then a pinpoint barrage would be called in to uncover the earth around the cupolas and walls.<sup>2</sup> After the major portions of the fort had been exposed, a heavy artillery piece, usually a 152-mm. or even a 203-mm howitzer would be moved into position directly opposite the target, frequently within two or three hundred meters.<sup>3</sup> Often the sound of the emplacement of such a heavy gun had to be masked by renewed artillery fire on the Finns. The danger of such a location for heavy guns was emphasized by the fact that the gun crews had to be volunteers.<sup>4</sup> After the gun had been emplaced--usually during the night--the men had to wait until morning to begin their fire. As one Red Army artilleryman remembered it:

Exactly at 0800 hours our gun opened fire. . . . We were unlucky. The first shell struck an empty tank which had been knocked out the day before.

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<sup>1</sup>P. Burmistrov, "Artilleristie-Razvedchiki" (Artillerymen-Scouts), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 297-300.

<sup>2</sup>A. Kirpichnikov, "Uho k Zemle" (Ear to the Ground), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 302-303.

<sup>3</sup>P. Leont'ev, "Sokrushenie Domov" (Broken Houses), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 340.

<sup>4</sup>Yakovlev, pp. 318-319.

The tank caught fire and a thick smoke came from it which tended to conceal the fort in front of us. It seemed that we might have to move to a new position! . . . Suddenly the wind shifted, the smoke blew away and the fort could be seen. We fired a second round. Again it struck short. I noticed that after each round our gun settled a bit more into the ground. In order to brace it, we drove wooden stakes into the ground which, along with the braceplates, prevented any backward movement.

The fort began to fire at us from its machine guns and cannon. It became necessary to cease fire and take cover. The shells exploded almost in our cover trench. All of us were covered with dirt. . . . However, the gun was unharmed and no one was killed.

When the firing had almost stopped I gave the command: "To the gun!"

The gun had been covered by the dirt. We soon cleaned it from the barrel and breach. Everything was in order.

The Finns again opened fire but their shells landed inaccurately and we continued to fire. After twenty shells had struck home, a steel cupola flew off the fort.

We sent several more shells into the middle of the fort.

There was a breach in the middle of the fort. The left wall began there. On the left side was another hole.

By the seventeenth shell the fort had been destroyed.<sup>1</sup>

The gun crews which became efficient at this sort of thing were soon very much in demand all along the Mannerheim Line. It was very likely that this sort of activity was responsible for the crushing of the Finnish strong-points in preparation for the general advance on Viborg that occupied the Red Army in the period between the 1-5 February 1940.

There was other activity in the Russian lines in

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<sup>1</sup>Loont'ev, pp. 341-342.



preparation for the February drive according to another participant. After the most thorough reconnaissance, infantry-engineer attack groups, supported by artillery, would penetrate the outer perimeters of the fortifications. In one of these stories a group surrounded the Finnish fort number 45 (nicknamed "Millionni") after a costly struggle and held off the inevitable Finnish counterattacks. To prevent the Finns from ever using the fort again, they filled the embrasures with dirt and snow (evidently enemy personnel were still inside the structure). After the engineers arrived with their explosives, the fort was demolished piece by piece while the supporting defensive positions were kept covered by Russian heavy tanks. This whole adventure was notable because, for the first time in the mass of Soviet memoirs, the infantry, tanks, artillery and engineers were shown to be working together in a single attack--in other words coordinated warfare.<sup>1</sup>

Another indication of the thorough preparation for the intended drive against the Mannerheim Line was the extensive training given the attacking troops. One officer remembered this aspect of the Winter War as follows:

The preparations to attack caused a move on the part of the 123rd Rifle Division. About three kilometers from the front lines a "defensive area" was established, which, in truth, reproduced the plan of the enemy defensive dispositions. Soldiers learned

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<sup>1</sup>M. Sipovich, "Padenie Pervieh Domov Hotinena" (The Fall of the First Buildings at Hotinen), Boi v Filyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 283-291.

about the parapets and barbed wire, and how to storm the forts. They were organized into 'interlocking groups.' Artillerymen and antitank gunners learned to fire directly with their guns, everywhere it was necessary to free the infantry from enemy fire. Tankers practiced their battle maneuvers with the infantry, and carried the 'interlocking groups' up to the model forts in armored sleds hooked to the tanks.

Captain Soroka, the battalion commander, insisted on individual combat training . . . . Everyone must be sharp-eyed and fearless in battle, and be able to understand the plans.

Captain Soroka placed great emphasis on the mutual aid of sections in action. The most difficulty was with the artillery. The wheels of their guns would sink into the deep snow. It took great effort to pull them out and operate the guns close behind the infantry. Foreseeing these difficulties . . . Captain Soroka beforehand prepared several sharpshooter squads to aid the artillerymen.

Three times we staged an attack against the enemy's defensive area. Realizing the gravity of their responsibilities in the fighting to come, the troops and commanders of the units worked on their actions in earnest, not letting up for a minute. The shouts of "hurray" would resound . . . . when the red banner rose over the wooden models of the enemy's forts. Soroka's eyes shone when the sections, supporting one another, systematically broke into the trenches, masterfully overcame the wire, the parapets and other obstructions.<sup>1</sup>

With such preparations as these and the great advantage in numbers, it was small wonder that the Red Army was finally able to break the Finnish defenses during the last month of combat in the Winter War. One cannot possibly miss the stress placed in this account or the cooperation of all branches of the Red Army in their task of reducing the Mannerheim Line.

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<sup>1</sup>A. Volovin, "Pered Sturmom" (Before the Storm), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 383-384.

Soviet records deal with many of the more obvious inadequacies of the Red Army in its attacks on the Karelian Isthmus and its penetration of the Mannerheim Line. The lack of coordination between the three major combat arms so apparent in the first days of the war was corrected during the months of December and January. The lack of information too about the enemy's positions and the repeated penetration of Russian lines by Finnish skiers was overcome with the development of better scouting and patrolling techniques and the greatly increased use of skis by the Red Army. Thus it would appear that the Mannerheim Line was broken by the use of combined infantry-tank-engineer teams supported by close artillery fire. The artillery also evidently received the perilous mission of bringing their heavy guns close to some of the larger Finnish iron-concrete positions and reducing them with direct fire. Almost certainly the Soviet units of the 7th Army on the Karelian Isthmus were better coordinated and professionalized by their experiences in this campaign.

It is interesting to note that the one type of combat experience which made practically no appearance in the Soviet record was the futile attempts of several Russian infantry divisions to penetrate the forest roads and trails of eastern Finland. Apparently the Red Army either learned no great lesson from their extensive defeats

in these areas or chose not to emphasize this facet of the Winter War. It was also noteworthy that Russian efforts to renew this type of penetration during the Second World War in the Repola District near the end of 1944 had the same results as their earlier efforts in 1939-1940.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Motti Tactics," p. 12.



## CHAPTER IX

### THE NAVAL WAR BETWEEN FINLAND AND RUSSIA

(30 November 1939--12 March 1940)

In most works about the Russo-Finnish War very little mention is made of the naval campaign which, by necessity, was restricted to the Gulf of Finland, the Aland Islands and the Arctic Ocean. The decision of the Finnish Government to refuse to lease either Hanko Cape or the Porkkala Islands to the Soviet Union as a naval base was apparently the central factor which resulted in the breakdown of the negotiations between these two nations in mid-November of 1939. Thus the problem would appear to be one of naval strength and position so that any attempt to analyze the war requires some consideration of the naval problems faced by the Russians in the Baltic.

Much has been written about the Russian search for warm-water ports which might open that nation to world commerce. While there is no doubt that this theme had its importance in the long history of Russian expansion,<sup>1</sup> the situation in 1939 could probably be stated as an effort by

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<sup>1</sup>For a good review of this subject see: Robert Joseph Kerner, The Urge to the Sea (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1942).

the Soviets to block all western sea routes to their nation in order to avoid possible sea-borne invasion or harassment. In no other way can this particular Soviet expansion into the eastern Baltic be explained since this body of water is never ice-free in any part and can very easily be shut off by the mining of the Skagerrak and Kattegat between Norway and Denmark by any of the principal European naval powers.

On the other hand, Soviet demands on Finland seem at first glance to make no sense from the standpoint of naval protection. If Soviet leadership was so concerned about a possible German invasion at that time, they were moving in the wrong direction, as Marshal Mannerheim pointed out later. Their hostility towards Finland could only turn that nation into a potential enemy base and the Russian position would become impossible under these circumstances since the German battle fleet far outweighed the Russian.<sup>1</sup> Then, too, with virtual control over the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, the Russian rulers had already erected about as good a land barrier as they could hope for against a potential German invasion.<sup>2</sup>

Before accepting the thesis that the Russians operated exclusively in the autumn of 1939 with the Nazis in mind, it would be well to recall that the world situation at that time was much more fluid and uncertain than it became during the

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<sup>1</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, pp. 221-243.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, p. 313, and Citrine, pp. 33-34.

remainder of World War II. As of October of that year the only definite military action which had taken place was the German-Russian conquest and division of Poland. This move had marked the beginning of the conflict between the Anglo-French powers and a greatly enlarged Nazi Germany which was now dominant in central Europe. It would appear that the recently demonstrated German military and aerial might, crouched behind the fortifications of the Siegfried Line, had created a Nazi bastion in central Europe which could not be immediately threatened by Allied land power. In the autumn of 1939 the war had become a problem of just how the two opponents might get at one another. And with the Nazis daily extending their influence and control further into central Europe, the pressure of action appeared to be in the hands of the Allies. Likewise, with so much of Europe neutral any nation in a position to aid the movements or actions of either of the opponents might well wake up one day and find itself faced with very unpleasant choices.

There were two main avenues of approach open to the Allied Powers in their efforts to "get at" Nazi Germany and damage her growing hegemony in central Europe other than the costly choice of a land attack straight through the Siegfried Line. Since both of these potential avenues of attack would depend largely upon overwhelming naval superiority, it could be expected that they would appeal to Allied planners. The first would be a strike at the "back



door" or, in later terms, the so-called "soft underbelly" of Europe through the Mediterranean Sea area. This, however, would certainly bring the Italians into conflict and would not be striking at the primary source of supply for the German war machine (Hungary, Rumania and the Soviet Union). The one advantage to this plan was that the Allies already held control of most of the Mediterranean Sea and thus would have a good base from which to move.

The other area of possible action would be the Scandinavian and Baltic Sea approaches to northern Germany. Here, of course, the bad winter and spring weather, the nearness of major German air and naval bases, and the rugged topography were the principal barriers, not to speak of the traditional neutrality of the Scandinavian peoples. On the plus side, the British had numerous commercial contacts with all the Scandinavian nations, their North Sea bases were close by and the fjords of Norway could offer convenient anchorages for a large fleet. As a matter of fact, the First Lord of the British Admiralty, Winston S. Churchill, drew up just such a plan of naval intervention in this area. This plan, which had the code name of "Catherine," envisioned the construction of capital ships which would be able to resist the effects of Luftwaffe bombing and torpedo attacks and still be capable of shelling German ships and shore installations in the Baltic. This scheme was to have been initiated in the late spring of 1940 with the passage of ice from



Scandinavian waters.<sup>1</sup> Any Russian naval strategist, given the situation in the autumn of 1939, would have done well to consider the possibility of a naval clash in the Baltic. This would have to lead to the conclusion that any such confrontation between the major antagonists might not be limited to the German-held coasts to the south.

It has been stated that the Russian occupation of the principal naval bases in the Baltic States during the fall of 1939 made it unnecessary for the Russians to control the entrance to the Gulf of Finland.<sup>2</sup> This view does not take a number of important factors into consideration. In the first place, the new Russian naval bases at Baltiski Port, Reval, Riga and Dogra Island could not be put into adequate condition for use until the spring of 1940. These areas had been partially dismantled by the peace treaties between the Baltic States and the Soviet Union in 1919-1920 and had not been repaired or even utilized by a naval squadron in some twenty years. As simple logic would make obvious, one cannot rebuild a first-class naval base in a single season, even in good weather, and the Baltic is not noted for this benign characteristic.

The problem of ice severely limits all major naval activity in these northern waters during the winter. What

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<sup>1</sup>Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1948), pp. 162-164.

<sup>2</sup>Citrine, p. 34.

the Soviet naval strategists were probably trying to accomplish in their insistence upon the temporary leasing of Hanko Cape (or extensive anchorages in the Porkkala area) was the protection of their main Baltic Fleet bases at Kronstadt and Tallinn until facilities and ships could be constructed to provide adequate naval protection for their recently acquired bases along the Baltic coast. For this reason the Finnish refusal to submit to the Soviet request could have seemed from Moscow's viewpoint evidence of possible collusion with the western allies in their efforts to put naval pressure on Nazi Germany.

Another point of danger which did not escape the Soviet leaders was the possibility of a threat to the sea approaches to Leningrad in the eastern sector of the Gulf of Finland.<sup>1</sup> Although by the Treaty of Dorpat of 14 October 1920<sup>2</sup> the southwestern shores of the Karelian Isthmus had been demilitarized and the old Tzarist fortifications at Ino and Terioki dismantled,<sup>3</sup> the possibility existed that should Finland join with any prospective enemy of the Soviet Union, they might easily move heavy artillery to these positions and control the northern channels to Leningrad and even threaten the Kronstadt base itself since it lay well within the range

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<sup>1</sup>The U.S.S.R. and Finland, Historical, Economic and Political: Facts and Documents (New York: Soviet Russia Today, 1939), pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Dallin, p. 113.

<sup>3</sup>Schonheinz (1 March 1940), p. 1687.

of these demolished fortifications.<sup>1</sup>

One of the important questions about the naval situation in the Gulf of Finland revolved around the Russian demands for a lease on Hanko Cape or the Porkkala anchorages just to the east of that port. Why should Soviet naval strategists insist upon this base when they had possession of such ports as Tallinn and Baltiski Port on the southern shores of the Gulf in Estonia, just seventy kilometers from Hanko? Of course one of the answers was probably that they hoped by setting up coastal artillery at both Baltiski Port and Hanko Cape they would be able to close the mouth of the Gulf of Finland by shell fire during periods of good visibility.<sup>2</sup> They might also have wished to deprive a potential enemy naval force of the use of this area. Because of these considerations, the question of the desirability of Hanko Cape requires a more thorough examination.

The largest and most accessible harbor on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland is still the Estonian port of Tallinn. During the winter, however, the ice and storms effectively close this port and shipping must be transferred to the smaller anchorages of Baltiski Port.<sup>3</sup> For this reason

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<sup>1</sup>G. Barandov, Voorusjenii Oplot Sovetskovo Gosudarstviya (The Armed Defense of the Soviet Government) (Moscow: The Government Social-Economic Institute, 1941), p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Jakobsen, p. 118.

<sup>3</sup>Robert McClintock, "Strategic Possibilities of Hanko and the Visit There by the American Minister," State Department Telegram #1597, State Department Files.



alone there was some purpose to the Soviet efforts to lease further harbor facilities on the northern shore of the Gulf.

In view of this fact further study must especially be made of the relative merits of the two winter stations on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. Baltiski Port is described as: ". . . encumbered with islands and shoals, extending as much as twelve miles off shore . . . which calls for alert navigation."<sup>1</sup> The anchorage is described as consisting of a single basin five hundred feet long and four hundred feet wide with an average depth of ten fathoms, entered by a seventy-foot channel. Any navigator is especially warned that the area west and south of the immediate channel is extremely dangerous at all times. For this reason, despite the fact that open water is certain from 15 March of one year to 1 February of the next, the facilities of Baltiski Port cannot be considered adequate. Here you have a single, small anchorage reached by one narrow entrance through a dangerous channel.<sup>2</sup> All these conditions would make the operation of a major naval force from this harbor extremely dangerous if an enemy naval force was only seventy kilometers away, at Hanko Cape for instance.

Hanko Port, on the other hand, can be kept open the

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Hydrographic Office, Sailing Directions for the Baltic, Vol. III: The Gulf of Finland, the Aland Islands, and the Gulf of Bothnia (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), p. 69.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 75.



year around by ice-breakers and the approaches are specifically described as possessing no dangerous rocks or shoals. The harbor consists of two relatively large basins, both of them wider and deeper than the single anchorage of Baltiski Port, with an entrance some three-quarters of a mile wide. Both the inner and outer harbors are reported safe from winds and storms from any direction.<sup>1</sup> The protection of Hanko Harbor is provided by low, encircling capes to the east and west, plus a fringe of outlying small granite islands which were occupied in 1939 by various coastal defense positions. These positions, in the opinion of one observer, made Hanko "difficult, if not impossible . . . to take by frontal attack from the sea . . . at least if such an attack were undertaken by the present vessels of the Russian Baltic Fleet."<sup>2</sup>

With these facts in mind, it is easy to see why the Soviet naval authorities were so determined to control Hanko Cape, either by leasing and fortifying the entire area or the establishment of a major naval base in the Porkkala Islands which would dominate the entrance to Hanko harbor. A base at Hanko itself would be a definite addition to Soviet control of the Gulf of Finland. It was almost the only anchorage open all winter inside the Gulf of Finland and seems to have been the safest refuge possible in case of a bad storm. Even if the Russians could not have utilized such

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>2</sup>McClintock, loc. cit.

a fine anchorage for their Baltic Fleet, they would have had to take measures to deny its use to any potential aggressor.

Although all this might be called clever rationalization, is there any concrete evidence of any sort for assuming that the Soviet political leaders had this specific situation in mind during their negotiations with the Finns? The answer, regrettably, must be no, for there were few references to the naval problems from the Kremlin during this early period of World War II. On the other hand, there is evidence to prove that Stalin feared potential naval invasion of the Baltic area by one of the major sea powers at some time in the future. Here is how he evaluated the situation during the negotiations with the Finns in November 1939: "Both Britain and Germany are able to send strong naval forces into the Gulf of Finland. I doubt that you could get them to stay out of the conflict . . . Once the war between these two is over, the fleet of the victor will sail into the Gulf of Finland."<sup>1</sup> The Soviet record of the period in question also revealed some indirect evidence that the Reds were vitally concerned about their position in the Gulf of Finland.

The very first book published in 1940 by the Soviet Government which dealt with naval problems in the Gulf of Finland<sup>2</sup> devoted its first and longest chapter to a description of the naval situation there at the time of the British

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<sup>1</sup>Jakobsen, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>S. Kudriantsev-Skaif, Dekabr 1939 Goda (December 1939) (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, 1940).

intervention in support of the White Russian General Yudenich. At this time, of course, it was questionable whether the British were there to disarm the German troops in the Baltic States or to overthrow the Bolshevik regime in Petrograd. As the story developed it became clear that the Soviet forces were unable effectively to interfere with any British plans in this area because of the lack of adequate naval bases in either the Baltic or the Gulf of Finland.

The author made a great story out of the heroic exploits of a Russian submarine the "Panther" which in December 1918 sailed from Kronstadt to look over the situation. It would seem that the Red Fleet at that time did not know where the British squadrons were located and, even more serious from the Soviet standpoint the Russians did not know what the English vessels were going to do in the area. Whether the Russian leadership in 1939 believed that there was a present danger of the same sort, the author's comments on the situation in 1918 are interesting:

Kronstadt was under the threat of attack from the English fleet. And the attack threat was especially great since the flight of the Russian sailors from Helsingfors to Kronstadt over the ice had revealed that winter naval operations in the Gulf of Finland were impossible. This was especially true because, even in December, the eastern part of the Gulf . . . had been welded shut . . . The Baltic Fleet knew that somewhere in the Gulf of Finland the interventionist ships were hiding but the whereabouts of these ships and what they would do was unknown.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5.



Russian naval strategists since 1918 feared the possibility of an enemy blockade of the Baltic coast during the winter's ice. They also feared that a hostile fleet might inflict great damage in the Baltic area when weather conditions permitted. It no doubt would be safe to assume, therefore, that such an aggressive naval campaign by either of the belligerents in 1939 or thereafter was an important part of Soviet thinking at that time.<sup>1</sup>

As far as can be determined, the Soviet Baltic Fleet in 1939 consisted of some one hundred and ten vessels.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the total Finnish Fleet, restricted in many areas by the Treaty of Dorpat, was about half this number and much less in gross tonnage.<sup>3</sup> But there were factors which tended to equalize these forces. For example, the only important Russian naval base in the Gulf of Finland was Kronstadt. This base lies in the eastern part of the Gulf which is closed by the earliest ice in the region.<sup>4</sup> What is even more important is the procedure which is followed by the Red Fleet to preserve both the ships and the men through the frozen winter. As one Russian observer recalled the

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<sup>1</sup>William and Zelda K. Coates, Russia, Finland and the Baltic (London: Lawrence Wishart, 1940), p. 93.

<sup>2</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, pp. 397-406.

<sup>3</sup>"Appeal of the Finnish Government to the League of Nations; a Summary Based on the Official Documents," Appendix to the Monthly Summary of the League of Nations (December 1939), p. 15.

<sup>4</sup>Sailing Directions for the Baltic, III, p. 170.



situation:

The spacious anchorage of Kronstadt is closed by sparkling ice. The ships sit there connected by hausers, gangways, hoses and cables with the shore. The smoke-stacks show no smoke. Carefully the hands have stretched tarpaulins over the decks . . . All electricity, water, and heat come from the shore. The ships' carpenters cover the superstructures with wooden roofs which smell of fresh pine. These structures look like huts with lights shine out of their frost-covered windows. Indeed, the whole line of anchored ships resembles nothing so much as a peaceful village of emigrants still not accustomed to the new area.<sup>1</sup>

A fleet so solidly frozen in will take some time to get ready for action. As has been pointed out, any enemy naval force could be maneuvering along the Baltic coast, blockading ports, landing raiding parties and seizing isolated Soviet bases long before any Russian flotilla could make its way out of Kronstadt, much less reach the mouth of the Gulf of Finland.

Another important factor which probably influenced Soviet naval strategy in the Baltic in the autumn of 1939 was the security of the main channel to Leningrad which followed the line of the earliest open water in the Gulf of Finland. This channel can be navigated during bad weather only through the aid of island lighthouses, especially the great light on Suursaari, a Finnish island.<sup>2</sup> A Russian author summarized the need for these navigational aids in the Gulf of Finland as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Sailing Directions for the Baltic, III, p. 175.

The friendly light of a lighthouse in the darkness of deep night gives the seafarer assurance and the correct bearing for his ship. Much trouble arises . . . when a vessel comes around the reefs and sandbars and does not spot in the darkness of night the longlasting flashes! Are we off course? In a matter of seconds will the ship, with a grinding crash, be cut in two by the rocks?

There are few areas so complex for navigation as the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland. Here there are so many sandbars and water-covered rocks that navigation is even dangerous by daylight. At night one cannot adequately speak of it! If there were not lighthouses, night navigation would simply become impossible.<sup>1</sup>

This concern for navigation was heightened by the climatic problems of the Gulf of Finland during both autumn and spring. At both periods the cloud cover makes celestial navigation difficult. The safety to such an important passage must have entered into Soviet considerations after the failure of the Moscow talks of 1939.

The situation in the Arctic area, while relatively minor in importance compared to the situation in the Gulf of Finland,<sup>2</sup> still was fraught with potential danger for the strategic position of the Soviet Union. As one reporter pointed out: "British naval experts appraise the Petsamo region as a potential key to the port of Murmansk and a guardian of all trade routes in the Arctic Ocean."<sup>3</sup> Pro-Communist writers also reported that the Finnish position

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<sup>1</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, pp. 34-35.

<sup>2</sup>Dallin, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>Albert Parry, "Russia's Strategic Seaport in the Arctic," Travel (January 1940), p. 40.

in the Arctic meant a potential threat to Murmansk.<sup>1</sup>

This concern might seem a bit overdone for the Murmansk passage is well protected and remains ice-free the year around. The trip along the Arctic coast, however, is filled with danger. It appears that sudden changes in the weather especially around the Ribachi Peninsula are to be expected in both summer and winter.<sup>2</sup> Extreme tidal currents also are not uncommon.<sup>3</sup> Even in "normal" conditions visibility is none too good in this stretch of the Arctic.<sup>4</sup> The Ribachi Peninsula is especially mentioned as one of the most notably visible landmarks on a coast famous for its lack of any natural navigational guides.<sup>5</sup> Added to this are the several fjords in the Ribachi Peninsula where fishermen had been in the habit of taking shelter during stormy weather and which can afford emergency shelter to naval vessels operating along the hostile Arctic coast.<sup>6</sup> Any considerable number of ships desiring to navigate in this area would have to possess

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<sup>1</sup>Amter, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Hydrographic Office, Sailing Directions for the Northwest and North Coasts of Norway (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 288.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>4</sup>U. S. Hydrographic Office, Sailing Directions for Northern U.S.S.R. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1954), p. 164.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

<sup>6</sup>Sailing Directions for the Northwest and North Coasts of Norway, pp. 292-296.



access either to the Ribachi Peninsula of Petsamo Fjord or both, a condition which must have been known to the Soviet naval staff in their plans for the prevention of the possible approach of a sea-borne enemy.

Another question partially eliminated by this investigation of the naval situation about Finland in 1939 was the choice of time for the attack on the land defenses of eastern Karelia. The Soviet military planners must have been well aware that December was not likely to be sufficiently cold to provide a solid base for a highly mechanized mass army in eastern Finland.<sup>1</sup> Likewise the heavy cloud cover which usually occurs throughout the month of December in those latitudes would greatly restrict any aerial support. Indeed, the previous Russian invasion of Finland of 8-9 February 1809 had been successful largely because the lakes, rivers, swamps and the Gulf of Finland itself had all frozen solid. The army of Tzar Alexander I for this reason had been able to attack the whole southern coast at once. The Russians in 1809 also had been supported by a well-organized group of Finnish political parties.<sup>2</sup> Despite this historical precedent the Kremlin leaders in 1939 chose to open hostilities on the last day of November before any really cold

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<sup>1</sup>George Fielding Elliot, "Reds Attack Finland by Land, Sea, and Air," Life (11 December 1939), p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>John Hampden Jackson, Finland (New York: Macmillan, 1940), pp. 46-47.



weather had set in.

The time factor in 1939 most probably was triggered by Soviet concern for the safety of the Gulf navigational aids, especially the lighthouses which might have been destroyed by the retreating Finns. Of course the Soviet strategists would have liked to have had as much time as possible to set up defensive measures against any possible spring naval attack as well. It made sense, therefore, from a naval standpoint to schedule the seizure of the Gulf Islands while the water was still open since any wait for freezing weather would force the Russians to approach their objectives across open ice in plain sight of a prepared enemy.<sup>1</sup> Another point would be the desirability of reconstructing the Finnish navigational aids and establishing fortifications while supplies could still be brought in by ship rather than moving heavy equipment over the uncertain ice in the Gulf.<sup>2</sup> The month of December would certainly in the eyes of the Soviet Naval Staff mark the last good chance to accomplish all these objectives before the cold weather locked the Red Banner Baltic Fleet into Kronstadt until spring. From this standpoint, therefore, the Soviet strategists had a good reason to initiate an early attack on Finland despite the problems this would have for any swift advance by the Red Army.

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<sup>1</sup>Mitrofanov, pp. 42-44.

<sup>2</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, p. 34.

As for possible Finnish naval opposition, the whole of the Finnish Fleet was apparently composed of two heavy coastal defense vessels, five small submarines, sixteen small coastal minelayer-icebreakers and some thirty-eight miscellaneous vessels of light tonnage.<sup>1</sup> Despite that fact that this force was described as: "armed by experienced crews and . . . well adapted to the waters in which they operate,"<sup>2</sup> this tiny force could not have hoped to survive a direct encounter with the Soviet Baltic Fleet.

On the other hand, the Red Fleet appears to have possessed some one hundred and ten naval vessels of various sizes and combat strengths.<sup>3</sup> How many of these ships were in the Gulf of Finland and how many in the Arctic at Murmansk and Archangel cannot be determined. At least one destroyer-minelayer, the "Groza," was reported to have taken part in the landings near Petsamo<sup>4</sup> and it is certain that other elements of the Red Fleet were stationed in the same area. Despite all possible detachments, however, the Russian flotilla in the Gulf of Finland must have outweighed the Finnish naval forces by a wide margin. Indeed, it would be safe to say that the only restrictions upon the movements of

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<sup>1</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, pp. 163-168.

<sup>2</sup>T. Bentley Mott, "Service News and Gossip," Army, Navy Journal (30 December 1939), p. 382.

<sup>3</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, p. 398.

<sup>4</sup>Akif'ev and Bronfman, loc. cit.

the Soviet fleet in Gulf waters were those imposed by geography and weather.

The action of the Finnish Fleet at the Beginning of hostilities reflected this superiority. On 30 November 1939 all Finnish naval vessels with the possible exception of the submarines were quickly withdrawn from the Gulf of Finland and stationed either at Turku, Hanko or the Aland Islands.<sup>1</sup> For this reason the Soviet Fleet, operating from its bases at Kronstadt, Tallinn and Baltiski Port, was able to occupy the Gulf islands against no naval opposition. It would seem that the Finns also evacuated their defensive forces from these islands well ahead of the Soviet occupying squadrons.<sup>2</sup>

The Soviet naval forces apparently moved out of their bases on the morning of 30 November to occupy the principal Finnish islands. On the first day the Russians seized the island of Seiskari while the Finnish garrison escaped on a schooner. On the same day other Russian landing forces took Lavansaari while the main body continued on to the mid-Gulf islands.<sup>3</sup> According to Soviet records the fleet with aerial support proceeded to the occupation of Suursaari, large and small Tartarsaaris, Sommers, Nerva and other islands. The whole operation was completed against minimal opposition by

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<sup>1</sup>Xylander (15 March 1940), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup>Elliston, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup>Zvonkov, pp. 6-7.



3 December.<sup>1</sup> At the same time the armored cruiser "Kirov,"<sup>2</sup> with attending destroyers, left Baltiski Port and steamed directly to Hanko where, battling a heavy storm, it opened an all-day bombardment of the forts protecting the harbor.<sup>3</sup>

This last operation raised one of the numerous controversies about the Winter War. The Finns claimed that the "Kirov" was struck by shells from their coastal artillery and so had to withdraw.<sup>4</sup> This report was lent some credence by a diplomatic observer in Tallinn who reported that the "Kirov" had had to be towed into Tallinn harbor because of damage sustained in the bombardment of Hanko.<sup>5</sup> Of course Russian communiques violently denied that this was true. The Soviets pointed out that the "Kirov" had stood outside the range of the Finnish coastal artillery while bombarding her targets and thus could not have received any damage from these guns.<sup>6</sup> Another report stated that a few days later the

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<sup>1</sup>E. Sobolevskii, "Fedor Radoos" (Theodore Radoos), Baltiski Geroi Sovetskovo Souza (Baltic Heroes of the Soviet Union) (Moscow: All-World Institute H.R.B.M., 1941), pp. 175-176.

<sup>2</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, p. 414.

<sup>3</sup>Zvonkov, pp. 8-10.

<sup>4</sup>Citrine, p. 31; Rosvall, p. 181; and Xylander (15 March 1940), p. 170.

<sup>5</sup>John C. Wiley, State Department Telegram #140 (5 December 1939).

<sup>6</sup>"Oproversjeniye Staffa Krasnoznamennovo Baltiskovo Flota" (Report of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet), Krasnaya Zvezda, 8 December 1939, p. 1.



cruiser was on blockade duty in the Baltic.<sup>1</sup> It should be pointed out, on the other hand, that neither the "Kirov" nor any other Soviet naval vessel made any further effort to bombard Hanko during December although the sea-lanes remained open and the Russians possessed leased ice-free ports in Estonia and Latvia.

There was also a difference in the Russian and Finnish accounts of the occupation of the Gulf islands which might merit further examination. The Finns, as has been noted, insisted that the islands had been completely evacuated long before Soviet landing forces had approached their targets.<sup>2</sup> The Russian accounts, on the other hand, tell of at least one clash between Finnish defenders and a Soviet landing party.<sup>3</sup> In another newspaper story of the campaign in the Gulf a local Fisherman on Suursaari thanked the Red Army and Navy for his liberation from the "brutality of the Finnish officers."<sup>4</sup>

Despite appearances, there is perhaps less difference between these two versions of the Gulf campaign than might appear at first hand. The "island defenders" who opposed the Soviet landing seem to have numbered only four men while

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<sup>1</sup>Zvonkov, pp. 10-11.

<sup>2</sup>Mannerheim, p. 346.

<sup>3</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, pp. 18-24.

<sup>4</sup>"Na Osvobozhdennih Ostrovah" (On the Free Islands), Trud, 8 December 1939, p. 2.

the account of the "old fisherman" stated definitely that he had been left behind in the general evacuation of the rest of the population. Neither of these accounts, therefore, disagree with each other in the matter of the evacuation of the Finns from the Gulf islands well ahead of the oncoming Soviet occupation forces. Indeed, a small group of Finnish soldiers or local Schutzcorps may well have decided to annoy the Russian invaders and an old fisherman might well have been left behind in the hurried evacuation of these exposed positions.

These Soviet stories about the campaign to occupy the Gulf islands made one of the major complaints against the twenty-year Finnish occupation of these positions. This complaint came out rather sharply in one article where a Soviet reporter spoke of the island of Seiskari as "an exclamation mark standing in the channel from Leningrad to the Baltic Sea. For . . . years enemy eyes have observed and photographed the movement of Soviet warships from this island. Seiskari and other Finnish islands swarmed with spies."<sup>1</sup> As for Suursaari, the principal island in the mid-Gulf area, another author declared:

To Suursaari came many health-seekers and under this innocent appellation were hidden the agents of foreign exploiting powers who did not rest so much as spied on our waters. It was very

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<sup>1</sup>Zvonkov, p. 6.

clear that these "tourists" have now flown the coop.<sup>1</sup>

The Soviet planners, in their own view, not only gained several extremely important navigational and defensive positions as a result of this island campaign but also removed several nests of spies and observers from the channels leading to Leningrad and Kronstadt.

After the return of the main units of the Soviet Fleet to Kronstadt the second phase of Soviet naval operations got underway. The fleet began a systematic bombardment of Finnish coastal defense positions on the western shores of the Karelian Isthmus largely because these forts were very active in impeding the progress of the Red Army in that area.<sup>2</sup> The Soviets opened this campaign with several bombardments of the forts at Muurila, Koivisto and defensive positions in the Gulf of Viborg by light destroyers and gunboats.<sup>3</sup> The first major attack by heavy naval vessels took place on 18 December at Koivisto Island. The area was first struck by sixty fighter planes and bombers<sup>4</sup> and then at noon the 23,250-ton battle cruiser "October Revolution,"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>P. Kriellov, "Desant Zaniniaet Ostrov Gogland" (A Landing on Hogland Island), Komsomolskaya Pravda, 5 December 1939, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Xylander, loc. cit., and Mannerheim, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>S. Abramov, "Na Kanonerskih Lodka" (On a Gun-Boat), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami, 1939-40 (Moscow: War-Fleet Publication, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 38-44.

<sup>4</sup>Sobolevskii, p. 177.

<sup>5</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, p. 413.



accompanied by four destroyers, steamed in and began a sustained fire on the Koivisto coast artillery positions.<sup>1</sup> On the next day two morning aerial attacks by forty to fifty planes were the prelude for another attempt at smashing the fortifications by the Soviet battle cruiser "Marat"<sup>2</sup> which sent 175 rounds into the Finnish positions from 25 kilometers away. According to Finnish records, the coast artillery returned fire with some thirty rounds and hit the "Marat" in the stern which forced the retirement of the Soviet squadron.<sup>3</sup> Whether it was damage, weather or just the apparent lack of success which caused the withdrawal of the Soviet ships will probably never be known. The vessels of the Red Fleet, however, did pay a return visit to Koivisto on 24-25 December but again inflicted little real damage,<sup>4</sup> for, as one Finnish commentator reported, "the sea flank of the Karelian Isthmus up to the last days of the war remained in Finnish hands."<sup>5</sup>

Further efforts at bombardment of Finnish coastal defenses in the Viborg region continued throughout the latter days of December and early January, mainly by heavy

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<sup>1</sup>Hannula, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Hannula, loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Xylander, loc. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Ohquist, p. 25.



destroyer-icebreakers such as the "Leningrad"<sup>1</sup> and other types of warships able to operate under winter conditions.<sup>2</sup> Although attacked repeatedly by Finnish aircraft on their dangerous missions,<sup>3</sup> they generally completed their tasks. These efforts, however, seem to have had little effect on the defenders for most Finnish accounts of the war failed to mention them and the Koivisto and Viborg coastal defenses were captured or put out of action by the Red Army late in the war.

The descriptions of these naval bombardments are rather interesting for they reveal that Russian naval commanders planned their attacks well. They would first send a fast destroyer in to the forts to draw Finnish fire and mark the locations of the guns. Then the heavier vessels would move up some time later and pour large caliber shells into the coastal artillery positions.<sup>4</sup>

Another function of the Red Fleet during the Winter War was the maintenance of the blockade declared on Finland on 9 December 1939, evidently after the Soviet fleet elements had reassembled in the eastern area of the Gulf.<sup>5</sup> The blockade was largely carried out by destroyers, submarines

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<sup>1</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, p. 418.

<sup>2</sup>Zvonkov, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, pp. 14-16.

<sup>5</sup>Xylander, loc. cit.

and aircraft. From the records that are available it is difficult to reconstruct the details of this blockade with any accuracy. As far as surface ships were concerned it would appear the Soviet destroyer "Volodarski" patrolled the Kotka area as long as there was open water while the ice-breaker "Leningrad" kept its winter station somewhat further to the west.<sup>1</sup> In the Petsamo region of the Arctic the Soviets emplaced artillery on the Ribachi Peninsula to command the fjord while a minelayer patrolled off shore in readiness to close the area to possible enemy fleet penetration.<sup>2</sup> There were also other reports that at least three Russian submarines maintained constant patrol off the Ribachi Peninsula, to prevent intrusion by a hostile naval force.<sup>3</sup>

It was, of course, the Soviet submarine flotilla upon which the main burden of the winter blockade of western Finnish waters rested. In Russian records there are specific reports of at least three of these vessels and their patrols in the upper Baltic and the Gulf of Bothnia. All of these ships reported great difficulties due to the removal of navigation lights and the presence of extensive Finnish mine fields along the coastal areas and in the Aland Islands.<sup>4</sup>

The submarine "S-1" on its first patrol claimed to

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<sup>1</sup>Zvonkov, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Erickson, p. 544.

<sup>3</sup>Xylander (22 March 1940), p. 201.

<sup>4</sup>Zvonkov, p. 21.

have spotted many transports and sunk one by shell fire on the evening of 10 December. The sub was spotted on the 11th, however, and had to leave its patrol area. On its second patrol the "S-1" began to have difficulty with the freezing weather. As one of the men reported: "You would begin a dive but the boat would not go under water because everything had been covered with ice like an iceberg."<sup>1</sup> Despite these conditions, the second patrol was maintained for at least a month and the submarine's gunners even managed to shoot down an attacking Finnish airplane on 11 January 1940.<sup>2</sup>

The submarine "SHCH-311" patrolling the western reaches of the Gulf of Bothnia was assigned to break enemy communications with Sweden in that area. In spite of difficulties with their deck gun which tended to freeze up, the "SHCH-311" sank one transport, carried on an artillery duel with another, and finally torpedoed another Finnish vessel.<sup>3</sup> The last Soviet submarine specifically mentioned in Russian accounts of the war was the "SHCH-324" which was assigned to patrol the Aland Islands on 30 December 1939.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>I. Bakanov, "Blokadnaya Slusj'ba Podvodnoi Lodki 'S-1'" (The Blockade Duties of Submarine 'S-1'), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 45-48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>N. Dobushev, "Za Rodinu! Za Stalina!" (For the Fatherland! For Stalin!), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 34-37.

<sup>4</sup>Zvonkov, p. 25.



In spite of the very bad weather encountered, this submarine managed to maintain its station for some time although there was no record of its having made a confirmed kill of any Finnish vessel.<sup>1</sup>

These reports of their submarine activity by the Red Fleet seem to have been fairly accurate as far as the number of ships sunk on combat patrols. The best Finnish summary of naval action during this period reported on ship losses as follows:

The German steamer "Oliva" was fired on without warning off Uti on 5 December 1939 on its way between Helsinki and Nantylnota. On 10 December 1939 an unknown submarine, without warning, sank the Hamburg steamer "Bollheim" . . . in the Gulf of Bothnia off Oregrund with shellfire. On the night of 28 December 1939 a Soviet war vessel opened fire on the Finnish tanker "Sigrid" west of Norskar but failed to score a hit. On the same night the Finnish steamer "Vilpas" ran aground south of Norskar while being attacked by two Soviet submarines. On 4 January 1940 a Soviet sub sank the Swedish merchant vessel "Tenris" on the Swedish side of the Gulf of Bothnia.<sup>2</sup>

While there are discrepancies in the number and circumstance of the Russian submarine attacks, the summary of the two reports was not too far apart on the actual number of vessels fired on and/or destroyed. In spite of the results of these Soviet submarine patrols, however, there seems little

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<sup>1</sup>S. Kudriantsev-Skaif, "Vo Vrasheskie Tieli" (In the Enemy's Rear), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>"Reprehensible Methods of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union," Letter from the National Minister of Finland to the United States Secretary of State. State Department Files.



doubt that fairly regular sea communications were maintained between Sweden and Finland throughout most of the war, although they suffered some difficulties because of mines.<sup>1</sup> This inability to patrol the coast of Finland adequately despite the lack of naval opposition and the restriction of increased ice tends to substantiate the impression that the new Soviet bases in Estonia and Latvia were not yet in a state of complete readiness.

Soviet naval aviation, as has been seen, supported the landings on the Gulf island and aided in the bombardment of various coastal defense installations at Koivisto, Muurila and the Gulf of Viborg. They also had the assignment of supporting the Russian blockade efforts along the Finnish coast. In this mission they ran into unexpected difficulties. Here is how one Soviet naval aviator remembered the situation:

The Finnish ships would hide in the fjords, taking advantage of the inland channels. These Finnish ships could travel the length of the Gulf coast concealed from our fleet. Only airplanes could keep an eye on them<sup>2</sup> . . . This was made difficult by the extremely bad weather which prevailed during much of this period. . . . It was a hard mission but we had to show the Finns that no place was safe for their ships.<sup>3</sup>

One of the great difficulties reported by the Russian naval aviators in searching out Finnish ships in the coastal

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<sup>1</sup>Vallotton, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>N. I. Rakov, "Tri Violeta" (Three Flights), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 55-56.

channels was the ability of the enemy to camouflage his vessels in their daylight anchorages.<sup>1</sup> The naval squadrons, however, did manage to attack one warship and several merchantmen but with uncertain results.<sup>2</sup> Finnish records, however, state that one Finnish steamer, the "Notunga," was sunk by Soviet naval aircraft in the Aland Islands east of Sottunga on 13 January 1940.<sup>3</sup> On the whole, however, both Russian and Finnish records support the contention of a German commentator who stated that the "Soviet Naval Air Arm was ineffective against shipping along the coast."<sup>4</sup>

During the period between the end of December 1939 and mid-January 1940 a unique problem arose for the Red Fleet. While the expanding ice in the eastern reaches of the Gulf of Finland had become sufficient to halt major fleet activity, it had not become thick enough to permit vehicle travel to the recently occupied islands. The Soviet navy, however, possessed a number of large icebreakers. These were utilized to supply the newly seized islands. Despite their long experience at icebreaking, the ships seemed to have had much trouble in maintaining a regular flow of food and equipment to their new possessions.<sup>5</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>"Reprehensible Methods of the Armed Forces of the Soviet Union," loc. cit.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 264.

<sup>5</sup>Kudriantsev-Skaif, Dekabr, 1939 Goda, pp. 34-41.

anticipation of these difficulties could well have been one of the more important reasons for the early start of the Finnish campaign since this particular problem would have existed whether Finland itself had been conquered by the Red Army.

Anyone interested in the Soviet naval operations during the latter part of the Finnish conflict might well ask what happened to those Red Sailors who were "on the beach" so to speak during the period of heavy ice in the Gulf of Finland. It would seem that these men were formed into units called "Winter Destroyers" which took a major part in the February and March attacks over the ice onto the south shore of Finland.<sup>1</sup> In the various stories about these converted sailors we find them acting as island defenders,<sup>2</sup> scouts,<sup>3</sup> ski troopers,<sup>4</sup> and field artillerymen.<sup>5</sup> While most of their duties were concerned with specialized attacks over either frozen lakes such as Lake Ladoga or the Gulf ice, such

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup>Kuselev, "Bou u Posta" (Fight for the Post), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 62-63.

<sup>3</sup>V. Maslov, "Razvedshiki Na Ladoga" (Scouts on Ladoga), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 62-63.

<sup>4</sup>P. Kapitza, "Aleksandr Poskonin" (Alexander Poskonin), Baltiski Geroi Sovetskovo Souza (Moscow: All-World Institute, H.R.B.M., 1941), pp. 143-163.

<sup>5</sup>L. Osipov, "V Pomoshch Slavnoi Pehote" (To the Aid of the Heroic Infantry), Flot v Boya s Belofinnami (Moscow: War-Fleet Publications, N.K.V.M.F., 1942), pp. 67-68.



missions revealed that the Kremlin leaders had no intention of wasting such experienced manpower in a wait for the ice to break in the Gulf of Finland and release the main battle fleet in Kronstadt.

It can be said in review that the naval aspects of the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940 were important. The first Soviet operations were directed at the swift conquest of and the repair of the navigational facilities on the major Finnish islands in the Gulf of Finland. The simultaneous bombardment of Hanko harbor and the establishment of a blockade virtually ended the activities of the Soviet naval squadrons in the western waters of the Gulf. The capital ships of the Red Fleet then returned to the eastern Gulf area and began to support the advance of the Red Army in the Karelian Isthmus. With the coming of solid ice even this activity was curtailed and ended with the return of the major fleet elements to winter stations in Kronstadt, Tallinn and Baltiski Port. The Red sailors thus released from sea duty were then used in various capacities to support the ground advance of the Red Army in many areas. In all one would have to say that the Red Fleet played a much greater part in the Winter War than has sometimes been given it by students of that conflict.

The active naval campaign, however, leaves some questions in the mind of any observer. Why did not the Soviet Fleet with its numerical superiority pursue the retreating Finnish Fleet beyond the mouth of the Gulf of



Finland in early December 1939 and force a fight to the finish in the Gulf of Bothnia? One answer might be that Soviet leaders were concerned about possible Swedish reaction to such an offensive move. Another possibility was that the Soviet Navy did not yet possess adequate winter base facilities at the newly-leased harbors on the Baltic coast. With these points in mind it can be understood that the Soviet leaders, despite their naval superiority over the combined Swedish and Finnish fleets,<sup>1</sup> would have been reluctant to push Scandinavia any closer to either the western Allies or Germany. Added to these considerations was the basic plan behind the Soviet campaign in Finland which called for a short, quick conquest and, as a consequence, a fear of enlarging the conflict to include other nations.

From an analysis of both Russian and western records about the Winter War one can say that the naval situation in the Baltic during the fall and winter of 1939-1940 revolved around two uncontrollable forces: the weather and the possibility of an Allied naval campaign in the Baltic. Soviet leadership, concerned about the protection of the western sea approaches to Leningrad, certainly felt that they must secure the best open-water harbor at the mouth of the Gulf of Finland. This move would provide their own flotillas with greater security against the uncertain Baltic weather and would deprive possible enemies of an excellent naval base from

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<sup>1</sup>Jane's Fighting Ships, 1939, pp. 445-454.

which they might mount a campaign against Leningrad. For all these reasons, there would have to be a naval campaign in the Gulf of Finland after the failure of the November negotiations with Finland.

From the standpoint of Soviet naval strategists, December 1939 was the latest period in which the Gulf of Finland would be open to even minimal naval activity until the breakup of the ice in Kronstadt, Tallinn, and Baltiski Port. Because this usually takes place in March or April, by that time there might well have been a triumphant Allied fleet, based in Hanko, moving just behind the outgoing ice towards the main Soviet bases protecting Leningrad. This necessity of beginning naval operations before ice closed the Gulf of Finland must have had a great deal to do with the timing of the Soviet attack on Finland. Certainly fear of possible Allied penetration into the area was one of the most important motives which caused the Soviet attack on Finland in late November 1939.









MAP VI  
THE NAVAL WAR IN THE GULF OF FINLAND  
(30 November 1939--28 December 1939)

This map outlines the various moves of the Red Fleet in the Gulf of Finland during the first month of hostilities. The initial sortie from Kronstadt base on 30 November 1939 led to a series of assault landings on the principal Finnish islands in the middle of the Gulf of Finland. At the same time a Soviet task force, headed by the heavy cruiser "Kirov," left Baltiski Port for Hanko. When the task force arrived at its destination it opened a day-long bombardment of the Finnish port but with little affect.

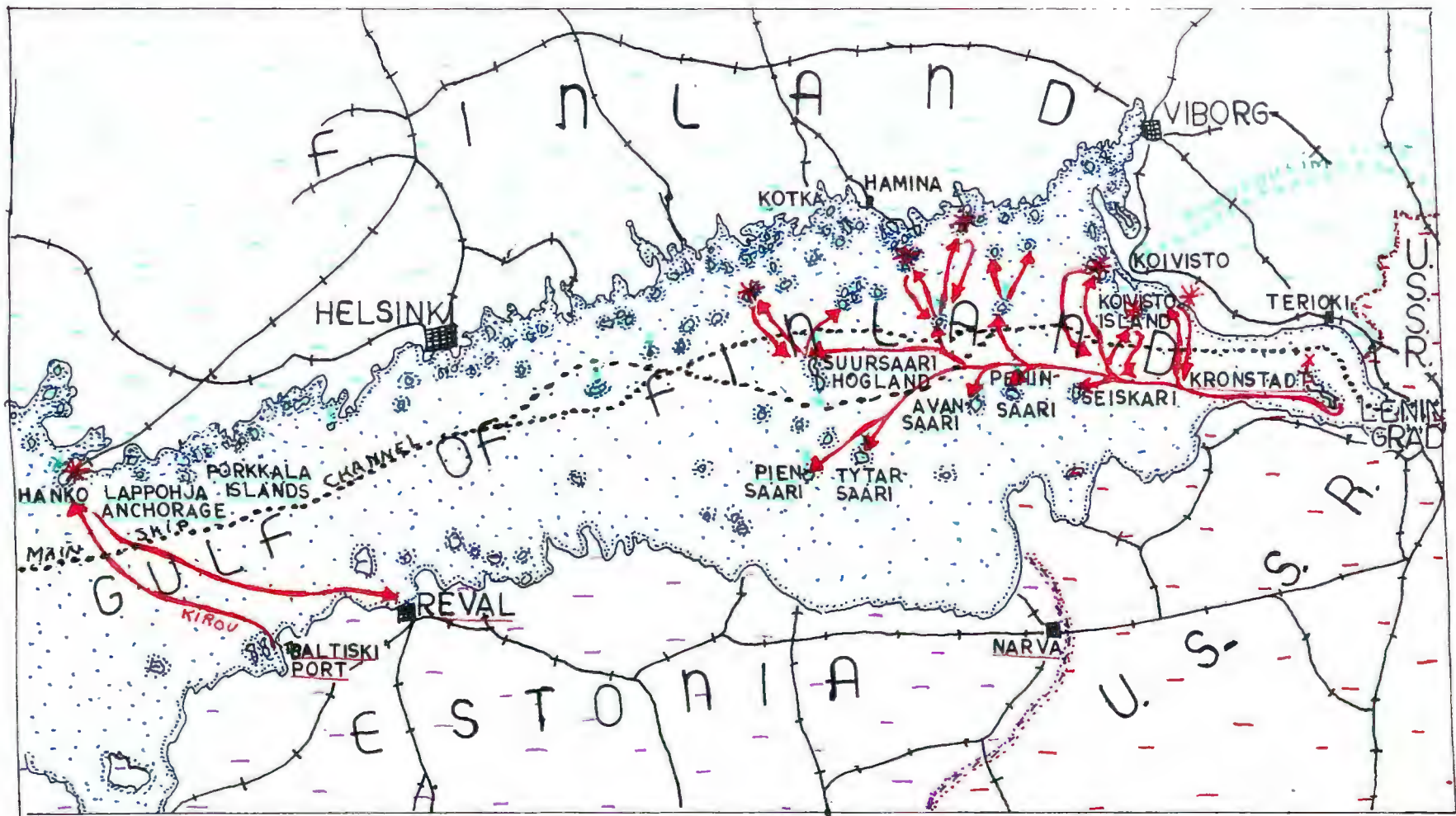
After the occupation of the Finnish Gulf islands, the Red Fleet began a program of bombardment of the principal Finnish coastal defenses on the western shores of the Karelian Isthmus, the coastal islands and the northern Gulf shore. These are recorded on the map as red arrows which approach and then turn away from their objective. Also red asterisks designate the general areas hit in these bombardments. All of these attacks seem to have had little effect on Finnish abilities to defend their shores.

An interesting note about the Soviet naval strategy in the Gulf of Finland was the relationship between the island occupations, the attempt to seize or destroy Hanko, the bombardment of coastal defense positions and the main ship's channel to Leningrad. On the map it becomes apparent, especially when the primary lighthouses are indicated, that the Reds were actually trying to gain control over this important waterway.

SYMBOLS:

	Political boundaries
	Ships' channels
	Important towns, naval bases, and islands
	Major lighthouses
	Approximate areas of naval bombardment
	Territory of the Republic of Finland
	Territory of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
	Territory of the Republic of Estonia





## THE NAVAL WAR, 1939

SOVIET FORCES: —  
FINNISH FORCES: .

0 10 20 30 40 50

100

150

200

250 KM



## CHAPTER X

### THE AERIAL WAR

(30 November 1939--12 March 1940)

Nothing on the first day of action in the Winter War demonstrated the strategic concept of the Soviet invaders as plainly as their aerial assault on Finland. As one German commentator pointed out:

With the number of planes available to the Russian Air Force (about 600 at the beginning of the action),<sup>1</sup> they could either concentrate upon attacking Finland's military forces and their supply lines, or attempt a terror-saturation attack on the Finnish population.<sup>2</sup>

The Kremlin strategists made the choice of terror bombing to produce dismay and defeatism among the population, although this was repeatedly denied by the official news announcements from the Leningrad Military District,<sup>3</sup> as well as pro-Soviet writers in the west.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the term "Molotov's Bread Baskets" for the multiple incendiary bombs

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," II (28 June 1940), p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., I (31 May 1940), p. 319.

<sup>3</sup>Hinshaw, p. 173.

<sup>4</sup>Kournakoff, p. 129.

used by the Russian planes originated from the clumsy denials from Moscow which proclaimed that the Red Air Force had been merely engaged in dropping bread to "starving Finnish workers."<sup>1</sup> However, the testimony of numerous observers to the fact that the Soviets had bombed towns of even two to three thousand population<sup>2</sup> would seem to destroy the Communist picture of their aerial intentions during the conflict.

The Finnish Air Force began the war with about 170 first-line aircraft, mostly pursuit planes and light bombers.<sup>3</sup> Since there was no substantial aircraft industry in Finland, all of these fighting planes were of foreign design although many were assembled in the State Aircraft Factory.<sup>4</sup> Replacements and parts, however, were still greatly limited.<sup>5</sup>

The Russian accounts of the aerial conflict mentioned only one type of Finnish aircraft in large numbers, but this notation was quite definite. The plane, essentially a defensive pursuit craft, was the Fokker D-21, designed by the Dutch aircraft factory of that name and outfitted for Finnish service with an 850 horsepower Bristol Mercury VIII radial engine, armed with four machine guns. It was of

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<sup>1</sup>Hinshaw, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Werner, Reporterreise in dem Finnischen Kriege (A Report on the Finnish War) (Olten: Otto Walter, 1942), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup>Luukkanen, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

"mixed" construction (both metal and fabric used) and had a fixed undercarriage.<sup>1</sup> This plane had definite weaknesses which became apparent in battle with more modern Russian craft. It had no armor,<sup>2</sup> was armed only with light machine guns,<sup>3</sup> and could scarcely outspeed an unloaded Soviet bomber.<sup>4</sup>

Other Finnish aircraft consisted largely of obsolete English Ripon Blackbird IIA's and Bristol Bulldogs IVA's which, as a Finnish pilot wryly observed "from the performance viewpoint, were all but worthless."<sup>5</sup> Although Russian sources mentioned Finnish aircraft purchased from England and Italy,<sup>6</sup> it would seem that the only planes which arrived in any considerable number were some thirty obsolescent Gloster Gladiator biplanes which were no match for the better Russian pursuit planes.<sup>7</sup> The Italian Fiat G-50's and American Brewster B-WE9's ordered by the Finnish Government arrived too late to be used in the war.<sup>8</sup>

The Soviet Air Force was largely composed of I 16,

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<sup>1</sup>Jane's Fighting Aircraft, 1938, loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Luukkanen, p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>6</sup>P. Krainov, L. Argutinskaya, and L. Kutukov, "Boevoi Kollektiv" (A Military Collective), Krasnaya Zvezda, 4 February 40, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup>Luukkanen, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 75 and 127.



I 18 and I 153 pursuit planes which had about a 500 mile range<sup>1</sup> and SB2, DB3, ZAR135 and some TB3 (Ant 4) bombers, mostly of the two-engined type.<sup>2</sup> These bombers were restricted in range and bomb load. They were primarily developed to support ground operations which can be determined from their limited range of some 1300 kilometers.<sup>3</sup>

The principal Soviet air bases for the war were evidently located at Kantalshti in Soviet Karelia, and Baltiski Port, Haapsalu and Oezel in Estonia.<sup>4</sup> It seemed likely that the bombers would have been based in Estonia with the pursuit planes mainly in the Karelian airfields. This conclusion is supported by the Soviet stories and articles about bomber flights, many of which recount that they flew over the Gulf of Finland before coming over their target areas. As one Soviet navigator put it:

For twenty minutes we flew over water. Here we cannot orient ourselves. Only the waves rolled. We sometimes had to fly only fifteen meters or less above them . . . We had to go unerringly to the point of orientation in order to properly make our maneuver to the target . . .<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Parry, The Russian Cavalcade, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," III (5 July 1940), p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>J. M. Spraight, "The War in the Air," Foreign Affairs (March 1940), p. 402.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," IV (12 July 1940), p. 405.

<sup>5</sup>Anisinov, "Udar o Sjivoi Sile Vraga" (A Blow at the Vital Force of the Enemy), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 77.



As should be noted, this necessity was troublesome in the beginning because of the very bad flying weather. Other Red airmen reported: "we had only maps and the clock to orient ourselves. Barely through the openings in the clouds could we see the land which was not known to us."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, one flight of bombers which was to attack a designated target in Helsinki early in the war was forced by the weather to fly to their secondary target instead.<sup>2</sup> The best testimony as to the climatic conditions of the first two days of the war came from one of these stories:

It was a warm November night. In the sky the thick clouds prevented us from seeing any light. Rain fell continuously. (Even with the approach of dawn the weather did not change.) As before, the sky was covered by clouds. Visibility was terrible. A light, soft snow was falling . . . In the clouds and heavy fog the navigator had a difficult time.<sup>3</sup>

Thus one can say that the weather on the opening period of the war was not too good for a sustained aerial assault on Finland. As a German journalist noted:

Snow storms and clouds made a navigation problem. The snow cover prevented the Russians from distinguishing the difference between water and land which also contributed to their problems.<sup>4</sup>

These poor weather conditions apparently prevailed over much of southern Finland during the first eighteen days of the

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<sup>1</sup>Riebakov, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>I. Riebakov, "Perviei Violet" (The First Flight), Krasnaya Zvezda, 4 December 1939, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Mihailovskii, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 259.

war. Evidence of this and the consequent restriction of Soviet aerial activity can be noted in the remarks of a member of a decorated bomber squadron:

Only one thing bothered us: there was no summer wind. The 'heavenly' seal embroiled all of our maps.

The dark, rainy days were replaced by frost and snowstorms. As if in defiance there was not one day of good weather. It was hard to wait for the meteorological section for they could not predict satisfactory weather!

But then on the synoptic maps appeared the edge of a cyclone and on 19 December there was promise of better weather conditions; it was, it was true . . . only a small 'strip' of clear weather but everyone could fly. After one flight had gotten off, however, the weather became bad again and we had to sit here like a crawfish in chalk.

On 20 December, the night before comrade Stalin's birthday, we went out to our airplanes. Again there was no flight. The weather could hardly have been improved upon for the enemy, but we, for the first time in twenty days, saw a strip of rosy sunset. Everyone rejoiced at the improvement in the weather.

Despite many false starts, the mission was successfully flown on the 21st and the planes began their return trip. The return route was cleverly complex. The weather had again deteriorated. The last seventy kilometers were flown in snow at an altitude of not more than one hundred meters. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This degeneration in the weather which seemed to have prevented any large-scale bombing raids probably resulted in a shift in emphasis in the Soviet plan of aerial attack. While there were undoubtedly many raids on Finnish population centers after the weather began to clear in late December,<sup>2</sup> none of these are recounted in Russian records. Instead the

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<sup>1</sup>K. Golubenko, "V Chest Lubimovo Stalina" (In Honor of the Beloved Stalin), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 253-256.

<sup>2</sup>Vallotton, pp. 102-111.

emphasis shifted to the bombing of communication lines, troop concentrations and airfields. Russian silence on terror raids no doubt sprang from an attempt to conceal the failure of their initial strategy. By late December it had at last become apparent, even to the Communists, that during the first phase of fighting their Air Force had tended to "make their missions in the deep areas of the Whitefinns but not on the battlefield."<sup>1</sup> As a result planes were shifted from terror bombing to the objective of aiding the tactical advance of the Red Army.

A German commentator who noted this easement of terror bombing ascribed it to the effectiveness of Finnish anti-aircraft fire. In his report he pointed out that ". . . the Finnish antiaircraft drove the Soviet bombers to greater heights: 1000 meters at the beginning, 300-400 meters at mid-point and 5000-7000 meters at the end."<sup>2</sup> On this subject the Russians, while admitting to this increasingly greater altitude, said that the reason their planes flew higher throughout the remainder of the conflict was that the gradually clearing weather permitted them to spot their targets more effectively from greater elevations.<sup>3</sup>

The power of Finnish antiaircraft guns would certainly

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<sup>1</sup>Kuz'min, pp. 237-238.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 267.

<sup>3</sup>P. Nahalov, "Pyat Reidov v Tiel Vraga" (Five Roads into the Enemy's Rear), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 121-122.



be justified if the figure of 314 Soviet aircraft downed and more than 300 damaged could be substantiated.<sup>1</sup> Although one can be somewhat suspicious of such high figures of destruction for antiaircraft fire, there is some support for this assumption because just about every account of Soviet bombing missions makes mention of the heavy concentrations of anti-aircraft fire encountered and described in some detail the means taken by Red pilots to avoid this danger.

Another point which arouses the interest of the reader of Russian stories was the problem of aerial protection for the Soviet bombers. One observer noted that the Russian bomber formations in the early stages of the war were not often accompanied by any pursuit planes.<sup>2</sup> If true, this might account for the Finnish claims of the high losses of Soviet aircraft shot down by their pursuit aircraft.<sup>3</sup> It would seem from this that the bomber force in the Soviet Air Force was somewhat of an orphan service. This may well have come from the fact that the Soviet Air Force had recently suffered a rather thorough "purge" which had seen the loss of the Commander-in-Chief Iakov Ivanovich Alksnis and his deputy V. V. Khripin, both advocates of large

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<sup>1</sup>Mannerheim, p. 370.

<sup>2</sup>Luukkanen, pp. 28-29.

<sup>3</sup>Hannula, p. 104.



bombers.<sup>1</sup> The result of this move was to place the new Air Force commander, General Novikov, more firmly under army control.<sup>2</sup> The ultimate result was that the Soviet Air Force which opened the Winter War was essentially "a tactical air force for supporting continental land armies . . . with no effective long range bomber force to support long-term strategic plans directed against enemy industry or communications."<sup>3</sup> There was also considerable evidence that training in bomber escort, night flying, and long-distance operations had largely been scrapped within the Soviet Air Force.<sup>4</sup> All these deficiencies would account for the poor showing of the Soviet Air Force in the Winter War.

The serious student of military history would generally be inclined to dismiss some of this information as a gross exaggeration at best and blatant propaganda at worst. However, as one reads through the various accounts of Soviet bombing attacks, written by many authors, one receives the distinct impression that Russian pursuit aircraft normally did not accompany bombers to their targets. At least the recollections of the bomber crews usually fail to mention

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<sup>1</sup>William C. Chapman, "The Soviet Air Force; History and Organization" (unpublished M.A. thesis, Georgetown University, 1964), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Lee Asher, The Soviet Air Force (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1950), p. 35.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

the presence of any protecting fighter planes until they return to Soviet territory.

As an example of all this there was the record of an attack of eleven Finnish interceptors upon a Soviet bomber which was heroically beaten off by radioman-gunner, one Fedor Lopatin. Throughout this desperate fight there was no mention of accompanying Soviet fighter aircraft.<sup>1</sup>

This lack of mention was especially true of the earlier period of the conflict. In the accounts of later aerial action there was some notation of pursuit planes which accompanied the bombers for part of their flight, but even here they do not seem to have played an important role.<sup>2</sup> It was much more common, even in the latter phases of the war, for the Soviet aerial gunner in the bomber to drive the Finnish interceptors off with his accurate machine gun fire<sup>3</sup> or for the bomber pilot to lose them in cloud cover.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the stories about fighter planes all mentioned that one of the tasks of the fighters was to accompany bombers on their missions. However, most Soviet

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<sup>1</sup>I. Riebakov, "Strelok-Radist Fedor Lopatin" (The Radioman-Gunner Fedor Lopatin), Krasnaya Zvezda, 5 January 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ya. Potehin, "Podvig Kapitan Trusova" (The Deed of Captain Trusov), Krasnaya Zvezda, 14 February 1940, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Riebakov, "Vozdieshnie Nalet"; Aleksandr Gutman, "Palet Biel Normalniem" (The Mission Was Normal), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 230.

<sup>4</sup>Anisimov, loc. cit.

pursuit squadrons seem to have concentrated on flying the front-line patrols, shooting down Finnish aircraft, firing on antiaircraft guns and even dropping propaganda leaflets.<sup>1</sup> From the descriptions concerning the relations between the pursuit planes and the bombers, it seemed obvious that the Soviet interceptors did not accompany the bombers on their long raids, possibly because of their own limited range. In one account the patrolling pursuit planes just happened to notice some returning bombers under attack by Finnish interceptors. Although the Russian pursuits drove the enemy away, the author made it very clear that the bombers had been having a very rough time up to that point.<sup>2</sup> In another instance of Soviet pursuit planes detailed to cover their bombers, the pursuits accompanied the bombers to the limit of their flight radius and then were relieved by another squadron of fighters which awaited the return of the bombers.<sup>3</sup> Apparently, as has been suggested, the Russian interceptors were limited by their range to an area of some 100 kilometers within Finland. While this would take in a good deal of southeastern Finland, the limitations of weather and the lack of proper navigation instruments (hardly possible in single seater planes) would keep them from making too many

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<sup>1</sup>M. Borisov, "Iz Dnevnik Latchika-Istrebitelya" (From a Fighter-Pilot's Diary), Boi v Finlyandi (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 48.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 53.



long distance flights.

As the Russian articles come to the last part of the Winter War, there is much more emphasis on the attacks on supply dumps, railroad yards and even the defensive fortifications of the Mannerheim Line. An interesting note about this duty was entered by the commander of a pursuit wing:

The pursuit planes were ordered to scout a large area of the Karelian Isthmus. My pilots were young, and not yet experienced in scouting. At night, after the missions, I taught them how to determine the strength of the enemy columns by their length, how to orient themselves by the high command's maps and so forth.<sup>1</sup>

With this sort of on-the-spot training there may have been something to the German observation that Soviet flyers in the beginning of the war had shown "stiff ineptness" and an inability to avoid Finnish antiaircraft fire.<sup>2</sup>

In the same Soviet recollection about pursuit aviation, the author related how these same pilots (after their extensive training, no doubt) managed to destroy a number of Finnish antitank guns near Laapijasvo on 18 or 19 February which presumably permitted Red Army tanks to occupy the village.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the program of systematic attacks upon Finnish defensive emplacements, according to reports was very effective. For it

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<sup>1</sup>N. Toropchin, "Istrebiteli" (The Pursuit Planes), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 233.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," III (12 July 1940), p. 406.

<sup>3</sup>Toropchin, p. 231.



subdued the Whitefinn zeal for the war. The flights of the Soviet flyers blocked the enemy's daily movements within a radius of one hundred kilometers from the front. When one flew over the terrain of Finland, it appeared to be a wasteland where everything was dead.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently the aerial offensive which began with good weather in mid-January was primarily aimed at aiding the advance of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus. This, of course, did not mean that the Soviet bombers had given up their attacks on population centers and rear communication lines. However, from Russian sources it would seem that the major emphasis swung largely to helping break the Mannerheim Line.

One of the later recollections of aerial combat involved a direct attack upon a known fortification in the Karhula area. This was the fort on Hill 38.2, evidently an extremely strong position if other accounts are to be believed. The bombers, although troubled by bad weather over the Gulf of Finland (which indicated that their base was in Estonia) were able to find their way to the Karhula defense knot despite the fact that they had been ordered to return to their bases. The squadron commander, demonstrating some real experience with support bombing:

. . . did not immediately turn towards the target. He continued to fly along his original bearing in order to throw the enemy observers off as to his real intention. He even lessened his

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

speed so that the other planes could close up and prepare to meet possible pursuit planes.<sup>1</sup>

The improvement in bombing tactics and organization evident in these recollections was confirmed by Finnish sources which reported that during this period the, "Russians were keeping better bombing formation with . . . better discipline for their formations."<sup>2</sup>

In the case of this attack on Karhula, the pilots claimed that their bombs had fallen directly on the fort at Hill 38.2 and completely smashed it. While this claim of destruction of principal fortifications in the Mannerheim Line by a single bombing raid may be in doubt, it indicates that the medium bombers of the Soviet Air Force based in Estonia were taking a much more active role in supporting the Red Army's advance on the Karelian Isthmus than had been the case in the earlier part of the campaign.

One of the most unusual incidents recorded in Soviet recollections was the account of the use of a balloon to direct artillery fire in the region of Summa-yarvi. This balloon seemed to have been very much like those utilized during World War I for much the same purpose. It is interesting to note that the Russians depended on their anti-aircraft guns to protect this balloon rather than on a patrol

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<sup>1</sup>Aleksandr Gutman, "Yeskadril'ya Nad Karhulai" (Squadrons over Karhula), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 332.

<sup>2</sup>Luukkanen, p. 54.

of pursuit planes.<sup>1</sup> This incident also indicated that by one means or another the Red Air Force had come to dominate the air over the Mannerheim Line during the latter period of the war, although they were never able to eliminate entirely a certain amount of Finnish interference with their activities. It was also a fact of some significance that Finnish sources also mentioned the use of this balloon in the Summa front, thus confirming the Russian account.<sup>2</sup>

Support of the fighting front evidently involved the Red Air Force in the difficult problem of night patrolling to keep the roads and railroads under constant surveillance and attack. According to at least one recollection, it would seem to have been the Russian habit to send out individual bombers on these night patrols over a particular road or railroad center and have them attack any target of opportunity. It is also interesting to note from the same story that the Finns were obviously doing much the same thing, for the Soviet bomber crew had a most difficult time persuading their own searchlight defenses along the front that the plane involved was one of their own.<sup>3</sup>

On this particular flight, the patrolling bomber

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<sup>1</sup>S. Lavrent'ev, "Razvedka s Ayerostate" (The Patrol from a Balloon), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), pp. 316-317.

<sup>2</sup>Saraja, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup>I. Zavrasjnov, "Nochoi Nalet" (Night Flight), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 347.



managed to fire on several columns of trucks which must have considered themselves relatively safe because they still had their lights on.<sup>1</sup> After machine gunning the truck columns, the bomber then dropped its load on various targets, avoided Finnish searchlights and pursuit planes, and returned to another airdrome.<sup>2</sup> The Finns confirmed much of the circumstances of this type of attack by noting that their pursuits had a most difficult time locating and destroying these Russian night bombers.<sup>3</sup>

The effects of the constant Soviet aerial activity on the Finnish defenders seemed to have varied with the position threatened. The front-line troops merely moved into their holes and bunkers to let them pass over.<sup>4</sup> The infantry seems to have regarded them as relatively minor annoyances which tended to arrive on schedule and thus were not able to inflict real damage.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand Finnish reports from eastern Karelia made it clear that in the latter days of the war the Red Air Force was particularly effective in temporarily isolating specific front-line sectors by their constant aerial patrols over Finnish communication lines.<sup>6</sup> The development of these

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 348.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 349.

<sup>3</sup>Luukkanen, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>Saraja, pp. 8-9.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>6</sup>Palolampi, p. 185.



tactics also was relatively effective in aiding the Red Army attack on the Mannerheim Line during February-March 1939.<sup>1</sup>

Another important mission of the Red aerial arm during the clear weather of January and February was flying defensive patrols over Leningrad and its vicinity. Despite some extreme claims by pro-Finnish reporters,<sup>2</sup> it would appear that the Russian boast that "over this city (Leningrad) the enemy will never fly"<sup>3</sup> was pretty much true during the Winter War. This concern for Leningrad would seem to substantiate the rather uncertain reports of the period that Finnish bombers did make some light raids across the Gulf of Finland, either upon Kronstadt<sup>4</sup> or the Estonian island of Varvolla (Stenskaari) near Baltiski Port.<sup>5</sup> Whatever the truth about these air raids they obviously could have had very little effect on the over-all aerial superiority of the Soviet Air Force.

As to the performance of the Soviet pilots and aircraft during the war there are several conflicting reports. While

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>2</sup>K. J. Eskelund, "Finnish Pamphlets Rain on Leningrad," New York Times, 5 January 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>A. Pahomov, "Stalinskaya Vahta" (A Stalin Watch), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 252.

<sup>4</sup>K. J. Eskelund, "Raids on Red Bases by Finns Reported," New York Times, 22 January 1940, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Walter A. Leonard, State Department Telegram No. 167, 28 December 1939 and State Department Memorandum No. 242, 18 January 1940, State Department Files.

all of these are from largely anti-Soviet sources, their comments cannot be entirely disregarded in any estimation of the aerial conflict over Finland. Most of them agree that during the early days of the war the Red Air Force was not too effective, except for their terror bombing of civilian targets. Since by the best estimation of all observers, the Soviets only committed some 600-800 aircraft during the month of December and early January, plus the uncertain weather which would have severely restricted any large-scale aerial activity, all would support the idea that such an evaluation of the Russian aerial performance was probably somewhere near the truth.<sup>1</sup>

The clear lessons that can be derived from Soviet records generally chime with what foreign observers (especially the Germans) noted about the aerial war. First there seems little doubt that Russian bombing efforts in early December concentrated upon the destruction of civilian objectives far beyond the immediate front lines and were probably an attempt at "terror tactics" to decrease the already low (from Soviet information) civilian morale.<sup>2</sup> Of this entire campaign however, it can be safely said that: "Terror tactics were of little use. They merely hardened Finnish resolve to fight and provided cases for the propaganda

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 261.

<sup>2</sup>Frank P. Hayes, "Evaluation of Finnish Forces," State Department Memorandum No. 3, 8 January 1940, State Department Files.

writers."<sup>1</sup>

A continuation of poor weather and the continued resistance of the Finns revealed that such tactics had failed, so the Russians shifted over to a combination of enlarged bombing attacks, both by day and night, against military targets, especially railroads and roads near the front lines. This was reinforced by selective heavy raids against specific industrial targets within easy range of Soviet medium bombers (750 kilometers).<sup>2</sup> Apparently even this was not too effective, despite Finnish fears,<sup>3</sup> because, "there was never enough planes, Finnish industry was decentralized and the alarm system was good."<sup>4</sup>

Soviet pilots, however, must have grown better with experience.<sup>5</sup> The later stories in the Russian material reveal that more bombers were being escorted by pursuit planes and were exercising greater caution over areas of heavy antiaircraft concentrations. Indeed, their improvement plus their increase in numbers led to an interesting rumor which apparently became current in Finland at the time. This was the report that "it was seriously believed among

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 269.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," III (5 July 1940), p. 393.

<sup>3</sup>Mannerheim, p. 369.

<sup>4</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, pp. 266-267.

<sup>5</sup>Luukkanen, p. 62.



large sectors of the Finnish population that German pilots had taken over the execution or at least the leadership of the air attacks."<sup>1</sup> Thus through the development of skills in combat plus a great increase in numbers<sup>2</sup> the Soviet aerial fleet had finally become effective against Finnish resistance, especially on the Karelian Isthmus.

This experience, as with much in the Winter War, seems to have had its effect upon subsequent Russian aerial strategy. The relative failure of high altitude terror bombing against the Finns<sup>3</sup> appear to have soured the leaders of the Red Air Force on the possibility of this type of attack having any immediate effect upon enemy resistance.<sup>4</sup> Certainly it was a fact that the Soviets in World War II did very little long-range bombing and seemed to have had little understanding of its long-term effect upon German resistance. Indeed, the Soviet Union, which at one time led in the construction of heavy, multi-engined aircraft,<sup>5</sup> possessed no mass-produced heavy bomber at the end of the

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," IV (12 July 1940), p. 406.

<sup>2</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," III (5 July 1940), p. 394.

<sup>4</sup>Robert A. Kilmarx, History of Soviet Air Power (New York: Praeger, 1962), p. 152.

<sup>5</sup>Richard E. Stockwell, Soviet Air Power (New York: Pageant Press, 1956), pp. 9-11.



war. Thus the Soviet experiences in the Winter War probably had a great deal to do with their tactics and strategy during World War II.

## CHAPTER XI

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to examine representative material published by the Soviet Union concerning its war with Finland during the winter of 1939-1940. From this study it would seem that the Russian press coverage of this conflict changed in relation to the military and diplomatic situation. By studying these changes it may be possible to gain some understanding of just what the Kremlin leaders were trying to convey to their people and to what extent the Russian press itself was influenced by the events of the war.

For the first twenty-six days of the prewar period Soviet newspapers had two aims: to exert indirect pressure upon the Finns to force them to agree to the Russian terms for a Baltic settlement, and to persuade the Soviet people that the reluctance of the "bourgeois government of Finland" to accept these terms was evidence of a hostile attitude towards the USSR. Interspersed among these two major themes were various stories which revealed that the Finnish working classes, suppressed economically and politically by their bankrupted rulers, were utterly opposed to this hostile attitude towards the "nation of socialism."

With the "Mainila Incident" on 26 November 1939 the Kremlin program shifted into high gear. The press denounced this "attack on the peaceful Soviet borderguards" as an "attempt of the Finnish military to create trouble along the Russo-Finnish border." The stories insisted that the Soviet population was solidly behind the efforts of their "party and government" to "guarantee the safety of the City of Lenin." At first this campaign seemed to be aimed at warning the Helsinki Government that they must quickly accept the Soviet proposals for the withdrawal of Finnish troops from the immediate border area in order to prevent further trouble. When the Finns proved reluctant to comply, however, the Soviet press effort openly called for the punishment of the "irresponsible Finnish gang, in their own territory if necessary." Through this period the Communist writers, foreign and domestic, continued to insist with great vigor that the broad mass of Finnish people would not support their militaristic leaders and would welcome Russian "liberation" as had the oppressed proletariat of eastern Poland.

During the first four days of the Winter War, Soviet newspapers applauded the victorious campaign to overthrow the "Whitebandits" in Finland. They confidently anticipated swift defeat for the reactionary Finnish bourgeoisie which, for twenty long years, had held their people under the yoke of international capitalism. All this, it was claimed, was substantiated by the "voluntary" establishment of a "Peoples'

Government" in Terioki by the "liberated" proletariat of Finland under the leadership of the exiled Finnish Communist leader, Otto Kuusinen. This organization, Soviet journalists insisted, would provide the leadership necessary to direct the great mass of disgusted Finnish workers and small peasants in a revolution against their oppressors, the Helsinki bourgeois political leaders. Although "eyewitness reports" of some Soviet war correspondents revealed difficulties in the triumphant march of the Red Army into Finland, there could have been little doubt in the minds of Russian readers that their liberating armies would soon "plant the banner of triumphant socialism" upon the presidential palace in Helsinki, and that the "bourgeois political gamblers" there would soon be in flight from the wrath of the people.

Then from 5 to 11 December space devoted to the Winter War in Russian newspapers dropped perceptibly. The hopeful atmosphere of the first four days remained the keynote of such articles as did appear, bolstered by reports of "conditions in liberated Finland" sent out by Soviet correspondents. These articles described the adverse effect of the war on the inhabitants of occupied towns, the hostility of Finnish war prisoners towards their officers, and the widespread dislike for the policies of the Helsinki regime. They emphatically stated that there was a strong pro-Russian attitude among the people interviewed by Soviet reporters. Such reportage no doubt encouraged the Russian people to believe that the



Finnish population was welcoming the Red Army as its liberators. As a consequence of such news coverage it might not have been difficult for Russian readers to accept the judgment of the Soviet press that "Whitefinn resistance has been reduced to a few nondescript gangs of fanatical Schutzcorps and Jaegers." Soviet newspapers insisted too that very soon there would be an end to this "focus of war on our northwestern borders."

Much of this type of news coverage came to an abrupt halt on 12 December 1939. War news, except for the "Operations Reports of the Leningrad Military District," was reduced to scattered articles and the stories of the actions of the many "Heroes of the Soviet Union in battle against the Whitefinns." It was as though Kremlin leaders wanted the Russian people to forget about the earlier expectations of a swift victory over the "forces of Finnish reaction."

Generally, Soviet editorial opinion remained essentially as before with denunciations of the "terror" initiated by the Ryti-Tanner regime in Helsinki and the continued prediction of a proletarian revolt against this government. However, mention of the "Peoples' Democratic Republic of Finland" was greatly reduced while the failure of the proletarian revolt was explained as a consequence of the "bloody terror" carried on by Helsinki leaders. The inability of Russian arms to achieve the expected swift success over the "scattered Whitefinn gangs" was explained by the difficulties

of weather, terrain and the extremely strong "Mannerheim" fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus.

By early February 1940 there were signs that Soviet leaders, in contrast to their previous stand, were prepared to deal with the Helsinki regime to reach a settlement of the Baltic problem. Illustrative of this change was the fact that news of the puppet Terioki Government and its "First Corps of the Finnish Peoples' Army" largely disappeared from Russian newspapers when the Red Army "steamroller" finally began to succeed in penetrating the Mannerheim Line during the early part of that month.

Press releases of the final month of the Winter War show a growing confidence in ultimate Soviet victory. The solid accomplishments of Russian leadership, both diplomatic and military, were reported by all the prominent Soviet news services. Even the Red Army could accept congratulations on its success in breaking the fortifications of the Mannerheim Line. There was no doubt about it in the Russian press, victory was in the air.

When the Treaty of Moscow was announced, the Soviet press, of course, greeted the settlement of the just result of the "wise Stalin policy of peace." The attitude of the newspapers concerning this treaty no doubt reflected the sincere joy felt by the Russian people at the removal of what they had been led to believe was a potential danger to their nation.

One of the most difficult things to deduce from the Soviet press during the Winter War was its effect upon the Russian people and especially Red Army personnel. Did the earlier expectations of an easy victory have any influence on the morale of the average Soviet soldier when it continued to insist that the Finnish armed forces were being easily crushed between the hammer of the "liberating" Red Army and the anvil of internal revolt? This is very difficult to answer because, quite naturally, the Kremlin was not likely to publicize the failure of its estimation of the situation. On the other hand, some indirect evidence can be found in the references to the attitudes among the Soviet population and captured Russian soldiers contained in the books and articles of English, American and European observers who happened to be in either Russia or Finland during the conflict.

The depressing effect of the failure of earlier hopes for swift victory on the civilian population of the USSR was to some degree borne out by an observation of the Moscow correspondent of the New York Times who reported that the "Soviet populace had been taught to expect that Soviet troops would enter Helsinki within a few days and at the most a week after the outbreak of the war."<sup>1</sup> Another American reporter wrote of this expectation as stated by a Russian prisoner-of-war:

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<sup>1</sup>G. E. D. Gedye, "Rumors Stir Russian Public," New York Times, 27 December 1939, p. 1.



Our political commissars told us that we would be in Helsinki by December 21st, Stalin's birthday. The Red Army, we were told, planned to make Stalin a birthday present of Finland.<sup>1</sup>

The American Ambassador to the USSR, Lawrence A. Steinhardt also noted some evidence of civilian discontent as a result of the disappointment over the failure of a swift victory when he reported:

. . . civilian morale is low. It has been impossible . . . to conceal from the population of Leningrad that the Soviet army has encountered serious reverses . . . The attitude of the people is more one of resignation and confusion than of revolt.<sup>2</sup>

Later in a much less authoritative report on civilian discontent in the Soviet Union the ambassador stated as follows:

About a week ago (18-19 January 1940) (there was) a riot at the Kaluga hospital. Population of the city (Leningrad) refused to work and stood two days and nights. On the third day food shortages relieved. No arrests made of rioters or population.<sup>3</sup>

Along these same lines, the British observer Langdon Davis reported that "the Russians mingled with their military preparations many of the elements of a political parade, and at the beginning seemed undecided as to whether their advance would be best facilitated by guns or by propaganda."<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup>Elliston, p. 372.

<sup>2</sup>Lawrence A. Steinhardt, State Department Telegram No. 30, 6 January 1940.

<sup>3</sup>Steinhardt, State Department Telegram No. 106, 15 January 1940.

<sup>4</sup>Langdon Davis, p. 8.



initial mistake of Soviet reliance on political subversion was even noted by some pro-Communist writers. Typical was the statement that "undoubtedly there were errors of the Red High Command at the outset of the campaign, based primarily on faulty political calculations."<sup>1</sup>

As for the reaction of at least one Russian prisoner-of-war, a British labor leader reported what the former said about the conflict:

Well, they told us that Finland had attacked Russia and that the Finnish workers had asked for our help against their capitalistic oppressors. But we have been here ten days now and I think there must be something wrong about this because people live so much better than we do.<sup>2</sup>

More evidence of confusion among the personnel of the Red Army between the reports of their leaders and the actual situation can be found in an interview with a captured Soviet officer who stated:

At first . . . there was great enthusiasm (for the war) because the people had thought it was going to be another march into Poland. But now they are disillusioned. The soldiers were cold, hungry and facing totally unexpected dangers and now they only wanted to get out of it.<sup>3</sup>

Another observer who interviewed Russian prisoners in Finland reported that in response to his questions about why

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<sup>1</sup>William Peyton Coates and Zelda K. Coates, The Soviet-Finnish Campaign, 1939-1940 (London: Eldon Press, 1942), p. vii.

<sup>2</sup>Citrine, p. 177.

<sup>3</sup>Edward Henry Harold Ward, Despatches from Finland: January-April 1940 (London: John Lane, 1940), p. 68.

Russia was fighting against Finland one interrogee responded: "They told us (but I did not believe it), that Finland had attacked Russia and the Finns had killed many of our soldiers." As proof, he added, that this story had been in the newspapers "and what is printed is surely true." All this was described as evidence that the average Red Army man had been much depressed by the contrast between the reports in his newspapers and the reality of the situation in Finland.<sup>1</sup>

It can be argued that this testimony might have been just as erroneous as the Soviet newspaper reports upon which such testimony was based. It should be noted, however, that none of the observers quoted above could read Russian, and yet the answers from the interrogees contained the same confidential predictions found in Soviet newspaper articles of late November and early December 1939. This would tend to verify the fact that these observers actually did interview Russian prisoners-of-war and that the attitude of the men interviewed was substantially what was reported.

For almost half-a-month before the beginning of the war the Russian soldier had been told by his leaders and newspapers that the Finnish Army was only a hollow shell, bolstered by the support of western imperialists. Indeed, at the first blow of the "victorious forces of socialism," so the myth ran, the bourgeois government of Finland would come down like a "house of cards," and he would be welcomed

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<sup>1</sup>Vallotton, p. 74.

as a liberator by the Finnish proletariat. The contrast between expectation and reality may well have led the Red Army man to feel that someone had made a mistake. Badly directed by his officers, who apparently based their plans of invasion on these same political miscalculations, the Russian fighting man may well have put forth less than his maximum effort in the early days of the campaign.

The results of the Kremlin-directed press brings up this question: How well did Soviet newspapers do their job of reporting the news during the Winter War? To answer this it must be understood that almost all newspapers seek to accomplish two aims. First they try to gain and keep the confidence and interest of their readers by reporting the news accurately and quickly. Then, utilizing this confidence, they seek to influence the thinking of their readers either by "slanting" the news or through the use of editorial comments. It might be supposed that the Russian press, so carefully controlled by the Communist Party, would have no need to gain and keep the confidence of the average reader. This assumption cannot be substantiated by this study.

To begin with, no matter how much they deviated from the truth, the Russian newspaper writers were very careful not to lie about items that could be verified by the Russian soldiers. It was perfectly in order for them to picture "White Finland" as a country defended only by a small group of "criminal Schutzcorps and Jaegers" as long as the Soviet



fighting man could not learn the truth. Once the Red Army had come into close contact with the Finnish defense forces, however, it became necessary to abandon this description of the "Mannerheim armies."

Another indication of the fact that Soviet press leaders were willing to change their line was the abrupt halt made in early newspaper stories which had predicted a swift victory over the forces of the "unpopular bankrupt Whitefinn regime." When, on about 12 December 1939, it became painfully apparent that there would be no blitzkrieg in Finland, the Kremlin immediately shifted its emphasis. From then on the difficulties of the invasion were played up and the Red Army was congratulated for having been able to advance against formidable natural obstacles, bad weather, and strong opposition from the enemy. Thereafter, although the "bandit gang of Helsingfors" was still denounced in ringing tones, Finland was pictured as a strong capitalistic dictatorship which, with the extensive aid proffered by England, France and the United States, had built up a formidable bastion of armed might within her borders. Certainly this later estimation of the fighting potential of the Finns was much closer to the real experiences of the Soviet combat forces.

An excellent example of how Soviet news experts turned reality into a cover for their own earlier inaccuracies was demonstrated by the failure of the expected proletarian revolt in Finland. According to Marxist-Stalinist dogma the



laboring classes of Finland should have risen in revolt against their exploiters as soon as the Red "liberators" crossed the frontier. Nothing of the kind occurred, of course, so some sort of excuse had to be invented that would rationalize this failure for the Soviet people.

Fortunately for the Russian news bosses, if not for the Red Army, the Finns elected to utilize a "scorched earth" policy as a weapon against the invading Communist forces. Due to this policy, the scene which greeted most Russian troops in Finland was one of silent villages, burned houses and dead cattle.<sup>1</sup> This picture gave the Kremlin news writers their excuse. Obviously, they stated, the "reactionary Whitefinn leaders," fearing possible contact between the discontented working masses and their "armies of liberation," had forcibly evacuated the workers and peasants from the Red Army's path to prevent a union which might well have spread the fires of revolution through White-Finland. The strength of this interesting rationalization lay in the fact that it could be verified by the experiences of Russian combat forces. This explanation demonstrated the ability of Russian journalists to shift their ground when their predictions did not come true.

Perhaps the best example of the relationship between reality and myth in the Soviet press is found in the ubiquitous "Operations Reports." In these communiques it

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<sup>1</sup>Antonov, p. 235.

was proper to inflate the number of captured Finns, the arms taken and the types of fortifications occupied by the Red Army. After all, none of these items could be easily disputed by the average Soviet fighting man. One item, however, that could very readily be checked by a Russian front-line soldier was the name of a town or village reported captured by his unit. In this matter the "Operations Reports" were almost never inaccurate and, indeed, they tended to be somewhat conservative. This illustrated the requirements imposed upon the Soviet press by the events and conditions of the Winter War.

The stories, descriptions and recollections of the Soviet fighting men who took part in the Winter War, found in both books and newspapers, had less of a burden to carry than the daily newspaper stories. In the first place these accounts were about individuals engaged in fighting and so whatever was contained in them would have little immediate effect on the newspaper picture of the conflict. Once the "official" version of the Winter War had been pronounced by V. M. Molotov in his speech of 28 March 1940 there was little that subsequent storytelling had to be concerned about except government censorship problems. As long as there was no sharp disagreement with the essential facts of the Communist record, it was apparently safe to describe any experience which occurred during the period of conflict with the Finns.

To keep in mind what the "official" Kremlin history of the Russo-Finnish War of 1939-1940 encompassed it would be well to recall the major points of Molotov's speech. First, was the myth that the Finns, encouraged by western imperialistic powers, had created an immediate and direct threat to Leningrad in the fall of 1939. It was in answer to this threat that the Soviet Union sent its armed forces into battle in Finland. Secondly, the Red Army had been shackled during the early phase of operations from 30 November 1939 to 26 December 1939 by the difficulties of geography, weather, and the extremely strong Finnish fortifications.<sup>1</sup> Since all these problems were real enough in the experiences of the participants, there could be little controversy between the "official line" and the recollections of the various individuals who had taken part in the campaign. The third point, the one that probably presented the greatest possibility of conflict with the censor, was the ease with which the 7th Red Army broke through the Mannerheim Line during February and March of 1940. Even here, however, personal descriptions of the difficulties encountered in this last great breakthrough seem to have been allowed to appear in published material. Altogether, the great mass of personal recollections, with only a few exceptions, seem to have been honest reports of the combat experiences of the participants.

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<sup>1</sup>Kuz'min, p. 235.



The greatest amount of recollections, as well might be expected, dealt with the land campaign on the Karelian Isthmus. Here the initial difficulties of the Red Army's attack seem to have resulted from the tendency of commanders to order their units forward without proper preparation. In most cases the Russian units, either infantry or armored, would frequently find themselves cut off by encircling Finns or running into totally unknown defense positions. Another problem which plagued these initial moves in the Winter War was the lack of proper coordination between infantry, armor, and artillery which resulted in unsupported, weak, piecemeal attacks and frequently allowed the "bandit-like" Finnish ski troops to penetrate between the units and strike far behind the front lines.<sup>1</sup> In addition to this problem was the vulnerability of the Russian light tanks used in the initial advance to Finnish antitank measures.<sup>2</sup>

Most of these defects were the natural result of poor leadership, reconnaissance, and intelligence. As the personal recollections emphasized, the Red Army had to train and equip units of specialized scouts properly before it could hope to locate, isolate and eventually destroy the enemy. These reports also pinpointed a major defect in ski training which hampered the activities of the Red Army on the Karelian Isthmus.

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<sup>1</sup> V. Korenskii, "Viesota 'Zhamenitaya'" (A Hill Named 'Famous'), Boi v Finlyandii (Moscow: Military Publishers, 1941), p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Andrononikov and Mostovenko, p. 224.



As this material revealed, these defects were recognized and solved one by one. There was a major change in command in the Leningrad Military District in early January 1940. Coordination, especially between infantry, armor and artillery was tightened and the engineers were integrated into the combined operations which began to reduce the Finnish fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus. Special scout units were organized and trained while both the scouts and the regular infantry were given skis and trained in their use. Even the Soviet Air Force during the February advance was apparently shifted from "terror bombing" to close tactical support for the ground units. The picture which emerged from these recollections was one of new leaders pulling otherwise basically good soldiers into a well-oiled machine for the renewed attack on the Mannerheim Line.

There is, of course, one noticeable omission from the Soviet picture of combat experiences during the Winter War. This was the experiences of the Russian soldiers who had taken part in the numerous penetrations of the eastern border of Finland and were so often trapped and cut to pieces in the famous "mottis" by lightly-armed Finnish troops. In the matter of these campaigns the Russian record, loud in its discussion of the deficiencies noted and corrected in the Karelian attack, falls silent. The only mention of these extensive operations in the deep forests of eastern Finland was the note by a pro-Communist writer that such thrusts were

carried out to prevent the concentration of Finnish forces before Viborg.<sup>1</sup> Very likely this defect in Russian tactics was never successfully solved so there would be some reluctance to mention it in a public record.

The naval campaign, in contrast to the land attacks, was largely successful. The Finnish islands in the Gulf of Finland, so critical to winter and spring navigation in that area, were all occupied during the first week of action. The Ribachi Peninsula and Petsamo were seized to protect the water routes to Murmansk and to prevent possible intervention from the west. From the recollections on this phase of the war, however, the difficulties of weather and Finnish resistance to ship bombardment did prevent the Red Fleet from occupying or neutralizing Hanko or enforcing a close naval blockade. The use of major fleet units to attempt the reduction of the Finnish coastal defenses at Koivisto and Muurila were also something less than a glorious success although these efforts did give the Russian naval units some experience at operating in conjunction with aerial forces. In the Soviet records of the naval war there was the feeling that the Red Fleet did very well considering the limitations of weather in the Gulf of Finland and the northern Baltic.

There is some evidence that the timing of the Soviet conflict with the Finns may have been dictated by naval strategy. Almost certainly Russian strategy was based upon

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<sup>1</sup>Hooper, The Soviet Fighting Forces, p. 31.



the immediate need for the protection of Leningrad from naval attack since the only land army in position to threaten the Soviet Union, was the German Wehrmacht, which could have attacked that nation over a wide open frontier.<sup>1</sup> Because December is the last month in which ships can safely move through the Gulf of Finland, the Russian naval attack could only have accomplished its mission in that period before ice would lock it into their bases in the Gulf of Finland. This meant that the Red Army would be forced to move into eastern Finland long before the waterways and swamps had frozen sufficiently to allow the proper deployment of the numerically superior Russian forces.<sup>2</sup> The inescapable conclusion is, therefore, that the Kremlin strategists were fearful of a possible naval threat to Leningrad and were forced to begin their aggression long before the proper season for a swift land attack on Finland but while their fleet units could still support landing and supply operations to the Finnish Gulf islands.

The least amount of material published about the Soviet side of the Winter War concerned the combat activities of the Red Air Force. Despite this, the accounts tend to confirm some opinions of the effectiveness of Soviet aerial action during this conflict. The most notable point was the

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<sup>1</sup>Timothy Andrew Taracouzio, War and Peace in Soviet Diplomacy (New York: Macmillan, 1940), p. 250.

<sup>2</sup>von Schonheinz (15 March 1940), pp. 1766-1767.



failure of terror bombing during the first month of the war to lower Finnish morale significantly,<sup>1</sup> if indeed, it did not stiffen their resolution to fight.<sup>2</sup> The western observers thought this might have been due to poor planning, use of second-rate aerial units and the combined efficiency of Finnish antiaircraft fire and pursuit aviation.<sup>3</sup> But Russian accounts seem to place most of the blame upon bad weather conditions which prevailed over Finland for the first month and a half of action. There were also references to the Finnish defense measures in the Soviet records but, except for antiaircraft fire, little notice was taken of the effectiveness of Finnish pursuit planes.

The most notable switch in the aerial combat record came with the "opening" of the weather over Finland after mid-January 1940. From the stories which date from this period one receives the impression that the Kremlin's "eagles" were exercising greater care in their missions. They began to coordinate their bomber-pursuit plane activities with telling effect and changed their target emphasis from distant population centers to tactical objectives in the immediate area of the Karelian Isthmus. Such new techniques as night patrolling and tactical bombing of

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<sup>1</sup>Werner, p. 86.

<sup>2</sup>Saraja, pp. 46-47.

<sup>3</sup>Borgman, "Der Sowjetische Luftkrieg gegen Finnland," III (12 July 1940), p. 406, and Luukkanen, p. 75.

fortifications make their appearance for the first time. Altogether it would seem that the Russo-Finnish conflict made the Red Air Force a better organized, more flexible striking arm of the Red Army. The one area of de-emphasis, strategic bombing, was apparently due to the disappointment of Russian aerial commanders with the failure of their early efforts to destroy Finnish will to resist with the mass bombing of population centers.

The final conclusion drawn from this examination of the many Soviet records in comparison with accounts of this same conflict from western sources is that Russian leadership did permit a significant amount of truth to "leak" through their close censorship. Indeed, on many points the Russian version of the problems encountered in the Winter War agree very well with the bulk of western commentators. In areas where the two accounts disagree in details, there is a suspicion that this may well have arisen from the difficulties in obtaining concrete information in a confused combat situation.

The efforts of the Kremlin leaders during and after the Winter War to keep their public records somewhere near the truth indicates that even in this period the average Soviet citizen had not become the "Pavlovian reactor" implied in the term the "new Soviet man." Western writers tended to see the Russian citizen and soldier as an unthinking product

of mass training and psychology.<sup>1</sup> The reluctance of the Communist bosses to lie about events and details which could be easily verified by individuals leads one to the conclusion that the average Soviet reader possessed more discernment than he has frequently been credited by some western observers.

There is one last important lesson to be derived from this study which concerns the tendency of many western writers and observers to reject Soviet material as too full of myths and half-truths to be of any use in historical analyses. From the experiences of this writer in handling and analyzing information from Soviet sources, this complete rejection of Soviet material is not acceptable. In order to maintain the confidence of their readers even Soviet publishers and newspaper editors must be careful not to make gross errors in reportage and to repair quickly such errors as are made with either de-emphasis or denials. This necessity of Soviet writers and editors to remain at least within the near realm of fact make Soviet records, if handled properly, very useful to the student of history who may discover unsuspected sources of useful information in analyzing historical events from the Soviet viewpoint.

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<sup>1</sup>Borgman, Der Ueberfall, p. 6.



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Collegiate institutions attended	Dates	Degree	Date of Degree
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University of Maryland	1956-1961	M.A.	1961
University of Maryland	1961-1964	Ph.D.	1968

Major: European History.

Minor: American History.

Positions held: Graduate Assistant,  
University of Maryland,  
1958-1959.

Instructor,  
Hood College,  
Frederick, Maryland,  
1961.

Assistant Professor,  
Fairmont State College,  
Fairmont, West Virginia,  
1962-1963.

Assistant Professor,  
Wayne State College,  
Wayne, Nebraska,  
1964 to present.