

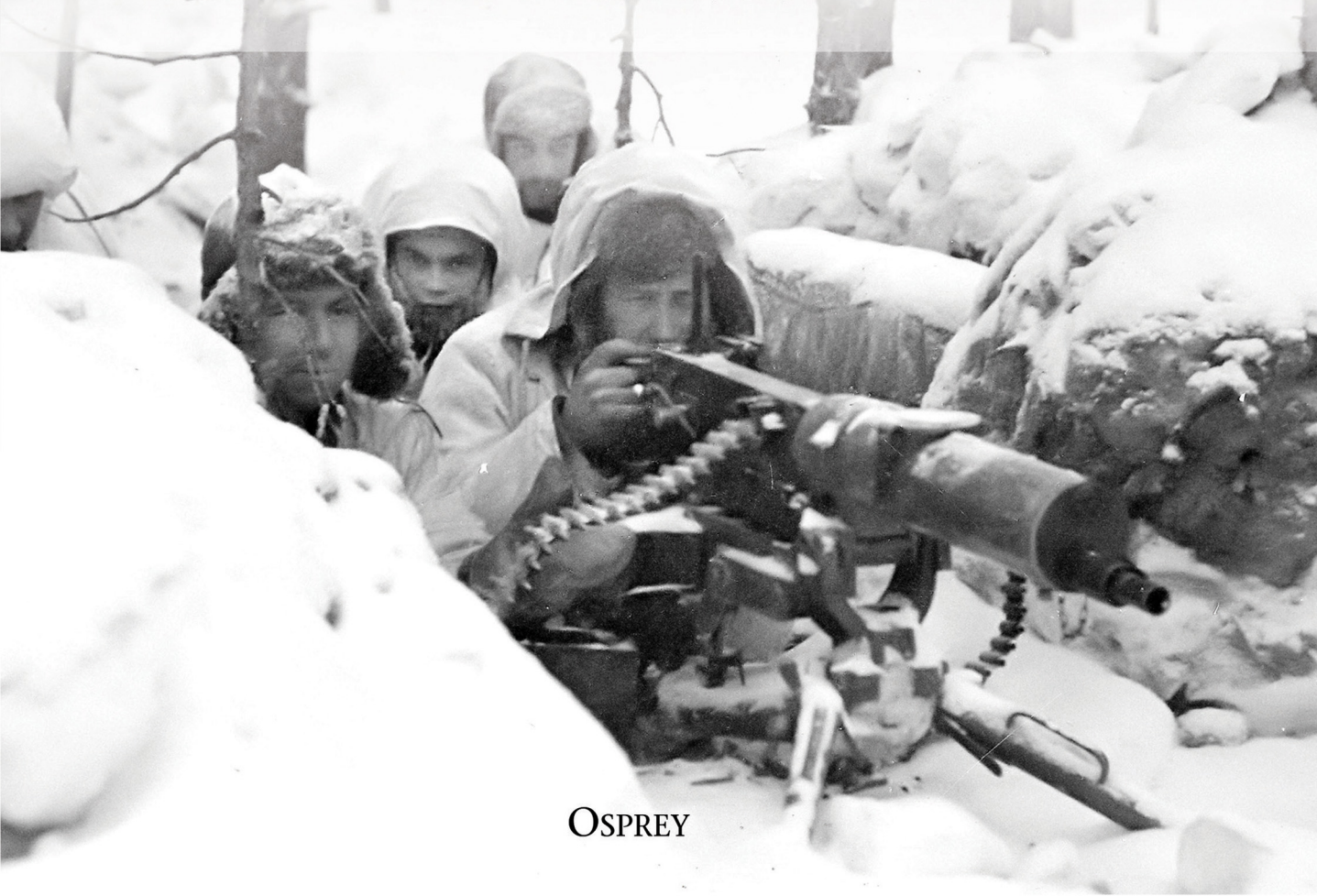


VESA NENYE

PETER MUNTER • TONI WIRTANEN • CHRIS BIRKS

FINLAND AT WAR

THE WINTER WAR 1939–40



OSPREY

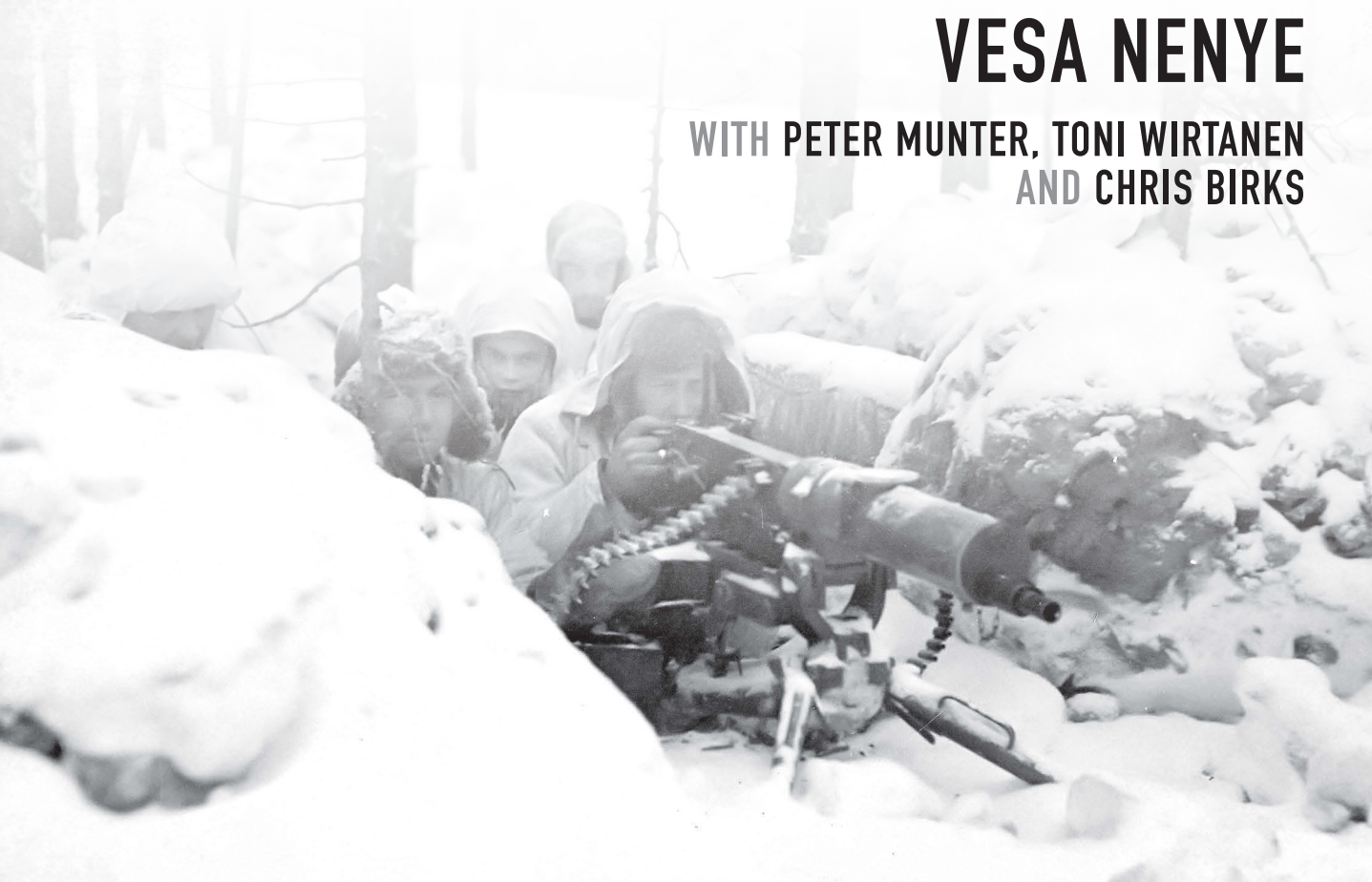
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WITH PETER MUNTER, TONI WIRTANEN
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We entered into this project with the goal of writing the kind of book about Finland's wars that we have always wanted to read ourselves, one that describes the most important battles, accompanied by plenty of contemporary pictures and clarifying maps. In the end the project grew and grew until Osprey, our publishers, made the wise decision to split the project into two parts.

This first book describes Finland's struggles from its fledgling independence, through the Civil War and the Kinship Wars that followed. It shows how the approaching conflict with the Soviet Union was practically unavoidable, and how this small nation stood against the mightiest army in the world. The 105-day-long conflict that the world came to know as the Winter War saw Finland bravely resist, until the war-weary Soviet Union finally relented and sought peace – albeit on Stalin's non-negotiable terms. This first book finishes with the signing of the peace treaty and looks at the immediate socio-economic problems that followed.

The second volume begins with the short period known as the Interim Peace, and explores once more how conflict became inevitable. The battles of both the Continuation War and the Lapland War are examined in detail.

Most of the names in the book are given in their Finnish forms. At the end of the book the reader may find an appendix with the most common translations in English and Russian. The Soviet ranks in this volume follow the positional system in place during the Winter War era; with the start of the Continuation War, general officer ranks are once again used.

A Finnish cavalryman at Huumola on 14 December 1939. At this time, each Finnish division still fielded a separate cavalry squadron. Many of the senior officers, including Mannerheim who was a former cavalry general, seemed averse to the use of modern armoured forces. Had the Finns had even 20 or 30 tanks in their reserves on the Karelian Isthmus, things might have gone altogether differently. Even this small number would have been able to provide rapid, concentrated fire support where it was most needed. (SA-kuva)

It is worth noting that we owe a special debt to the plethora of writers who have already covered this topic. They are frequently referenced in the text. We would like to point out that much of what has been written before is conflicting or contradictory; thus in order to chart the actual course of events we have tried to use contemporary sources and unit war diaries as widely as possible. Thanks to the extensive and vigorous research of recent years, many documents in the former Soviet archives have now seen the light of day. Unfortunately, it is also clear that many of these source materials were considerably manipulated either during or after the war. For instance, accurate casualty figures or portrait photographs of disgraced Red Army front-line commanders are hard to obtain.

Ultimately, we hope we have created an accurate yet entertaining recount of those demanding times. As writers we would welcome any feedback or constructive criticism directly, and we can be reached at vnenye@hotmail.com

A project of this magnitude, covering Finland's 20th-century wars in just two books and featuring extensive illustrations and maps, would never have been possible without the help of many people.

We are especially grateful to our beloved and supportive families – Sarah & Ronja, Folke, Nora & Niklas and Jannika, who together with our hounds patiently tagged along on the many research trips, and graciously let us continue writing into the small hours of many a morning.

Marcus Cowper and Kate Moore of Osprey Publishing have been instrumental in keeping us on track and on time and getting these books published. Thanks to John Stellard of Warlord Games for his introductions and recommendations that started all of this in the first place.

For this new edition of our work we decided to show our enduring gratitude to Chris Birks by adding him to the list of authors. Chris undertook the heroic task of reading through all the different versions of the manuscripts, and without his help this book would never have been completed. Further editing and feedback were provided by Steve Morgan and Steve Yates as well as Lauri Priha, Jouni Soininen and Captain Mick Poussa.

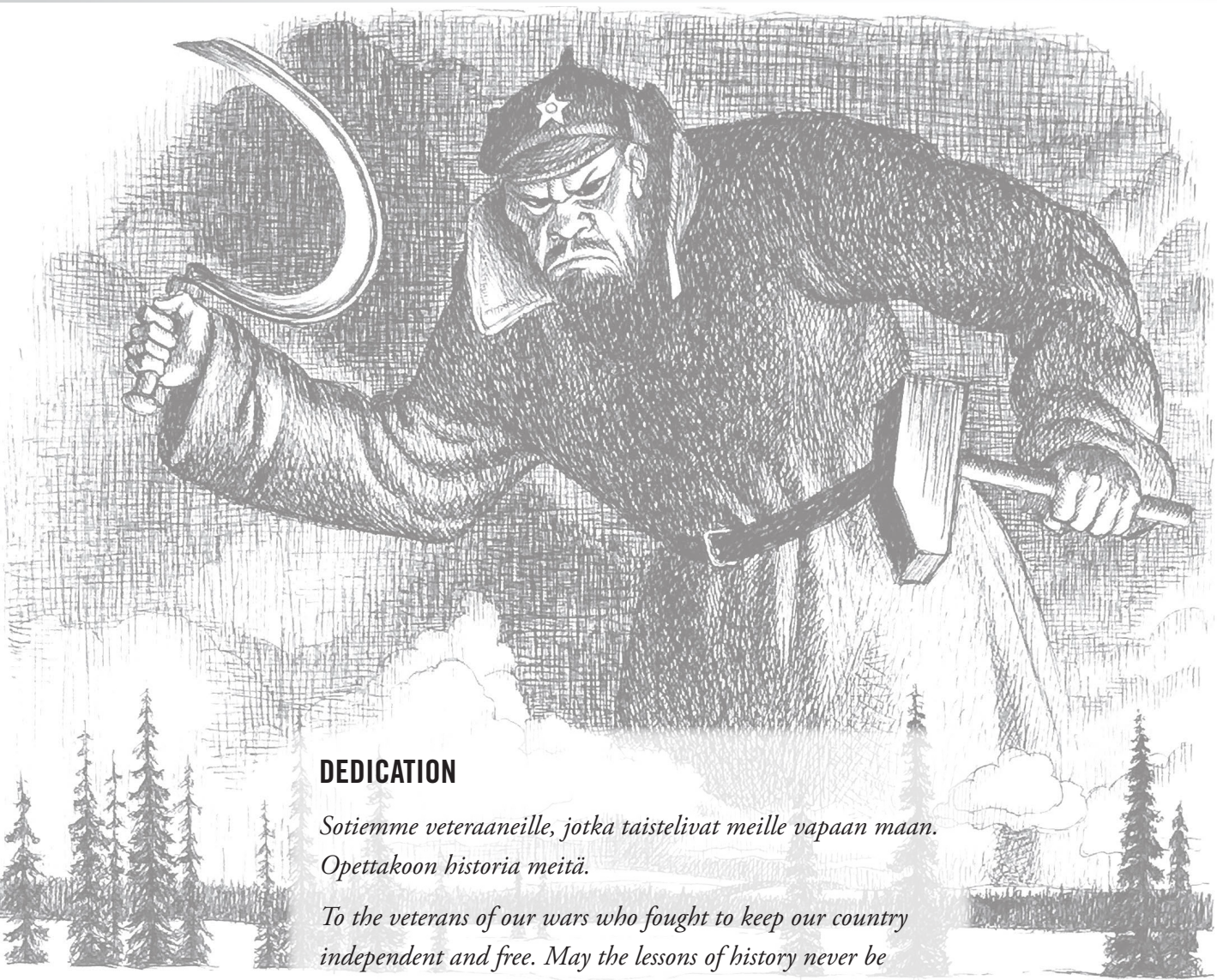
Additional thanks must be given to the people who provided us with access and materials: Jari Saurio, the museum curator of the Armour Museum at Parola, for his encouragement and feedback throughout the editing process, and his infallible ability to recognise which tank was depicted by the smallest part jutting out in an otherwise uniformly snowy image; Engineer Major Reserves Esa Muikku, who gave us access to his valuable, previously unpublished private collections and helped to identify names and places needed for many of the image captions; Tanker Jerry

Riipinen, for his photography and for all his help; the Chairman of the Armoured Museum Trust, Jari Lemmetyinen; Armi Häkkinen, who pored over and made legible hundreds of pages of old handwritten war diaries and unit logs; and Sakari and Kirsti Neny, who undertook the massive task of preparing all the chosen photographs (only a few more books, and then we are sure you two can actually, finally retire...).

We are grateful to a number of libraries and archives in Finland which all provided friendly and helpful aid. In particular, we would like to mention: the whole team at the Armour Museum at Parola; the Photographic Centre of the Finnish Defence Forces; the Finnish Museum of Photography; the Finnish Military Museum; the Lotta-Svärd Museum; the museum wing of the National Defence University in Tuusula; Jukka Kukkonen, for his overall, profound expertise on the historical photo archives; Colonel Pekka Järvi of the Armoured Brigade, who supported us throughout this process and helped gain access to largely unpublished material; Captain Ari Viitala, who provided us with the personal papers of his grandfather and access to the Sissi war diaries; and Senior Lieutenant Jari Markkula, also of the Armoured Brigade, for his photography and liaison work.

Further thanks are due to the following: Juhani Talvela, who gave us permission to access his grandfather's diaries stored at the National Archives; Heikki Talvela, who further enlivened the events with his stories and collections from the wars; the Sotiemme Veteraanit organisation, for the use of their images; and finally, the tank ace Reino Lehväslaiho, for his interview and inspirational repertoire of war stories and books.

Ultimately, a big thank you goes to everybody who is interested in this period and takes the time to learn more about how a few stood against the many, and about a lone fight against oppression in a darkening Europe.



DEDICATION

*Sotiemme veteraaneille, jotka taistelivat meille vapaan maan.
Opettakoon historia meitä.*

*To the veterans of our wars who fought to keep our country
independent and free. May the lessons of history never be
forgotten.*



CHRONOLOGY

It is generally accepted that the Finnish armed forces were officially established when the country became an Autonomous Grand Duchy of the Holy Russian Empire in 1809. However, long before this, Finnish forces had distinguished themselves on the battlefields of Europe, mostly against a familiar eastern foe. The following section provides key dates from the end of the 19th century through to and including the Winter War four decades later.

1898

12 October

Governor-General Bobrikov arrives to take control of Finland, and begins by giving a speech to the Grand Duchy's governing officials. He calls Finland a 'borderland' and fails to acknowledge its special position as an autonomous state. Bobrikov declares Russia to be singular and undivided, proclaiming that love and allegiance can exist solely towards a shared Russian motherland. Bobrikov's goal of the destruction of Finnish autonomy and the Russification of its people becomes clear.

1899

15 February

Tsar Nicholas II issues the February Manifesto. It states that the Finnish Diet (assembly) has only an advisory role in making Russian imperial law, and that it cannot stop imperial laws from being enforced in Finland.

1899–1905

The Russification programme: a systematic quelling of Finnish nationalism, including language and national rights, and the disbandment of the Finnish Army (1901).

1902

New conscription for the Russian Army starts. Now, troops can be made to serve in any corner of the empire; previously, Finnish troops have only served in Finland. The Finns resist the conscription through strikes and conscientious objection. The tsar is later forced to end conscription in Finland.

1904–05

The Russo-Japanese War. Japan emerges victorious.

1904

16 June

The Finnish nationalist Eugen Schauman assassinates General-Governor Bobrikov.

1905

The Russian Revolution of 1905. A general strike begins in Finland, which leads to the creation of the November Manifesto. This document replaces the February Manifesto and removes the dictatorial rights of the governor-general.

1906

29 May

The Finnish Diet approves a new election law and the Parliament Act, replacing itself with a unicameral parliament. Tsar Nicholas II ratifies the law on 20 July. Finland becomes the third country in the world, and the first in Europe, to give women the vote as part of universal suffrage.

1907

15 March

The first parliamentary elections take place in Finland. The world's first female representatives are elected.

1908–17

A second, more intense period of Russification. All vestiges of autonomy are removed and all state matters become subject to the Russian government.

1910

The Russian State Duma takes Finnish matters under its administration.

1912

Russians receive equal rights in Finland under the Equality Act.

1914–18

World War I; martial law is declared in all of Finland.

1914

Plans for the complete Russification of Finland are cancelled due to the outbreak of World War I.

1915

The Jäger movement is founded; the first Finns make their way for Jäger training in Germany.

1917

The February Revolution in Russia ends the last of the hard-line policies towards Finland.

15 March

The last tsar of Russia, Nicholas II, is forced to abdicate.

1917

18 July

Parliament is declared the wielder of supreme state power in Finland.

7 November

The October Revolution takes place in Russia.

4 December

The Finnish Cabinet gives a notification to parliament; following its ratification, this notice is called the Declaration of Independence.

6 December

Finland declares independence.

31 December

The Russian Bolshevik government recognises Finnish independence.

1918

25 January

The Finnish Civil Guard (Suojeluskunta) is recognised as a government force.

27 January–14 May

The Finnish Civil War between the White (Civil) Guard and the Red Guard. There are over 38,000 casualties in total. Many of the defeated Reds die following capture owing to the poor conditions in the prisoner of war camps. A total of 555 Red prisoners are sentenced to death and 12,000 succumb to hunger and disease in prison camps this year.

6 March

The Finnish Air Force is founded.

21 March–2 October

The Viena Karelia (White Karelia) expedition: Finnish volunteers attempt to annex White Karelia from Russia.

Spring

First Petsamo expedition; Finnish forces attempt to take the area of Petsamo in Lapland from Russia.

18 May

Pehr Evind Svinhufvud becomes Regent of Finland.

16/17 July

Tsar Nicholas II, his family and several personal attendants are executed by the Bolsheviks in Yekaterinburg.

11 November

The first Lotta Svärd (Finnish women's volunteer movement) organisation is founded.

28 November

Estonian War of Independence begins. Finnish volunteers help drive the Bolsheviks out. The war lasts until 2 February 1920.

9 December

Prince Frederick Charles of Hesse is chosen as King of Finland, by parliamentary vote.

14 December

Frederick Charles renounces the crown of Finland following the collapse of the German Empire. Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim becomes Regent of Finland.

1918–20

Revolt of the Ingrian Finns.

1918–22

The Kinship Wars: armed Finnish volunteers conduct expeditions in East Karelia, Ingria and Estonia.

1919**March–June**

The Aunus expedition: an attempt to annex parts of Aunus (Olonets) and parts of East Karelia.

17 July

Finland becomes a republic.

25 July

Kaarlo Juho Ståhlberg becomes the first President of Finland. He serves until 1925.

1919–1932

Prohibition in Finland. It is abolished after Finland's first national referendum in 1931.

1920**Spring**

Second (unsuccessful) Petsamo expedition.

14 October

Signing of the Treaty of Tartu, between Finland and the Soviet Union. It comes into force on 31 December. Its purpose is to end the state of war caused by the 1918 Finnish Civil War, to establish borders, and to create diplomatic relations between the two countries. Petsamo is ceded to Finland while the Repola and Porajärvi areas stay with the Soviet Union. The Republic of North Ingria, which sought to be incorporated into Finland, also remains with the Soviets. The borders are an uneasy compromise for both parties, and the question of East Karelian autonomy continues to be a strain on Finnish–Soviet relations.

16 December

Finland joins the League of Nations.

1921–22

Vienan Karelians rebel against the Bolsheviks in an attempt to gain independence. Finnish volunteers fight without official backing from the Finnish government. The future Finnish generals Talvela and Pajari lead this expedition. The rebels are finally driven out in 1922.

1925–31

Lauri Kristian Relander serves as President of Finland.

1926

At the Finnish Academy for the General Staff, Talvela and Pajari write their final theses on 'The Offensive Opportunities in Ladoga Karelia'.

1929–32

The radical nationalist Lapua Movement aims to move Finnish political opinion towards the far right.

1930**7 July**

The Lapua Movement organises the 12,000-strong 'Peasants' March' in Helsinki. The government yields to their demands to ban communist newspapers.

14 October

The Lapua Movement kidnaps former President Kaarlo J. Ståhlberg, transporting him from Helsinki to Joensuu. Public opinion is against this, and the movement loses support with moderate right-wingers.

1931–37

Pehr Evind Svinhufvud serves as President of Finland.

1932

21 January

Finland signs a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union.

27 February–6 March

The Mäntsälä Rebellion: supporters of the Lapua Movement try to overthrow the government, accusing it of supporting communism. The revolt fails and the movement is disbanded. The power of the Finnish far right wanes.

1933

30 January

Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.

19 May

Mannerheim receives the honorific post of field marshal.

14 October

Germany leaves the League of Nations.

1934

7 April

Finland and the Soviet Union agree on extending their mutual non-aggression pact, to expire in 1945.

18 September

The Soviet Union joins the League of Nations.

1935

1 March

Saarland is reintegrated into Germany.

16 March

Germany renounces the military edicts of the Treaty of Versailles and institutes conscription.

August

Stalin's confidant Commissar Andrew Zhdanov travels along the Finnish border and begins preparations for a potential invasion.

3 October

Italy invades Abyssinia.

1936

7 March

Germany remilitarises the Rhineland.

17 July

The Spanish Civil War begins.

24 October

The Rome–Berlin Axis is formed.

25 November

Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact.

1937

1 March

Kyösti Kallio is elected President of Finland; he serves until 1940.

7 July

The Second Sino-Japanese War begins.

6 November

Italy joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

11 December

Italy leaves the League of Nations.

1938

12 March

Germany occupies Austria.

29 September

The Western Powers sign the Munich Agreement, approving the integration of the Czechoslovakian Sudetenland into Germany.

1939

14 March

Slovakia declares independence.

15 March

Germany occupies the rest of Czechoslovakia.

23 March

General Franco's nationalist faction is victorious in the Spanish Civil War.

7 April

Italy occupies Albania.

17 April

Great Britain and France begin negotiations with the Soviet Union.

22 May

Germany and Italy sign a military alliance.

23 August

The Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union, is signed. It contains a secret protocol that divides Finland, the Baltic States, Poland and Romania into German and Soviet 'spheres of influence'.

1 September

Germany invades Poland. World War II begins.

2 September

Great Britain and France present an ultimatum demanding Germany's immediate withdrawal from Poland.

3 September

Great Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand declare war on Germany after the expiration of the ultimatum.

5 September

The United States declares neutrality.

17 September

The Soviet Union begins the occupation of eastern Poland.

19 September

Finland and the other Nordic countries declare neutrality.

28 September

The Soviet Union and Estonia sign a pact of non-aggression.

5 October

The Soviet Union invites Finland to negotiate land concessions.

9 October

Juho Kusti Paasikivi departs for Moscow for negotiations.

10 October

First day of the Extraordinary Reservist Manoeuvres.

13 November

As the Moscow negotiations cease, the threat of war is imminent.

26 November

The Soviet Union blames Finland for the border incident known as the 'shelling of Mainila'.

28 November

The Soviet Union unilaterally severs ties with Finland, and renounces the non-aggression pact.

30 November

The Soviet Union invades Finland; the Winter War begins. The Leningrad Military District begins the invasion of Finland on all fronts. The Fourteenth Army advances towards Petsamo in northern Finland. The main Soviet attack, by the Seventh Army, begins on the Karelian Isthmus. The Eighth Army advances on the Ladoga Karelia front. The Ninth Army advances towards Oulu, mounting four days of unsuccessful attacks against the Finnish 15th Independent Battalion.

1 December

Prime Minister Risto Ryti's first Cabinet is appointed.

2 December

The Soviet Union signs a mutual assistance agreement with the puppet Finnish Democratic Republic (or Terijoki Government).

The Soviet Eighth Army captures the Finnish village of Suojärvi. A Finnish counter-attack the following day fails.

3 December

The Finnish 15th Independent Battalion retreats from the Soviet Ninth Army at the Purahseijoki. The Soviets do not realise they have retreated, and leave the capture of the now empty positions for another two days.

4 December

The Soviet 163rd Rifle Division reaches the Palovaara crossroads in northern Finland.

4–6 December

Soviet troops reach the Mannerheim Line on the Karelian Isthmus.

5 December

The Soviet Fourteenth Army moves towards Peranka and Suomussalmi.

6 December

Mannerheim forms Group Talvela.

The Soviet 49th and 150th Rifle divisions, part of Grendahl's Right Wing Group, attempt to cross the Taipale River on the Karelian Isthmus. They manage to obtain a small bridgehead on the north side of the river.

7 December

Finnish troops of the 24th Infantry Regiment repel the Right Wing Group's attempts to cross the Taipale in the Kiviniemi sector.

The Finnish defenders at Suomussalmi withdraw; the village is captured by the Soviet 81st Rifle Regiment.

7–8 December

Seventh Army commander Yakovlev launches bungled assaults across the Kiviniemi Rapids. He is removed from command and transferred back to Moscow for administrative duties.

8 December

Colonel Siilasvuo's 27th Infantry Regiment is transferred to the Suomussalmi area.

The Soviet Eighth Army attempts to cross the Kollaa River for the first time.

Pajari's 100-strong force raids the campsites of three Soviet battalions. Pajari suffers a mild heart attack on his return from the raid.

9 December

Soviet attacks are halted across the entire front, and Stavka takes control of operations. Seventh Army is heavily reinforced.

Soviet forces from the 122nd Rifle Division occupy Salla, in Lapland.

Tsherepanov's 56th Rifle Corps attacks the Finnish lines just north of Ladoga.

10 December

'The Sausage War' takes place near Tolvajärvi village. Ad hoc Finnish force defeats the Soviet 718th Rifle Regiment.

11 December

56th Rifle Corps reaches Kitilä, but is stopped by Colonel Hannuksela's 13th Division.

Siilasvuo commences operations to retake Suomussalmi. Finnish task forces Oinas, Jousimies and Luoti are formed north of Lake Ladoga.

12 December

Soviet troops skirting Lake Koivu are located and forced to retreat by elements of Group Talvela.

The Soviet 316th and 208th Rifle regiments capture Ruhtinaanmäki hill, and occupy the area of Lake Syskyjärvi. General Hägglund counter-attacks with groups Oinas, Jousimies and Luoti in the Ruhtinaanmäki area. In Finland's first major victory, Colonel Talvela defeats a Soviet rifle division at the battle of Tolvajärvi. Siilasvuo orders the attack on Suomussalmi to begin. They are unsuccessful.

13–19 December

Second Soviet offensive at Taipale. Repeated attacks by 30,000 men and 99 tanks fail to break the Finnish lines.

13–24 December

The Soviets threaten Viipuri, but are repeatedly repelled by Finnish troops.

13 December

Finnish troops begin to isolate elements of the Soviet Fourteenth Army at Suomussalmi. By 15 December, the army is completely encircled.

Major-General Wallenius receives command of Lapland Group.

14 December

The Soviet Union is expelled from the League of Nations for its aggression.

Finnish troops under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Wilhelm Teittinen manage to cross the Kollaa River, and harass the Eighth Army there.

At Kitilä, Finnish troops manage to sever the supply lines of the Soviet 18th Rifle Division.

Group Oinas fails to retake Ruhtinaanmäki hill. Red Army forces capture Syskyjärvi village and proceed to Ruokojärvi. The Soviet high command removes Khabarov from command of Eighth Army following the defeat at Tolvajärvi. Shtern replaces him.

16 December

Talvela pursues the Soviet troops to the Ägläjärvi area. Mannerheim promotes Talvela to major-general and Pajari to colonel.

16–21 December

The battle for Pelkosenniemi village. Wallenius stops the Soviet 273rd Rifle Division's offensive towards Kemijärvi.

17 December

The Soviet 122nd Rifle Division is stopped in its tracks at the Finnish Joutsijärvi strongpoint.

17–18 December

Troops from task forces Oinas, Jousimies and Luoti manage to sever Soviet supply lines, further weakening their enemy.

17–22 December

The ‘Miracle of Summa’: the Finns halt the Soviet advance at their most vulnerable point on the Karelian Isthmus.

17 December

The attack of the Soviet Eighth Army at Kollaa is halted.

18 December

Stavka orders Eighth Army at Kollaa to prepare defensive positions.

18–22 December

Major-General Talvela wins a significant victory at the battle of Ägläjärvi. The ‘Legend of Finland’ gains popular international media coverage.

19 December

The Soviet 123rd Rifle Division achieves a limited breakthrough and reaches Lake Summajärvi. Mannerheim reinforces Siilasvuo’s troops.

20 December

The Soviet offensive on the Karelian Isthmus is stopped. Finnish troops begin a counter-offensive at Kollaa, but are eventually forced back to their starting positions.

21 December

Stalin’s 60th birthday. Adolf Hitler’s congratulatory telegram to him reads: ‘Best wishes for your personal well-being as well as for the prosperous future of the peoples of the friendly Soviet Union.’ Stalin promptly replies with similar warmth: ‘The friendship of the peoples of Germany and the Soviet Union, cemented by blood, has every reason to be lasting and firm.’

Soviet Ninth Army headquarters orders the attacking 122nd Rifle Division to dig in and prepare defensive positions in and around Joutsijärvi.

The Soviet Eighth Army is ordered to withdraw from the Ägläjärvi area to the Aittojoki River.

22 December

Having retaken the village of Ägläjärvi, Talvela orders his troops to follow Shtern’s withdrawal. The Finns continue to advance to the Aittojoki, and dig in there.

23 December

The ‘Idiot’s Nudge’, a costly Finnish counter-offensive, sees over 1,000 Finnish casualties suffered for little gain.

25 December

Troops and tanks of the Right Wing Group cross the frozen Vuoksi River.

26 December

Lapland Group hands over front-line responsibility to the Svenska Frivilligkåre (Swedish Volunteer Corps).

27 December

The Right Wing Group is forced to retreat after its failed attacks on Kelja.

Parts of the Finnish 36th Infantry Regiment cut the Uomaa road. The critical northern crossroads at Palovaara is retaken and occupied by Finnish troops under Siilasvuo. At the same time, the commander of the Soviet 47th Rifle Corps, Dashitsev, receives orders to withdraw from Suomussalmi. He delays.

The final attack on Suomussalmi begins. Colonel Siilasvuo’s troops are victorious.

27–29 December

Further attempts to retake Ruhtinaanmäki hill by the Finnish 13th Division fail.

The Soviet attack at Kelja village is repulsed.

28 December

Tchaikovsky, Sharov and Podhumutov flee Suomussalmi. The Soviets are surrounded and 662nd Rifle Regiment is effectively destroyed by the Finns.

29 December

The last Soviet troops at Suomussalmi are defeated, and the village liberated. The Soviet 163rd Rifle Division suffers heavy losses during the operation.

30 December

Grendahl’s Right Wing Group receives orders to dig in and repel any Finnish counter-attacks.

Hägglund orders the attack on Ruhtinaanmäki hill to cease. Siilasvuo receives new orders to attack and destroy the Soviet 44th Rifle Division on the Raate road.

1940

1 January

Siilasvuo makes his first concentrated attacks against the 44th Rifle Division along the Raate road. They meet strong resistance.

3 January

Finnish attempts to take Ruhtinaanmäki hill are renewed.

3–4 January

Battle of Sanginlampi. Siilasvuo is victorious, further pressuring the 44th Rifle Division. The Soviets manage to airdrop supplies onto their isolated and surrounded troops. This feat is repeated two days later.

6 January

Siilasvuo orders attacks to sever the Raate road, cutting it at several points. Vinogradov, contrary to orders, prepares his trapped troops to flee to the east.

Finnish forces attack, and force the Soviets to form *motti* at Lemetti.

7 January

The Finns win a famous victory at Raate road, capturing practically all of the 44th Rifle Division's equipment and routing this Soviet force for the remainder of the war.

8 January

Finnish Foreign Minister Väinö Tanner begins probing for peace negotiations.

9 January

Finnish troops cut the supply road to Pitkäranta, and subsequently reach Koirinoja, thus preventing the Soviet 168th Rifle Division from escaping.

12 January

The Finns divert parts of the 12th Division from Kollaa south to maintain the Uomaa *motti*.

16 January

Heavy Soviet bombardments target the Summa and Lähde sectors in Karelia. Soviet troops start to probe the defensive lines. The bombardments continue for days.

19 January

Siilasvuo's 9th Division receives new orders to proceed to the Kuhmo sector.

22 January

Finnish troops near Ruhtinaanmäki receive orders to channel all their efforts into crushing the western Lemetti *motti*.

26 January

Siilasvuo is ordered to attack the Soviet fortified positions at Kuhmo.

29 January

Soviet forces in the Kuhmo region are pushed into a *motti* by Siilasvuo's troops.

The Soviet Union agrees to negotiate with the Ryti government.

31 January

Löytövaara hill is captured by Siilasvuo's troops.

1 February

Soviets aim for breakthrough at the Summa direction. Paalu's 3rd Division is attacked by five Soviet divisions supported by armour and artillery.

4 February

The Soviet troops in the western Lemetti *motti* surrender.

5 February

The Soviet Union rejects all offers of a peace settlement with Finland. Negotiations to allow the passage of pro-Finnish troops though Sweden also stall.

8 February

The Soviets launch renewed attacks in the Taipale sector. The front line shifts back and forth over the next few days. Fierce fighting continues at Summa.

11 February

A large Soviet offensive on the Karelian Isthmus begins. Soviet assault at Summa breaches the front line of the Lähde sector. The Poppius bunker finally falls, while Miljoonalinnake bunker still controls its sector for another day. The same evening, the Soviets reach the Interim Line at Lähde. The Finns try to wipe out the northern *motti* at Saunajärvi.

12 February

Finland receives notice of Soviet peace terms.

The Red Army forms the Fifteenth Army from troops around the Pitkäranta area, near Ladoga. Its commander, Kovalyov, reports directly to Stavka. Following poor performances, he is replaced two weeks later by Kurdjumov.

13 February

Two Finnish regiments launch an ineffectual counter-attack at Lähde. The Soviets proceed to breach the Mannerheim Line at Lähde. Neighbouring Merkki and Summankylä sectors continue to hold until high command orders withdrawal. The breach at Lähde soon swells into several kilometres wide and deep.

15 February

Mannerheim orders Finnish forces to withdraw to the Interim Line.

Major Lovlev leads his troops out of the Uomaa *motti*, and back to friendly lines.

17 February

Colonel Autti destroys the Soviet forces escaping from the *Rykmentti motti*.

Soviet forces at Taipale are ordered to focus their attacks on the Finnish artillery.

Tactical retreat to the secondary defensive positions, the Interim Line, is completed by the Finns.

18 February

The Soviet Thirteenth Army captures Kirvesmäki and the Terenttilä sector. Instead of pushing on, they wait to consolidate their forces.

19 February

The Finns work to strengthen their Interim Line on the Karelian Isthmus.

22 February

Renewed Soviet attacks along the Interim Line; the line holds. Over the next few days, the Finns manage to retake several of the strongholds the Soviets had occupied.

Lieutenant-Colonel Österman steps down as commander of the Army of the Isthmus following disagreements with Mannerheim over strategy. Erik Heinrichs takes over, while Talvela transfers to III Army Corps in the east of the isthmus (including Taipale).

23 February

Finland receives more detail about the Soviet peace terms. Near Kiteä, the Soviet troops in the *Rykmentti motti* request help and permission to withdraw; it then does so without orders, leaving the most severely wounded behind.

25 February

In the Kuhmo sector Soviets try to relieve the northern *motti* around Luelahi Bay, with little success.

26 February

Stavka prioritises taking the Kollaa region.

27 February

Finnish I and II Army Corps retreat to the Rear Line.

28 February

Soviet forces advance over the Interim Line and push towards Viipuri. Stavka orders the Red Army to break the Rear Line by 3 March.

29 February

The government of Finland decides to engage in peace talks. Grendahl's forces finally occupy the whole Interim Line. The focus switches to the Rear Line's anchor point of Äyräpää.

1 March

While Soviets start preliminary bombardment of the defences of Viipuri the Finns continue to reinforce the incomplete fortifications of the Rear Line.

Soviet troops attack Äyräpää.

The Finnish defenders are forced to retreat from two peninsulæ in Viipuri (Vyborg) Bay, but hold the island of Uuras.

2 March

Four divisions of the Eighth Army begin a wide-fronted attack in the Kollaa region. They make slow progress.

The Soviet 4th Rifle Division takes Äyräpää, but soon loses it again to the Finns. The Thirteenth Army commander on the Karelian Isthmus, Grendahl, is replaced by Stavka with Army Commander 2nd Class Philip A. Parusinov.

The Finnish defenders on the island of Tuppuraa find their situation untenable, and have to withdraw over Viipuri Bay. Soviet forces breach the Finnish 3rd Battalion positions, and advance towards Viipuri.

3 March

Wallenius orders a defensive stand on the Vilaniemi Peninsula on the western side of Viipuri Bay, but the troops withdraw prior to his orders being received. Finnish troops manage to retake the Häränpääniemi Peninsula.

4 March

The battle for Vuosalmi and bitter fighting for control of Vasikkasaari Island take place.

The last of the Finnish troops withdraw from Äyräpää. Wallenius orders the retaking of Teikarsaari Island in Viipuri Bay, but the attack is stopped by the Soviets. In return, the Soviets push across the bay towards the Vilajoki River.

5 March

The Soviet 50th Rifle Division takes Vasikkasaari Island. The Soviets also establish a foothold on the northern bank of the Vuoksi River. Catastrophic counter-attack by the 'Men of Nurmo'. Soviet forces rout the Finnish defenders on the Vilaniemi Peninsula west of Viipuri.

6 March

The Finnish 9th Infantry Regiment launches a counter-attack on the Vilaniemi Peninsula, which ultimately fails.

The Soviet 37th Motorised Division makes good progress capturing the islands on northern Lake Ladoga. The Soviets encounter fierce resistance at Maksimansaari, but eventually take the island following heavy bombardment. Over the next few days, more islands are taken, and the encircled 168th Rifle Division can finally be resupplied.

The Finnish peace delegation departs for Moscow. The city of Viipuri is cut off from Helsinki by Soviet forces. Simo 'White Death' Häyhä is shot and hospitalised.

7 March

General Sir Edmund Ironside informs the Finns that British troops are able to reinforce them and help.

The second wave of the Soviet attack at Kollaa. The 56th Rifle Division manages to cross the river, but is drastically weakened.

Intense battles take place for the small islands around Uuraansaari Island in Viipuri Bay.

9 March

The Soviets sever the Hamina–Viipuri road.

Meretskov orders the 34th Rifle Corps to continue its attack on Viipuri and then push on to new goals. The Soviets meet determined resistance from the city's defenders.

Öhquist seeks permission to retreat from Viipuri, but

Mannerheim orders his troops to stand their ground.

The defending Finnish battalion on Uuraansaari withdraws.

The islands of Ravansaari, Hapensaari, Turkinsaari and Piispansaari are also lost.

10 March

Finnish counter-attacks at the River Kollaa are repulsed.

Lieutenant-Colonel Aaro Rautiainen and his 12th Infantry Regiment withdraw from the Majapohja sector towards the Koivuniemi Peninsula. All along the Finnish coast troops are withdrawing to their last defensive positions.

11 March

Panic spreads through the Finnish troops; they retreat from the area around Lake Patrusjärvi, and several Finnish battalions lose contact with Viipuri. The troops are rallied by Major Varko, and are formed into Group Varko, which halts the Soviet advance.

12 March

Talvela decides to withdraw to a new defensive line further west from Vasikkasaari.

Heinrichs agrees to a withdrawal from Viipuri.

The Moscow Peace Treaty is signed.

13 March

The Kollaa defensive line holds.

The ceasefire, stipulated in the Moscow Peace Treaty, comes into effect at 11:00 (Finnish time), ending the Winter War.

Despite the truce, Meretskov orders the attack on Viipuri to continue until the city is in Soviet hands.

15 March

The flag of Finland is lowered at Viipuri. Troops proceed to withdraw behind the new borders agreed in the Moscow Peace Treaty.

30 March

The USSR declares any country forming or joining a Scandinavian defence union would be in direct opposition to the Soviet Union.

9 April

Germany invades Denmark and Norway.

1 May

During May, Sweden approaches Finland to discuss a military alliance.

10 May

Germany invades France and the Low Countries.

22 May

The Finland–Soviet Union Peace and Friendship Society is founded, with a secret aim of destabilising Finland's government.

10 June

Italy declares war on France and Great Britain.

14 June

The Soviets shoot down the Finnish passenger plane Kaleva over Finnish territorial waters, on its return journey from Estonia.

15–16 June

The Soviet Union demands that Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia form new governments, and grant military access to the Red Army.

17 June

Soviet forces deploy into the Baltic States.

18 June

The law for the resettlement of Karelian refugees is passed in the Finnish parliament.

22 June

France surrenders.

23 June

The Soviet Union demands mining rights for the Petsamo nickel deposits.

26 June

The Soviet Union demands the territories of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania.

27 June

The Soviet Union demands the demilitarisation of Åland.
The Soviet ultimatum to Romania is met in full.

29 June

Finland draws up a trade treaty with Germany.

8 July

Sweden agrees to allow the passage of German troops through its territory.
The Soviet Union demands the right of passage on the leased Hanko Peninsula.

10 July

The Battle of Britain begins.

21 July

The Baltic States declare themselves Soviet republics.

22 July

Generaloberst Franz Halder notes that Germany views Finland as a viable route to attack the Soviet Union.

23 July

Finland promises to sell 60 per cent of its nickel production to Germany for the year.

24 July

The Soviet Union demands the resignation of Finnish Minister of Supply Väinö Tanner.

31 July

Hitler finally decides to attack the Soviet Union.

4 August

The Finnish National Brothers in Arms Association is founded.

9 August

The law for the compensation of lost property for Finnish refugees is ratified for the benefit of those affected by the Winter War.

15 August

The Finnish Minister of Supply Tanner resigns.

17 August

Oberstleutnant Josef Veltjens approaches Mannerheim in order to request the movement of German troops and supplies through Finland.

18 August

Acting President Ryti instructs Mannerheim to verbally accept the proposed transport of German troops.

6 September

Finland signs an agreement allowing the USSR passage and access to the leased military base at Hanko.

12 September

Finland agrees to allow the passage of German troops on its territory.

26 September

Germany begins arm shipments to Finland.

27 September

Germany, Italy and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact.

7 October

Germany occupies the Romanian oilfields.

28 October

Italy invades Greece.

12 November

Molotov begins his visit to Berlin. Finland's future is discussed.

27 November

Finnish President Kyösti Kallio seeks permission to resign.

December

Hitler informs his staff and General Eduard Dietl of Operation *Silver Fox*, an attack on Murmansk from Petsamo in Finland.

16–18 December

General Talvela meets General Halder and Reichsmarschall Göring in Berlin.

18 December

Hitler approves the plans for Operation Barbarossa.

19 December

Finnish President Kallio suffers a fatal heart attack.
Risto Ryti becomes President of Finland – the country's only president not to be its commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

23 December

The Finland–Soviet Union Peace and Friendship Society is disbanded by court order in Helsinki.





CHAPTER 1

THE RISE OF FINLAND

For centuries the lands of present day Finland had been a hotly contested prize between East and the West. Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox missionaries had all tried their best to convert Finnic pagans to Christianity. Finland was gradually annexed to the Kingdom of Sweden as a fully fledged province. Several wars against the Russians and other enemies of the king followed. In 1809, the War of Finland ended with the Treaty of Hamina. At this time Finland became an Autonomous Grand Duchy of the Holy Russian Empire.

During the early period of autonomy, Finland developed rapidly and became a model and inspiration to the rest of the Russian states. Tsar Alexander II started a wave of reforms across the empire. These had a great positive impact on the development of the Finnish economy, culture and social structure. Finnish soldiers continued

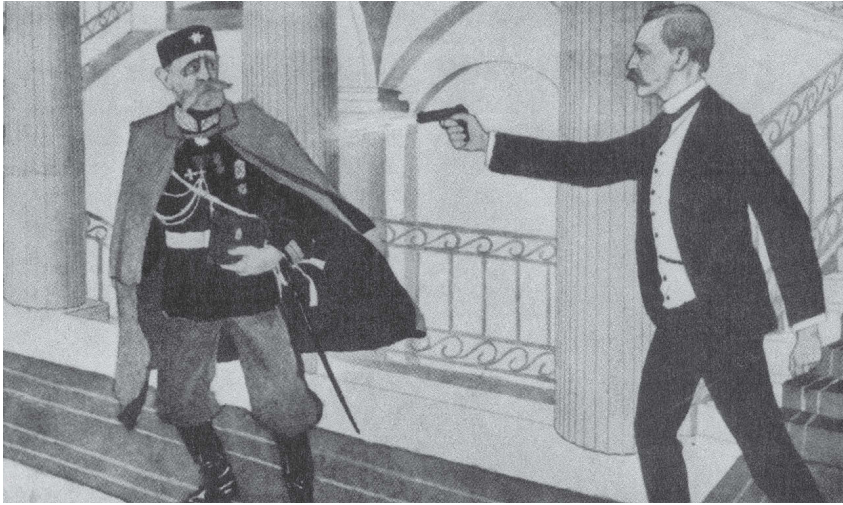
The burial of Hannu Munter, the great-great-grandfather of one of the authors of this work, Peter Munter. This ceremony took place during the War of Finland (1808–09), fought between the Kingdom of Sweden and the Russian Empire. As a result of this war, Finland became an Autonomous Grand Duchy of the Holy Russian Empire. The man holding the shovel is General Carl Johan Adlercreutz, a Finnish-born noble who went on from this defeat to lead all of Sweden's armies against Napoleon. From the book *Vänrikki Stoolin tarinat* (1887).

to excel in the tsar's army, and eventually Alexander II restored the national armed forces, allowing annual conscription to start once again in Finland.

Darker times soon followed. First, the more conservative Alexander III slowed the modernisation programmes started by his father, and returned the control of universities, law courts and the press to Russian governance. Things degenerated further when his son Nicholas II became the Grand Duke of Finland and the Emperor and Autocrat of All the Russians. Nicholas soon realised that he would much prefer it if the Finns conformed to his autocratic rule and were not quite so independent and autonomous.

Maps showing the development of Finland's national borders





This illustration by an unknown artist shows Eugen Schauman killing Governor-General Bobrikov on the House of Senate's stairs in Helsinki. Schauman shot Bobrikov three times, and then shot himself twice.

There followed a period of Russification. This officially started when the tsar appointed Nicholas Bobrikov as a special governor-general for Finland. Bobrikov's main task was to remove any Finnish prerequisites that might facilitate autonomy or independence. This included having their own army, postal system and currency. Bobrikov was responsible for enforcing Russian laws in Finland, and in general controlling all the influential government and administrative offices. Russian was now to become an official language in the duchy. In 1904 Bobrikov was assassinated, and for a few years the practice of Russification was relaxed. However, a second more robust period of this process was not long in coming.

During the first decade of the 20th century, a growing sense of hatred of the Russians ran deep among many Finns. 'We are no longer Swedes, we will not become Russians, so let us be Finns' ran one particular slogan of the time. A Finnish nationalist movement was starting to gather momentum, and there was even talk of a rebellion. However, Tsar Nicholas II had already dismantled the Finnish Army and heavily garrisoned the country, preventing any form of coordinated unrest.

In November 1914, as the process of Russification peaked, nationalist college students met in Helsinki to plot a path to Finnish independence. Early on it became obvious that to gain its freedom Finland would again need its own army. Several countries were approached to provide military aid, but many, including Sweden, were reluctant to become involved. Finally imperial Germany agreed to support the underground freedom movement by providing secret military training for Finnish volunteers, most of whom were students, in what became known as the Jäger movement. The training provided during the Jäger movement was to play a key part in the conflicts

PAAVO TALVELA'S ROUTE TO THE JÄGER

Like many other patriots, Paavo Talvela decided to make his own way in secret to Germany for Jäger training. Talvela, who later became a general, recalled his experiences in his memoirs:

Late February 1916, I took a train north with two of my classmates. We had earlier received our secret instructions and a small travel stipend. Now we just had to make our way to the coast avoiding detection by the Russians. Upon arrival at Lapua train station, we started to ask around for the next contact point at Kosola's farm. Soon it became clear that Mr. Kosola had in fact been imprisoned earlier that very same day. Luck was with us, as a chain of local farmers passed us from house to house until finally we were close enough to our goal that one factory owner's daughter was able to take us to the coast on her sleigh. We then skied for a couple of hours along the shores avoiding all the Russian patrols until we arrived at a fisherman's sauna. Here other men like us had already been gathering. A young boy, aided by only a small pocket compass, was to be our guide for the dangerous crossing of the frozen Gulf of Bothnia [a crossing of between 60 and 80km at its narrowest point].

The early part of the trip went well. About 20 of us were on skis and we also had half-a-dozen horse-drawn sleighs with us. I remember clearly, that when we set off I saw an ice mountain on the horizon. By noon we had reached it. The shores of our homeland were now far behind us.

By the first night our situation got more depressing and during the brief stops many of us just collapsed on the snow despite the cold. This resulted in bad cold-stiffness, and many had to be placed in the sleighs to warm up. Thus our numbers kept dwindling, but we kept a close eye so that no one was left behind.

After a few more hours we came across fresh sleigh tracks on the snow. We were soon to realise that they were our own tracks and that we had been going in a circle for God knows how long. In other words our compass was broken. Therefore we decided to follow the stars and were lucky to also see the Northern Lights. Relying on these we managed to keep more or less in the correct direction.

Wintery day was again turning into night when we finally came upon a traveller on horseback. At that moment all my strength was spent and I collapsed onto the road. I had to be carried to the sleigh as my body had nothing more to give, only my will had kept me going this far. Who knows, maybe it could have carried me even further if help had not arrived.

We were now taken into a house near the town of Umeå in Sweden. There we were given food and nurtured back to life. Initially I could not eat as my tongue was very frostbitten and in general I was just too tired to chew.

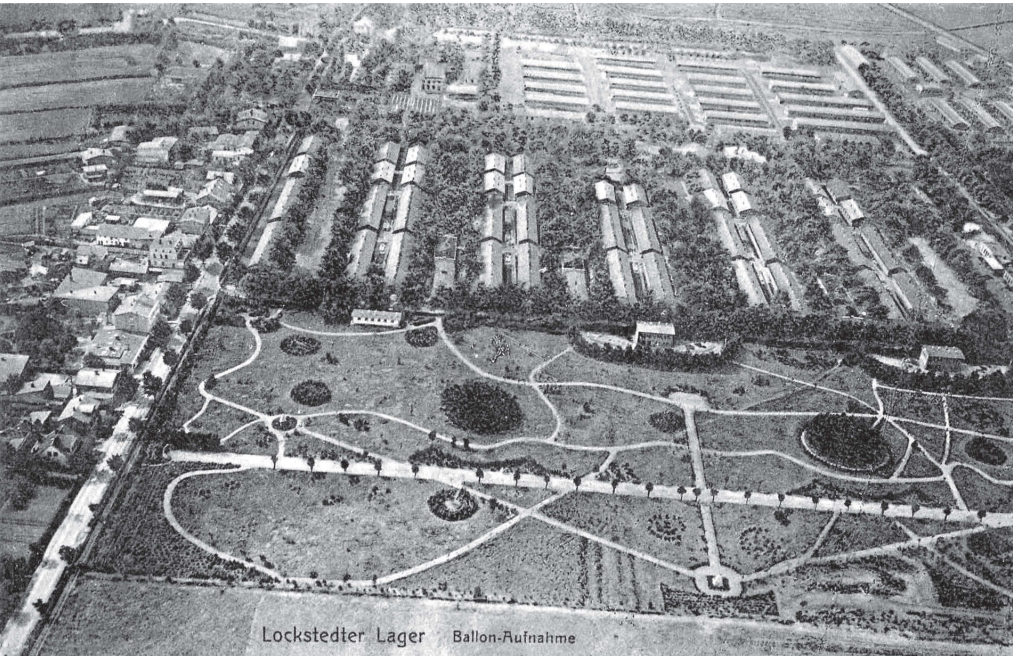
It turned out that I made it through my first adventure relatively well, in the end only my fingers and toes remained a little frostbitten with no permanent damage. However, Immeli, one of my friends, was to be hospitalised for six months losing all the toes on his right foot to the cold. Even worse was the fate of one other comrade, who had to have his leg amputated from the knee down. Thus he had become an invalid even before our war had begun.

From Sweden the trip to Germany went quickly and without disturbances. And so I joined the ranks of the Jäger.

(Talvela, 1976)

of the coming years. These troops would form the backbone of Finland's officer corps; the strict discipline, theoretical training and active service provided a solid foundation for many of the country's future leaders.

In January 1915 the first 200 volunteers travelled to Germany to take part in 'scout leader training' on a four-week long *Pfadfinder* (scout) course. This training was soon extended by several weeks, and by August 1915 the group had increased to the size of a full battalion. The 'scout training' ruse was gradually dropped and the troops were openly trained as fully fledged



Jäger, the elite troops of the German Army. As more Finnish volunteers entered, the unit was named Ausbildungsgruppe Lockstedt or Lockstedt's Practice Group.

By 1916 these men were assessed as being fully trained, and on 9 May 1916 they were entitled the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion. Shortly after, the Finnish Jäger were deployed to the Eastern Front, principally serving around Riga and Libau.

On 15 December 1917 Russia and the Central Powers agreed an armistice, later ratified with the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918. Pressure began to grow for Finnish troops to return home. In 1918, the men received their first Finnish military ranks. These were based on their current German rank, and how well they had served so far. When the main body of the Jäger finally sailed back to Finland, Commander-in-Chief Carl Gustaf Mannerheim gave the following address: 'You will be



ABOVE

Tsar Nicholas II of Russia ruled from 1894 until his forced abdication in March 1917. During his reign, the Russification programme was launched, cancelling the special semi-autonomous rights enjoyed by the Grand Duchy of Finland. Painting by Ilja Repin.

ABOVE LEFT

An aerial photo from 1908 of Locksted Barracks, where the Finnish Jäger were first trained. (*Vapaussodan Kuvahistoria*)

BELOW

A rare image of the 27th Royal Prussian Jäger Battalion lining up. These men were to receive their baptism of fire in the kaiser's many conflicts. (*Vapaussodan Kuvahistoria*)





Finnish Jäger in positions along the Gulf of Riga, between September and December 1916. (*Vapaussodan Kuvahistoria*)

seen as the teachers and leaders of the Finnish Army now being formed. A great and illustrious task awaits you: the creation of the army that is capable of making Finland free, great and powerful.'

INDEPENDENCE AND CIVIL WAR

On 6 December 1917, following the transfer of power to the Bolsheviks in Russia, the Senate of Finland ratified a new Finnish constitution and declared the nation independent. By the end of the year, Lenin's Soviet government had officially recognised the fledgling country. Thus reassured, other governments soon followed and acknowledged Finland's sovereignty.

This move by Lenin was not made in haste. At the time, the Bolsheviks did not necessarily have sufficient control of Russia to quell a rebellion in Finland, and Lenin also strongly believed that Finland would gladly come back to the fold of his socialist portfolio. In March 1917 Lenin, who had spent several periods as a political refugee in Finland, made the following statement: 'Let us not forget that adjoining Petrograd [soon to be named



Leningrad] we have one of the most advanced countries, a real republican country, Finland, which between 1905 [and] 1917, under the shelter of the revolutionary battles in Russia, has developed its democracy in conditions of relative peace and won the majority of its people for socialism' (Lenin, 1932). However, Lenin's high hopes for a socialist Finland were soon to be dashed by Baron Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, a stern and experienced military commander (from his time in the Imperial Russian Army), who had emerged still in his full dress uniform from the ashes of the Russian Revolution. He arrived in Helsinki by train in December 1917 accompanied by his trusted Russian servant carrying the two valises containing all his earthly possessions. Mannerheim had taken one look at the revolution and decided that it was not for him. He later wrote: 'It disgusted me to see generals carrying their own kit' (Mannerheim, 1954).

Internal tensions between the Red and White factions of the Civil Guard and the nearly 40,000 Russian soldiers still stationed in Finland made for an uneasy start. Just two weeks after approving Finland's independence, Lenin started supplying weapons to the Reds and inciting them to revolt.

In order to secure the arrival of these secret arms shipments, the Red Guard launched a surprise assault in Helsinki on 28 January 1918. They succeeded in occupying important sections of the railway line, including the main station.



ABOVE LEFT

'To the shores of raising Finland!' is a refrain from the famous *March of the Jägers* composed by Jean Sibelius. This photograph was taken from the ship *Arcturus*, which carried the Jäger back home to Finland. In the shadow of the vessel, the first welcomers can be seen on the icefields outside the town of Vaasa. (*Vapaussodan Kuvahistoria*)

ABOVE RIGHT

Väärinmaja hamlet in Ruovesi saw some of the fiercest battles of the Vilppula front during the Civil War. Pictured here are the troops of the White Guard in the Seppälä trenches. (*Vapaussodan Kuvahistoria*)

LEFT

Kauno Edvard Talvela, the elder brother of Paavo Talvela, examining a map of the front during the Civil War. Shortly after the picture was taken, Kauno was placed under house arrest by the Red Guard. Whilst vigilantes were executing other local landowners, Kauno was spared when his former tenants spoke on his behalf. They explained that he was a good man, who always gave to the poor and that no one ever had to leave his farm hungry. (Authors' collections)