



**VESA NENYE**

PETER MUNTER • TONI WIRTANEN • CHRIS BIRKS

# **FINLAND AT WAR**

THE CONTINUATION AND  
LAPLAND WARS 1941-45





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## DEDICATION

*To our children and to future generations. Remembering those countless unsung heroes whose sacrifices paid the price of freedom.*

*Lapsillemme ja tuleville sukupolville. Muistaen niitä tuhansia joiden uhraukset lunastivat meille vapauden.*

This rendition of Akseli Gallen-Kallela's 'The Defense of the Sampo' was painted by Angelika Rasmus. It depicts Marshal Mannerheim leading the stalwart men of Finland in their defense of the Maiden of Finland against Stalin's legions.





# 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. The first volume, which covers Finland's struggle for independence and the legendary battles of the Winter War is already out. This, the second tome, continues the narrative beginning from the uneasy Interim Peace, charting Finland's path into the Continuation War and the renewed struggle against the Soviet Union. We go on to explore the bitter peace terms which in turn lead directly into the War of Lapland against the former co-belligerent German armies.

We owe a special debt to the plethora of writers who have already covered this topic and are frequently referenced in the text. It is worth noting that many of the sources are often 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 clear that many of these source materials were considerably manipulated either during or after the war. 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. You can reach us at [vnenye@hotmail.com](mailto:vnenye@hotmail.com)

The biggest change since the first book is that our dear friend Chris Birks took an even more active role and must therefore be celebrated as a full co-author. As with the first volume, *Finland at War: The Winter War 1939–40*, this project would never have been possible without the support and help of many people. We would like to thank Marcus Cowper and his team of Osprey Publishing who has been instrumental in keeping us on track and on time. A special mention to Nikolai Bogdanovic for being able to cut down our manuscript and for being such an incredible well of knowledge throughout the editorial process.

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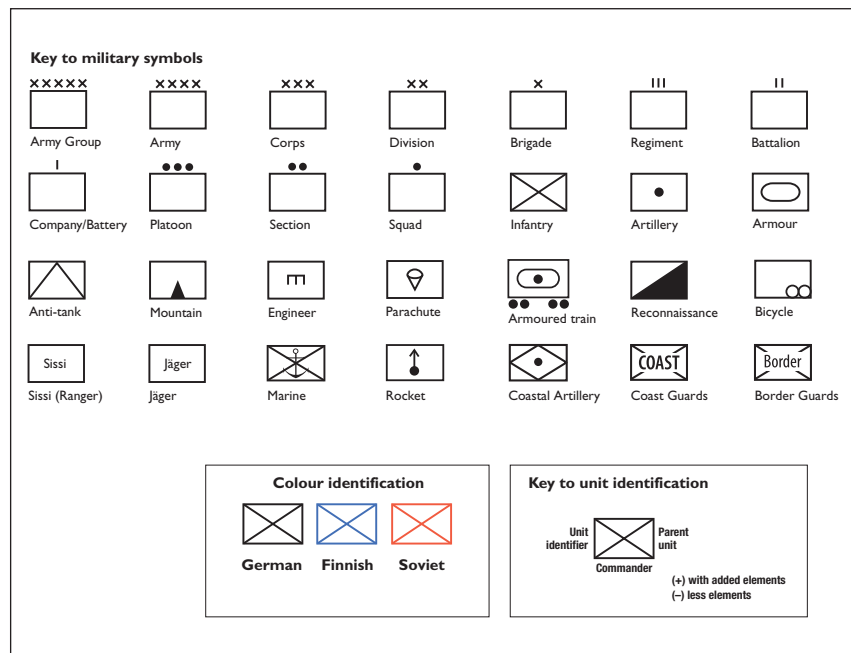
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Most of all we owe thanks to our families, who supported us throughout this enthralling project.

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 Eleanor and Signe Birks and Ragnhild Krüger

Take heed reader, there is much we can learn from history, lest it repeats itself.



# CHRONOLOGY

The dates in this section follow on directly from the signing of the Moscow Peace Treaty and the end of the Winter War, through to the end of World War II and its repercussions for Finland.

## 1940

### 13 March

The Moscow Peace Treaty is signed. The ceasefire comes into effect at 11:00am (Finnish time), ending the Winter War. Blatantly ignoring the ceasefire, Cyril Meretskov orders the attack on Viipuri to continue until the city is in Soviet hands.

### 15 March

Finland's flag is lowered at Viipuri. Troops start to withdraw behind the new borders agreed in the Moscow Peace Treaty. The Soviet Seventh Army is finally able to take the ground denied them during the war.

### 30 March

The Soviet Union declares that the forming of a Scandinavian defence force would be considered a hostile act.

### 9 April

Germany invades Denmark and Norway.

### May

Sweden approaches Finland to propose a military alliance.

### 10 May

Germany invades France and the Low Countries.

### 22 May

Foundation of the Finland–Soviet Union Peace and Friendship Society; its secret aim is to destabilise Finland's government.

### 14 June

The Finnish passenger plane *Kaleva* is shot down by the Soviets over Finnish territorial waters whilst returning from Estonia. German troops enter Paris.

### 15–16 June

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

### 17 June

Soviet forces deploy to the Baltic states. Soon Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia 'ask' to become members of the USSR.

### 18 June

The Finnish parliament passes law for the resettlement of Karelian refugees.

### 22 June

France surrenders.

### 23 June

Rights to the Petsamo nickel deposits are demanded by the USSR.

### 26 June

The Soviet Union demands Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina from Romania.

### 27 June

The Soviet Union demands the demilitarisation of the Åland Islands.

The Soviet demands presented to Romania are met in full.

### 29 June

Finland establishes a trade treaty with Germany.

### 8 July

Sweden agrees to allow German troops to pass through its territory.

### 8 July

The USSR demands passage to the leased Hanko Peninsula.

### 21 July

The Baltic states declare themselves to be Soviet republics.

### 22 July

First mention of Finland as a viable route of attack against the Soviet Union is recorded in the personal diary of General Franz Halder.

### 23 July

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

### 24 July

Finnish Minister of Supply Väinö Tanner's resignation is called for by the USSR.

### 31 July

Hitler 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 Winter War refugees is ratified.

**15 August**

Väinö Tanner resigns following Soviet pressure.

**17 August**

German Lieutenant-Colonel Josef Veltjens approaches Mannerheim to ask for permission to move German troops and supplies through Finland to northern Norway. Germany agrees to start to sell arms to Finland.

**18 August**

Acting President Risto Ryti instructs Mannerheim to verbally accept the German proposal of troop transport.

**30 August**

Germany give Romania guarantees for the nation's safety and agree the deployment of the Wehrmacht.

**6 September**

Finland signs an agreement allowing Soviet passage to the leased military base at Hanko.

**12 September**

Finland agrees to allow passage to German troops garrisoned in Norway.

**26 September**

Germany begins arms shipments to Finland.

**27 September**

Germany, Italy and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact.

**7 October**

German troops enter Romania to guard its oilfields against the Soviets. In order to deceive the USSR, German soldiers are deployed among the Romanian ranks as 'advisors'.

**12 November**

Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov begins his visit to Berlin. The Germans appear to dissuade the Soviets from an immediate invasion of Finland.

**27 November**

President Kyösti Kallio seeks permission to resign.

**16–18 December**

Halder and Göring meet with Major-General Paavo Talvela in Berlin.

**18 December**

Hitler approves the plans for Operation *Barbarossa*.

**December**

Hitler informs General Eduard Dietl of Operation *Silberfuchs* (*Silver Fox*), a planned attack against Murmansk launched directly from Petsamo in Finland. The Finns have not yet been consulted.

**19 December**

Finnish President Kallio passes away.

**19 December**

Risto Ryti becomes President of Finland.

**23 December**

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

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**1941**

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**3 January**

The new Prime Minister of Finland, Johan Rangell, forms his cabinet.

**30 January**

General Erik Heinrichs meets General Halder in Berlin. The Finns refuse even to entertain talks about any hypothetical joint operations in the future.

**3 March**

The Soviets officially object to Germany having pressured Bulgaria to join the Axis powers.

**4 March**

British Operation *Claymore* landings against the German base at the Lofoten Islands.

**7 March**

Finland and Germany sign a trade agreement.

**6 April**

Germany invades Yugoslavia and Greece.

**21 April**

The Finnish long-range reconnaissance patrols (LRRP) gain official status.

**25 April**

A Finnish military delegation led by General Heinrichs travels to Germany and is told about the plans for Operation *Barbarossa*.

**31 May**

Finland asks Germany to guarantee its independence, the import of foodstuffs and the restoration of its 1939 borders.

**3 June**

Germany pledges to support Finland should it find itself embroiled in another war with the Soviets. Finnish-German military negotiations begin in Helsinki.

**5 June**

Mannerheim recalls Talvela to active duty.

**6 June**

The first 120 secretly recruited volunteers depart Finland for the *Waffen-SS*. At the end of June, recruitment for the 1,500-strong Finnish battalion of the *SS-Division 'Wiking'* begins officially.

**7 June**

The first German formations move to Finland from bases in Norway.

**15 June**

Hjalmar Siilasvuo's III Army Corps is mobilised under German command in northern Finland.

**17 June**

Finland declares general mobilisation in a context of extraordinary military manoeuvres.

**21 June**

The Finns are informed that Operation *Barbarossa* will begin the following day.

**22 June**

Operation *Barbarossa* begins. Unprovoked, the Soviets bomb Finnish fortifications and vessels around Hanko and Åland. Luftwaffe bombers attacking the USSR are allowed to use Finnish airfields on their return legs (taking off from Finnish soil is not sanctioned until 25 June). Mannerheim orders the garrisoning of the Åland Islands. The Finnish Navy is allowed to participate in laying mines in the Gulf of Finland, in cooperation with the Germans.

**23 June**

Hitler's speech about brothers-in-arms in Finland causes a political scandal. Molotov demands an explanation from the Finnish government regarding its position towards Germany. The Soviet Union evacuates its embassy in Helsinki.

**24 June**

The Wehrmacht issues orders to Finnish troops under its command in the north of Finland not to cross national borders.

**25 June**

The Soviet Union bombs civilian and industrial targets in Finnish territory. Soviet artillery also fires on Finnish troop positions. The Finnish Air Force and anti-aircraft forces destroy 27 enemy planes. Prime Minister Rangell informs the Finnish parliament that Finnish neutrality has been violated and that Finland finds itself in a state of war.

The Continuation War begins.

**28 June**

The Finnish military is given permission to cross the national border for reconnaissance and to occupy empty sectors of no man's land.

**29 June**

Operation *Platinfuchs* (*Platinum Fox*) begins. German forces attack Soviet positions from Lapland and Norway.

**30 June**

Major-General Talvela is given the critical command of VI Army Corps.

**1 July**

The German attack towards Murmansk (Operation *Platinfuchs*) grinds to a halt at the Soviet line at Litsajoki. Operation *Polarfuchs* (*Arctic Fox*) sees an attack launched towards Salla. The Finnish 6th Division (attached to the Wehrmacht) begins its own attack as part of the overall plan. Siilasvuo's III Army Corps, under the command of Army Command Norway (AOK Norwegen), begins its attack.

**3 July**

Siilasvuo's troops capture the village of Vuokkiniemi.

**4 July**

The 14th Division, led by Colonel Raappana, is ordered over the Soviet border. These are the first troops under Finnish command to invade the USSR since the Kinship Wars.

**7 July**

The village of Vuonninen is captured by Siilasvuo's III Army Corps. Task Force J proceeds forward to Kiestinki. Salla is captured as planned in Operation *Polarfuchs* with the help of the Finnish 6th Division.

**8 July**

Group O begins its advance; its troops are eventually halted by the strength of the enemy at Ristisalmi. Raappana's 14th Division captures the village of Repola and continues towards Omelia.

**10 July**

The Karelian Army begins its offensive with both the VI and VII Army Corps. Mannerheim makes the so-called Sword Scabbard Declaration.

**11 July**

Heiskanen's 11th Division liberates the town of Värtsilä. Task Force J reaches the Soviet defences at the Sohjana narrows, where the 242nd Rifle Regiment keeps it at bay.

**12 July**

Great Britain and the Soviet Union sign the Anglo-Soviet Agreement. Finnish troops under the command of Colonel Ruben Lagus reach Lake Tolvajärvi. The Finnish 14th Infantry Regiment is sent from Åland to reinforce Operation *Platinfuchs*.

**14 July**

Lieutenant-Colonel Väinö Merikallio leads the capture of Loimola village.

**15 July**

Colonel Antero Svensson's 7th Division reaches the Soviet positions along the Matkaselkä railway. The 1st Jäger Brigade reaches Koirinoja on Lake Ladoga.

**17 July**

The 1st Jäger Brigade destroys a strong enemy column marching to reinforce Loimola village. Troops from Woldemar Hägglund's VII Army Corps meet with those of the 11th Division at the Jänisjoki River.

**18–22 July**

Task Force Järvinen (VI Army Corps) secures the Lake Tulemajärvi area and then marches south, capturing the village of Suurmäki.

**19 July**

Mannerheim orders the Karelian Army to halt its attack on the Vitele–Vieljärvi line until further notice. Lagus' forces capture Salmi after two days of fierce fighting.

**22 July**

Colonel Lagus and Major-General Talvela are made Knights of the Mannerheim Cross (Talvela's cross is officially awarded 3 August). Lieutenant-Colonel Järvinen's troops capture the village of Suurmäki.

**23 July**

Talvela's VI Army Corps cross the former national border. The *Stavka Glavnogo Komandovaniya* – the Central Command of the Armed Forces of the USSR – is formed.

**24 July**

Talvela's VI Army Corps captures the village of Vitele and proceeds to take positions along the Tuulosjoki River, halting their attack without crossing, as dictated by Mannerheim. In the north, the 14th Division captures the town of Omelia. Soviet troops are forced to retreat from the Ruskeala area.

**29 July**

The German 163rd Division push for Suojärvi is unsuccessful.

**30 July**

The Royal Air Force bombs Liinahamari harbour in Petsamo. British diplomats call this either a 'tragic accident' or 'justified action against Germans, where Finland happened to be in the way'. It remains the only act of war between the two nations during the conflict.

**31 July**

Task Force J is reinforced by the Germans, and continues across the Sohjana River.

**1 August**

The Soviet counter-offensive in the Sortavala area fails, and the 168th and 198th Rifle divisions are forced to retreat. Mannerheim orders II Army Corps to begin its attack.

**3 August**

The battle for Kirvu; the extraordinary actions of Anti-Tank Gunner Vilho Rättö earn him the Mannerheim Cross.

**5 August**

The strategically important point village of Ilmee in Karelia is cleared by 18th Division.

**7 August**

Colonel Aarne Blick's 2nd Division from II Army Corps, reaches Lahdenpohja. Large Soviet formations are now left in the Sortavala area between the II and VII Army Corps. By 14 August they have been destroyed.

**8 August**

Task Force J captures the town of Kiestinki.

The German attack in the north of Finland towards Aittojoki is halted.

**11 August**

II Army Corps captures Hiitola village.

**13 August**

I Army Corps is formed.

**14 August**

The United States and Great Britain issue the Atlantic Charter, defining post-war Allied goals. Soviet forces in Karelia are forced back over the Antrea River. Task Force J is reinforced into Division J under Colonel Väinö Palojärvi.

**15 August**

Sortavala falls to the Finns. The Soviet 88th Rifle Division's Major-General Andrew Zelensov and his headquarters staff are wiped out in a Luftwaffe raid.

**15–17 August**

The Soviet 265th Rifle Division is destroyed at Räisälä.

**17 August**

On the Karelian Isthmus, forward elements of the Finnish 18th Division establish a bridgehead over the Vuoksi River at Hopeasalmi.

**17–19 August**

A large proportion of the 168th Rifle Division manages to break out of the Rautalahti *motti* and escape over Lake Ladoga, but much equipment is left behind.

**18 August**

The United States informs Finland that the Soviet Union is ready for peace talks.

**19 August**

Group O and the 11th Division launch a joint operation to capture Suojärvi. The German XXXVI Army Corps reorganises for a new attack, and finally forces a Soviet retreat from the Kairala area of Lapland.

**20 August**

Formation of the Kiestinki *motti* resulting in the entrapment of parts of the Finnish Division J. These men are not liberated before early September, after having suffered 1,683 casualties. Soviet troops in Viipuri leave their defensive positions and quietly withdraw south.

**21 August**

IV Army Corps receives permission to conduct aggressive reconnaissance on the Viipuri front; this turns into an all-out assault. All Finnish land forces are now committed in the war. The 10th Division liberates the town of Käkisalmi. The Suojärvi area and the village of Suvilahti are captured by the Finns. The towns of Enso and Jääski are liberated.

**23 August**

Finnish forces capture the Kilpola archipelago, although not before significant elements of the 142nd and 198th Rifle divisions have escaped by boat. Tsalkki village is captured. The Finns reach Taipale on the Karelian Isthmus.

**24 August**

Konevitsa Monastery Island is liberated. The 115th and 123rd Rifle divisions start their counter-attack aiming to drive the Finns back into the Vuoksi River. Ryti and Mannerheim agree that Finland should not, despite German suggestions, participate in the invasion of Leningrad. The Finnish 8th Division crosses Viipuri Bay and cuts off the Soviet route of retreat to the south.

**25 August**

The capture of the railway station at Kämärä severs the Leningrad–Viipuri tracks acting as Soviet supply routes for large parts of the Karelian Isthmus. Group O reaches Onkamus and secures the bridge over the Suununjoki River. The 11th Division is ordered to swing eastwards towards Prääsä village, and to cut off and create a large *motti* to contain the Soviet troops. Colonel Matti Tiainen, the commander of Light Brigade T, is killed by a Soviet barrage.

**26 August**

Finnish forces capture the narrows between the two largest lakes on the Karelian Isthmus.

**27 August**

The Finnish 12th Division captures Huumola.

**27–29 August**

The ‘Russian Dunkirk’: 190 ships of the Baltic Fleet attempt to evacuate Tallinn before the Wehrmacht reaches the city. At least 12,000 men drown.

**28 August**

The 4th Division occupies Sainö village, thus surrounding the Soviet troops on the western isthmus completely. German troops liberate Tallinn. The Soviets launch a counter-attack against the German XXXVI Army Corps causing them to dig in. The German attempt to cut the Murmansk railway fails. Plans for the Soviet 198th Rifle Division’s counter-offensive in the Sortavala area fall into Finnish hands. Finland severs diplomatic relations with Great Britain.

**29 August**

Finnish forces liberate Viipuri.

**31 August**

Finnish troops reach the former national border on the Karelian Isthmus. The German XXXVI Army Corps crosses the Tuutsajoki River.

**1 September**

Finnish forces destroy the Porlammi *motti*, and capture the largest cache of Soviet equipment of the entire war. The village of Säämäjärvi falls to the Finns, as they push past the large Karelian lakes.

**2 September**

Koivisto harbour is captured by Finnish troops, thus threatening the Soviet enclaves on the surrounding islands.

**4 September**

The Karelian Army starts its offensive from Tuulos towards Syväri. Soviet forces conduct a rapid counter-attack from Kiestinki.

**5 September**

The Finnish 11th Division captures Kinnas village and the important bridge over the Säpsäjoki River. Lagus' Jäger break the Soviet defence at the Aunus River. The city of Aunus falls shortly afterwards.

**6 September**

Raappana's 14th Division reaches Rukajärvi. Nurmoila falls; Soviet troops are forced out of the village.

**7 September**

The Syväri River is crossed by the 1st Jäger Brigade. The Soviet 3rd Rifle Division narrowly escapes from a *motti* near Lake Kalajärvi, but is forced to abandon all its heavy equipment.

**8 September**

Finnish forces capture Prääsä village.

**9 September**

Mannerheim orders the advance to stop just outside of the defensive lines around Leningrad.

**11 September**

Mannerheim expands the Karelian Army by granting it use of the 4th Division and the German 163rd Infantry Division, in preparation for the push to Petroskoi.

**13 September**

Talvela's men capture the railway bridge across Syväri. The Finnish 7th Division captures the Lumatjärvi crossroads. The joint German–Finnish naval Operation *Nordwind* begins; Finnish vessels set sail from Utö. The Finnish Navy's flagship, *Ilmarinen*, hits a mine and sinks, taking with it two-thirds of its crew.

**14 September**

The battle for Villavaara ends in a Finnish victory.

**15 September**

The Finnish 1st Division under Colonel Paavo Paalu captures Pyhäjärvi.

**17 September**

The German XXXVI Army Corps reaches the Vilmajoki River and takes up defensive positions. Mannerheim orders Raappana to stop at the Ontajoki River, to allow the formation of a unified front with the Karelian Army.

**19 September**

Colonel Kaarlo Viljanen's 4th Division captures the crossroads at Markkila.

**22 September**

The Karelian Army reaches the objective line agreed upon with the Germans prior to the campaign.

**23 September**

The 1st Jäger Brigade captures Petäjäselkä village, permanently severing Petroskoi from the south.

**24 September**

Stavka replaces Seventh Army commander Philip Gorolenko with General Cyril Meretskov.

**30 September**

The battle for Moscow begins.

**End of September**

Hitler orders the attacks towards Murmansk and the railway to stop. However, Nikolaus von Falkenhorst and Siilasvuo decide to make another attempt to reach Louhi town before the end of 1941.

**1 October**

The Karelian Army takes Petroskoi. The city is renamed Äänislinna.

**2 October**

Finnish forces push past Petroskoi to secure the region. They cross the narrows of the Suojunjoki River, and reach the bridge at Besovets. They also take Koskenkyä village.

**3 October**

Hitler gives a radio speech announcing that the Soviet Union has once and for all been defeated, and that it will never rise again.

**6 October**

Finnish troops initially refuse to cross the Syvärinniska River.

**7 October**

The Finnish 7th Division crosses the Syvärinniska tributary on the eastern edge, by Lake Ääninen. Munjärvi village is captured by Colonel Oinonen's Group O.

**14 October**

Parts of the 7th Division head east, cross the river Syvärinniska and meet the vanguard of the Soviet 114th Rifle Division, freshly transferred from Siberia. This meeting defines the front line for the remaining years of the war.

**19 October**

Group O reaches its objectives in northern Karelia, secures the Munjärvi area and defeats the Soviet 71st Rifle Division.

**26 October**

The Finnish 8th Division connects with Raappana's 14th Division and forms a unified front. They settle into trench positions.

**27 October**

The coastal defences in the Petroskoi area are secured and handed over to the newly formed Äänisjärvi Coastal Brigade.

**1 November**

Siilasvuo's III Army Corps attacks again towards Louhi and the Murmansk railway.

**5 November**

President Ryti informs Mannerheim that discharging parts of the army to return to civilian duty is vital for the infrastructure of the country.

**6 November**

Mannerheim starts to plan a third line of defence between lakes Seesjärvi and Ääninen. He also orders the formation of II Army Corps under Major-General Taavetti Laatikainen.

**17 November**

Siilasvuo gives orders to halt III Army Corps' attack on Louhi. The Murmansk railway is not reached.

**17 November**

Group O enters the deserted village of Perälähti without a fight.

**23 November**

The 8th Division of II Army Corps captures Karjalan Maaselkä by Lake Seesjärvi.

**25 November**

Finland joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

**28 November**

Mannerheim proposes the first discharge of parts of the army.

**30 November**

The German offensive halts at the gates of Moscow.

**2 December**

The Soviets abandon the Hanko naval base under the cover of darkness.

**5 December**

Finnish forces take the town of Karhumäki.

**6 December**

Poventsa village comes under Finnish control. This is as far as Mannerheim allows the front to be extended.

The Finns declare that territories lost in the Moscow Peace Treaty have now returned to Finland. Great Britain declares war on Finland.

**7 December**

Mannerheim orders the Karelian Army to take up defensive positions on the fronts on the Maaselkä Isthmus (along lakes Ääninen and Seesjärvi) and Aunus Isthmus (along the Syväri River). A prolonged period of trench warfare starts.

**8 December**

The United States and Great Britain declare war on Japan. In a belated attempt to prevent further Finnish advances, the Soviets blow up the locks of the Stalin Canal, flooding the town of Poventsa.

**1942****1 January**

The Soviet Navy attacks Finnish islands. The Red Army attacks towards Krivi on the Maaselkä Isthmus.

**5 January**

President Ryti receives news of Soviet peace terms, presented to the British foreign minister by Stalin.

**14 January**

Formation of the mostly German Army Command Lapland (AOK Lappland), and relief of the Finnish troops under Army Command Norway. Finnish Major Arnold Majewski leads an attack to sabotage the Murmansk railway at Maiguba.

**19 January**

Majewski's sabotage mission destroys a section of railway, and the troops make their return to Finnish territory.

**21 January**

Mannerheim warns Ryti of a possible German collapse on the Eastern Front. Japan invades Burma. The Soviet Navy manages to capture the station at Krivi.

**3 February**

Mannerheim informs Germany that, unless its position on the Eastern Front improves, he will abandon the attack on the Murmansk railway.

**7 February**

The Soviets are ejected from Krivi by Laatikainen's II Army Corps. A surprise attack by Soviet ski-troops attempts to take the town of Poventsa, but is repelled after a week.

**10 February**

Finnish headquarters upgrades the Tank Battalion to an armoured brigade. In June the unit is combined with the 1st Jäger Brigade to form the Armoured Division.

**27–28 March**

Finnish forces perform a daring crossing of the frozen Gulf of Finland to capture Suursaari Island from the Soviets.

**28–29 March**

The Royal Air Force bombs Cologne (Köln).

**30 March**

The Finnish Army occupies Tytärsaari Island. The Germans agree to garrison it.

**5 April**

Hitler orders a shift in focus on the Eastern Front towards Stalingrad and the Caucasus.

**8 April**

A Soviet attack on the garrison on Tytärsaari is repelled.

**9 April**

US troops surrender on Bataan in the Philippines.

**10 April**

Finnish troops depart Tytärsaari, and the German garrison takes over.

**11 April**

The Soviet attack on the Syväri River marks the beginning of the *rasputitsa* battles.

**21 April**

Finnish forces recapture the Syväri River breach during the *rasputitsa* battles.

**24 April**

Soviet forces attack from Kiestinki.

**7 May**

The Soviet encirclement at Kiestinki is contained by the Finns.

**8 May**

German troops begin an offensive in the Crimea.

**12 May**

The Soviet Union begins a spring offensive south towards Kharkov.

**22 May**

The Finnish and German navies begin building a mine blockade, forcing the Soviet Navy into a small corner of the Gulf of Finland.

**24 May**

The second phase of the *rasputitsa* battles, at Kiestinki, ends after a month of fierce fighting with a defensive victory for III Army Corps.

**26 May**

Great Britain and the Soviet Union sign the Anglo-Soviet Treaty. A German-Italian force attacks towards El Alamein on the Egyptian border.

**30–31 May**

The Royal Air Force launches a major raid on Cologne.

**3 June**

German troops attack Sevastopol in the Crimea.

**4 June**

Hitler visits Finland on Mannerheim's 75th birthday.

**27 June**

Mannerheim departs for a visit to Germany.

**28 June**

German forces launch a broad attack on the Don front.

**1 July**

The German XVIII Mountain Corps relieves Finnish forces on the Lapland front. The 3rd Division takes responsibility for the area south of Uhtua. German troops take Sevastopol in the Crimea.

**23 July**

Hitler orders preparations for the taking of Leningrad.

**27 July**

The Germans take Rostov at the mouth of the Don River.

**29 July**

Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler visits Finland.

**30 July**

Stalin issues Order No. 227: 'Not a step back.'

**2 August**

Mannerheim agrees to participate in the attack on Sorokka (Belomorsk), provided that German forces take Leningrad by September.

**23 August**

The German vanguard advances to Stalingrad.

**13 September**

The German attack at Stalingrad begins.

**9 October**

Hitler permanently abandons plans to capture Leningrad.

**22 October**

In Stockholm, junior diplomatic official (and NKVD secret agent) Boris Yartsev hints at the possibility of peace between Finland and the Soviet Union.

**3 November**

The Cabinet of Finland forbids the mass deportation of Jewish refugees.

**16 December**

Soviet troops break through Italian lines on the Don front.

**22 December**

Soviet forces attack in the Caucasus.

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**1943****2 January**

German forces begin their retreat from the Caucasus.

**31 January**

Commander of Sixth Army Friedrich Paulus is captured at Stalingrad.

**1 February**

The Finnish Air Force agrees a deal with Germany for the delivery of 30 modern Messerschmitt Bf 109 G-2 fighters.

**2 February**

Axis forces surrender at Stalingrad.

**21 February**

German forces counter-attack at Kharkov.

**4 March**

Mannerheim informs Germany that he will cease offensive operations.

**13 March**

Hitler prioritises the offensive on the Kursk front. The troops expected to be freed up after this are to be redeployed as part of Operation *Parkplatz*, the capture of Leningrad.

**15 March**

German forces retake Kharkov.

**20 March**

The United States offers Finland its services in opening up dialogue with the Soviet Union.

**26 March**

Ribbentrop chides Finland for its intentions of peace.

**17 April**

Lieutenant-General Talvela requests that Mannerheim let him return from Germany to a front-line command. *'Om det blir krig'* ('If the war starts'), promises Mannerheim.

**23 April**

The American chargé d'affaires receives instructions on severing diplomatic ties with Finland.

**25 April**

The United States cancels the breaking of diplomatic ties.

**12 May**

Axis forces in North Africa surrender.

**22 May**

The Soviet Union dissolves the Comintern.

**1 June**

The Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen-SS returns to Hanko for a period of leave.

**2 June**

The Western Allies inform the Soviet Union that the invasion of Europe will be postponed until spring 1944.

**27 June**

Mannerheim informs Hitler that Finland needs the men of the Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen-SS for itself and that these troops will not return to Germany.

**10 July**

The Allies land in Sicily.

**11 July**

The Finnish Volunteer Battalion of the Waffen-SS is disbanded.

**30 July**

The Soviet Union enquires about the Finnish view on peace terms.

**3 August**

The Finns decide to respond to Soviet peace enquiries.

**11 August**

The Soviet Union rejects Finnish peace proposals.

**13 October**

Italy declares war on Germany.

**14–15 October**

General Jodl visits Finland and informs Mannerheim of Germany's military situation.

**6 November**

Soviet troops take Kiev.

**18 November**

Mannerheim orders the construction of the Viipuri–Kuparsaari–Taipale (VKT) Line on the Karelian Isthmus, and the U Line north of Ladoga.

**20 November**

The Soviet ambassador to Sweden, Alexandra Kollontai, proclaims that Finland will not be required to surrender unconditionally.

**26 November**

Ribbentrop enquires about the possibility of a political union between Finland and Germany.

**29 November**

The Finns inform Kollontai that they are ready to negotiate based on the borders of 1939.

**28 November–1 December**

Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt discuss strategy at the Tehran Conference.

**1 December**

In Tehran, Stalin states his terms for peace in Finland.

**29 December**

Finland rejects the political union proposed by Germany.

## 1944

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### 14–27 January

The Soviet offensive to relieve Leningrad takes place.

### 30 January

The US recommends that Finland remove itself from the war.

### 1 February

Mannerheim orders the Finnish Armoured Division to become part of his personal reserves north of Viipuri.

### 6–7 February

Following the British example set at Cologne, Stalin uses terror bombing over Helsinki to force Finland to capitulate. The first raid is carried out by nearly 800 bombers. The massed bombing raids are repeated, by 400 planes on 16/17 February and again by 920 planes on 26/27 February. Other Finnish population centres also receive their share of the bombers' attention in this period.

### 7 February

Mannerheim orders Aaro Pajari's 3rd Division to transfer from Uhtua to the Vammelsuu–Vuotas area to prepare for action against the Soviets.

### 14 February

The German forces retreat, and the siege of Leningrad is lifted. This enables Soviet commanders to amass forces on the Finnish front.

### 3 March

Mannerheim gives a critical directive requesting that care be taken when preparing defences across the Karelian Isthmus.

### 4 March

Mannerheim reorganises the command structure on the Karelian Isthmus.

### 29 March

Siilasvuo expresses concerns that the Vammelsuu–Taipale (VT) Line is nowhere near finished or defensible.

### 22 April

Finnish efforts to reach a peaceful settlement with the Soviet Union cease.

### 10 May

Mannerheim again expresses concern about the unfinished state of the defences, and tells the troops that he wants them to hold firm in face of the overwhelming attack that will follow.

### 6 June

The Allied invasion of Normandy takes place.

### 9 June

The Leningrad Front's offensive against Finland begins with a massive artillery bombardment on the Karelian Isthmus.

### 10 June

The defences at Valkeasaari are overrun by Soviet forces. Major-General Johannes Sihvo's 10th Division flees the front.

### 11 June

General orders are issued that all Finnish troops should fall back to the Vammelsuu–Taipale (VT) Line. Finnish troops on leave are recalled, being given until 20 June to return to the front line.

### 12–16 June

Major-General Ilmari Martola's 2nd Division holds the Soviets at the battle of Siiranmäki for four days before the enemy withdraws.

### 14 June

The Soviet 72nd and 286th Rifle divisions break through at Kuuterselkä, compromising this section of the VT Line. The Soviet 1st Tank Brigade continues past the Finnish positions at the VT Line, capturing the area by the Cavalry Brigade's headquarters. Mannerheim orders the creation of a new Karelian Isthmus command centre under Lieutenant-General Karl L. Oesch. Major-General Talvela takes command of Aunus Group.

### 15 June

Soviet tanks have reached the rear of Major-General Lars Melander's Cavalry Brigade at Vammeljärvi. Its consequent retreat will force the Finns to abandon the VT Line. Colonel Albert Puroma's 1st Jäger Brigade's counter-attack towards Kuuterselkä fails. After heavy fighting these men are sent to recover in the rear. The VT Line is deemed unrecoverable. Lieutenant-General Oesch receives Mannerheim's orders for all troops to withdraw from the VKT Line. Colonel Olli Paloheimo's Military Government of Ladoga Karelia and Aunus begins civilian evacuations in the area.

### 16 June

Siilasvuo's III Army Corps abandons the southern side of the Vuoksi River. The 2nd Jäger Battalion manages to capture Perkjärvi village from the Soviets, but loses 90 per cent of its officers in the process.

### 17 June

Aunus Group and II Army Corps are given permission to begin a fighting withdrawal towards the U Line and the former border.

**19 June**

Finnish troops from Aunus Group withdraw from bridgehead positions south of the Syväri River.

**18 June**

Major-General Lagus assumes overall command of the 10th Division and the Cavalry Brigade. He organises the defence of the Rokkalanjoki area. Leonard Govorov is promoted to the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.

**19 June**

Mannerheim's daily orders demand that the VKT Line must hold. The new commander of the Cavalry Brigade, Colonel Urho Tähtinen, is ordered to repel any attacks on the western coast of Viipuri. The Soviets attack the PSS Line in eastern Karelia, and the Finns abandon their bridgehead on the south side of the Syväri River.

**20 June**

Mannerheim splits the defence of the VKT Line between the IV and III Army Corps. The V Army Corps takes up position west of Viipuri, which is captured by Soviet forces in a single day. The Soviets break through on the Maaselkä Isthmus, and force the Finns back to the Karhumäki–Seesjärvi line. The Finns enquire as to the possibility of peace with the Soviets. The Soviets will only agree to complete and unconditional surrender, something the Finns cannot accept. Major-General Ivan Fadeyev orders the Soviet 6th Rifle Corps to attack through Näättä and past Lake Kokkoselkä to Noskua. The attack is repelled, and Fadeyev repeats the attack the next day, which also fails. These struggles will continue for a further week.

**21 June–6 July**

The battle of Tali-Ihantala – the largest ever fought in the Nordic countries – begins with attacks by Twenty-First Army. Two weeks of the fiercest combat result in a decisive defensive victory for the Finns. The Soviet 98th Rifle Corps reaches positions in front of Äyräpää and Kyläpaakkola on the Vuoksi River. Two weeks of failed attempts to cross the river follow.

**21–24 June**

Soviet forces cross the Syväri while Finnish troops conduct an orderly fighting retreat as planned.

**22 June**

German foreign minister Ribbentrop makes a surprise visit to Helsinki. He talks to President Ryti about the possibility of more German aid if Finland allies itself firmly to Germany. On the Tali front, the Finnish 18th Division's strongpoint in front of Mannikkala is destroyed, and the Soviets steamroller through the VKT Line towards Tali and Repola. Soviet Operation *Bagrator* begins on the third anniversary of Hitler's *Barbarossa*.

**23 June**

The town of Karhumäki on the Maaselkä Isthmus is lost. II Army Corps continues its orderly retreat. Coastal defence troops are forced to retreat from the Koivisto Islands. The Soviet 70th Naval Rifle Brigade makes a surprise landing behind the PSS Line, near the villages of Vitele and Tuulos. Finnish counter-attacks fail, and the PSS Line starts to fold.

**23 June**

Colonel-General Eduard Dietl dies in a plane crash.

**24 June**

Major-General Blick disregards direct orders to hold the PSS Line and instead gives orders for his VI Army Corps to retreat. This forces the rest of Aunus Group to withdraw in haste to avoid being surrounded.

**25 June**

The second concerted attempt by the Soviet Twenty-First Army to break through in IV Army Corps' sector at Tali-Ihantala begins. This creates a serious breach in the Finnish lines at Portinhoikka.

**26 June**

The reinforced 1st Jäger Brigade launches a successful night counter-attack on the Tali–Repola front. Despite destroying 45 enemy tanks, the Finnish light tanks suffer heavy losses.

**27 June**

The Ryti–Ribbentrop Agreement: President Ryti sends his personal guarantee to Hitler that Finland will not enter into any form of peace agreement with the USSR in return for immediate German aid. On the Syväri Isthmus, VI Army Corps is given orders to retreat north of the Soviet landing to their rear. Major-General Heiskanen and the 11th Division arrives from eastern Karelia, and takes over the defence of Kärstilänjärvi–Leitimojärvi, thus freeing Lagus' Armoured Division to manoeuvre and attack.

**27–29 June**

The IV Army Corps attempts to surround the Soviet 63rd and 64th Guards Rifle divisions at Tali-Ihantala. When this action fails, Laatikainen again moves to the defence. By now the Twenty-First Army commander, Colonel-General Dmitry Gusev, has realised that his gambit has not worked. Despite this, the fighting continues for another week.

**28 June**

Fighter ace Hans Wind is engaged by enemy planes and badly wounded. He survives and makes it back home. In the wake of the battle of Noskua, the Soviet 6th Rifle Corps is totally spent, and moves to the defensive. The Finns abandon the city of Äänislinna in eastern Karelia. It will soon revert to being known as Petroskoi.

**29 June**

The IV Army Corps fails to surround the Soviet Guards units, and retreats to the north of their battleground. Commander of the Leningrad Front Govorov concludes that the Twenty-First Army is unable to create the breach he needs, and so orders the Fifty-Ninth Army under Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Korovnikov to cross Viipuri Bay and for Alexander I. Tsherepanov's Twenty-Third Army to cross the Vuoksi River at Äyräpää.

**29 June–6 July**

Finnish artillery proves instrumental in halting the last efforts of the Soviets in the Tali-Ihantala area, shelling Soviet troops repeatedly at their jumping-off points. Over the previous weeks, both sides have accumulated a total of over 35,000 casualties.

**30 June**

Korovnikov's newly arrived Fifty-Ninth Army attempts a final landing across Viipuri Bay for the first time, but is repelled. Mannerheim brings II Corps under the control of Talvela's Aunus Group and orders a fighting withdrawal to the U Line.

**1 July**

Stavka starts to transfer surplus units from the front line in Karelia to the Eastern Front.

**3–10 July**

A major Soviet attack is launched by the Fifty-Ninth Army in Viipuri Bay, but it fails to create the intended bridgehead on the coast of Finland.

**3 July**

Lieutenant-General Basil I. Shvetsov replaces Tsherepanov as the Twenty-Third Army commander in the central Karelian Isthmus. Soviet forces capture Minsk and take around 100,000 German prisoners.

**4–9 July**

The 98th Rifle Corps attacks at Äyräpää–Vuosalmi. The Finns are driven across the Vuoksi River to Vuosalmi, but in the process the attacking corps is practically destroyed.

**4–6 July**

The Finnish Navy supports Finnish forces in Viipuri Bay. The following day, Soviet forces claim the islands around Viipuri.

**5 July**

The Lintujärvi–Jänkäjärvi line is reached by the Soviets. Aunus Group continues to fall back, exposing II Army Corps' right flank and thus also forcing its retreat.

**6 July**

Four powerful Soviet corps roll forward, capturing Salmi village and crossing the Tulemajoki River in Ladoga Karelia.

**7 July**

Talvela gives the orders to withdraw to the U Line, the last line of defence in Ladoga Karelia. The last Finnish rearguards do so by 10 July. Due to disobeying orders and retreating, Major-General Blick is relieved from VI Army Corps command and sent to lead the 2nd Division on the Karelian Isthmus. He is replaced by Major-General Martola.

**9–17 July**

The newly arrived 115th Rifle Corps continues the attack by the 98th Rifle Corps around Vuosalmi. In the end both sides suffer tremendous losses, but the VKT Line still remains under III Army Corps control.

**9 July**

Soviet forces attempt to cross the Tervajoki River at Viipuri Bay, but are halted by the German 122nd Infantry Division. The Soviet Fifty-Ninth Army moves to the defensive. Finland remobilises older men that have been discharged from service.

**11 July**

Soviet forces launch a major attack in the Nietjärvi sector. The U Line holds.

**13 July**

The Soviets take Porajärvi from Colonel Torvald Ekman's 21st Brigade.

**15–17 July**

Soviet forces attempt a second breakthrough in the Nietjärvi sector. The U Line still holds.

**17–23 July**

The battle of Loimola village, involving the newly arrived Soviet 127th Light Rifle Corps on the northern edge of the U Line. Both sides end up entrenched.

**17 July**

The frequency of Soviet attacks on Finnish positions dwindles. The VKT Line has been shifted, but holds. Both sides adopt trench warfare.

**18 July**

Aunus Group is disbanded, the front having been stabilised around the U Line ten days previously. Mannerheim again sends Talvela as his envoy to German headquarters. In Ladoga Karelia, VI Army Corps assumes overall responsibility for the defences. The Red Army enters Poland.

**25 July–4 August**

A Soviet attack forces Major-General Frans U. Fagernäs' 1st Division to retreat from Suojjärvi to Tolvajärvi, digging into defensive positions at the lake narrows.

**26 July**

Aiming for the town of Ilomantsi, the 289th Rifle Division captures the important Kuolismaa village crossroads, while the vanguard of the 176th Rifle Division on their right flank edges past the former border.

**27 July**

Alexandra Kollontai tells the Swedish State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Erik Boheman that the Soviet Union is ready to talk peace, on condition that Finland changes its government.

**29 July**

German forces are recalled from the Karelian Isthmus to protect the front lines threatening Germany.

**1 August**

President Ryti resigns. Prime Minister Edwin Linkomies acts as president.

**2 August**

The Soviet 176th and 289th Rifle divisions are encircled in a loose *motti* by Raappana's Group R. The Karelian Front sends two naval rifle brigades to relieve their comrades.

**4 August**

Soviet forces in the Tolvajärvi area cease all attacks, and the front stabilises for the remainder of the war. Mannerheim is sworn in as Finland's president.

**5 August**

Major-General Einar Vihma is killed by a Soviet mortar barrage at Ihantala.

**9 August**

On the Ilomantsi front, Major-General Raappana inflicts heavy losses on the Soviet divisions trapped in the *motti*. Both sides entrench.

**17 August**

Field Marshal Keitel, Chief of the German Armed Forces, visits Finland. Mannerheim bluntly informs him that Finland will only keep fighting alongside Germany as long as it is in its own best interest to do so.

**25 August**

The Finnish ambassador to Sweden, Georg Gripenberg, hands Kollontai a letter containing Finland's proposal for an armistice.

**29 August**

The USSR answers Finland's proposal for peace with its own harsh terms.

**2 September**

The Finnish parliament accepts a draft peace agreement and terms of armistice with the Soviet Union. Finland breaks relations with Germany and, as demanded, declares that all German troops must leave its territory by 15 September.

**3 September**

Mannerheim sends what forces he can to the northern front in Lapland. These troops are not yet given orders to fight German troops, but are instructed to garrison the area in the wake of their withdrawal.

**4 September**

Finnish forces begin the ceasefire as agreed at 08:00. The German Twentieth Mountain Army receives orders to initiate Operation *Birke* (*Birch*).

**5 September**

After a further day of attacks, Soviet forces also join the ceasefire.

**7 September**

President Mannerheim orders the evacuation of civilians from the areas controlled by German forces. A Finnish delegation leaves for Moscow in order to negotiate the final peace agreement. The delegation is led by Prime Minister Antti Hackzell, but after he falls ill, Foreign Minister Carl Enckell takes charge.

**11 September**

Lieutenant-Colonel Usko Haahti flies to Rovaniemi in order to agree on the terms of the planned 'Phoney War' with the Germans.

**14 September**

Negotiations start for a final peace agreement; the Soviet Union unveils its new, even harsher demands. German forces leave southern Finland. The 'Autumn Manoeuvres' or 'Phoney War' commences in Lapland.

**15 September**

The Lapland War begins. The deadline set by the Soviets to drive out the Germans expires. The German Navy attempts a landing against the Finns at Suursaari Island, and suffers a humiliating defeat. The Finns are able to showcase a point of actual warfare, fulfilling the armistice terms.

**18 September**

Molotov gives Finland one day to consider and sign the peace agreement. Following the German attack at Suursaari, Haahti returns to Rovaniemi to reaffirm the terms for the Phoney War, including the timetable for the German withdrawal.

**19 September**

The Finnish parliament accepts the terms of peace proposed by the Soviet Union. A temporary peace agreement is signed in Moscow. Puroma's 6th Division is ordered to push forwards towards Suomussalmi and Puolanka.

**22 September**

Mannerheim's daily orders concerning the end of the war against the Soviet Union are made public. Finnish troops led by Colonel Kustaa Inkala meet Soviet forces that have already crossed the border near Suomussalmi.

**24 September**

Major-General Lagus orders his forces to advance towards Kemi. Shortly after, Mannerheim installs Siilasvuo as overall commander of Finnish forces in Lapland, with headquarters at Oulu.

**27 September**

Siilasvuo officially takes charge, and moves to put an end to the Phoney War. He issues new orders to his forces.

**28 September**

The Porkkala Naval Area is 'leased' to the Soviets and handed over. The first firefight of the Lapland War takes place between the Finns and the Germans at Pudasjärvi.

**30 September**

Mannerheim receives threats from the Allied Control Commission that if Finland is unable to evict the German armies on its own, the Soviet Union will send troops to provide immediate support.

**1–6 October**

The Finns conduct a stealth landing, starting the battle of Tornio. Over the coming days the bridgehead is heavily reinforced and all German counter-attacks repelled. The loss of Tornio accelerates the withdrawal of the whole German Twentieth Mountain Army.

**2 October**

German forces are ordered to destroy all industrial and military property and infrastructure in Lapland.

**5 October**

Soviet members of the Allied Control Commission arrive in Finland. The German high command orders General Lothar Rendulic to withdraw all his troops to Norway and take up positions at the Lyngen Fjord.

**7 October**

Mannerheim approaches Sweden to help with the refugee problem in the north.

**8 October**

Finnish troops liberate the town of Kemi.

**9 October**

Churchill and Stalin meet in Moscow. Finland remains outside the Soviet sphere of influence. The defeated German 7th Mountain Division escapes from Group Lagus.

**13 October**

German forces in Lapland are ordered to destroy all civilian property and any possible shelter the Finns could use during the oncoming winter.

**16 October**

Finnish forces liberate the ruined town of Rovaniemi.

**19 October**

The Allied Control Commission presents the Finnish government with its first list of war criminals.

**20 October**

The Finnish Armoured Division occupies the ruined village of Sodankylä. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavian resistance forces capture Belgrade.

**23 October**

Finnish troops reach the German fortifications at Tankavaara, but fail to displace German forces there.

**28 October**

Bulgaria makes an armistice agreement with the Allies.

**30 October**

Minister Tanner forbids the handing of Jewish refugees to Germany. German troops withdraw from Muonio village.

**31 October**

The German high command orders the troops at Tankavaara to withdraw. Following pressure from the Soviets, a law is passed in Finland disbanding all Civil Guard organisations.

**1 November**

The disbanding of the Finnish wartime army begins. Peacetime formations are to be in place by 5 December.

**7 November**

Roosevelt is re-elected for his second term as President of the United States of America.

**17 November**

President Mannerheim appoints the second government of Prime Minister Juho K. Paasikivi.

**20 November**

Finnish forces reach the border at Utsjoki.

**22 November**

The Soviet Union returns the first prisoners of war.

**23 November**

Lotta Svärd, the women's paramilitary organisation, is disbanded.

**5 December**

Peacetime strength is reached in the Finnish armed forces; former soldiers have returned to civilian life. The Allied Control Commission approves Finland to take loans from the US government.

**16–26 December**

German forces launch the Ardennes offensive.

**17 December**

Agreement is reached on the amount of Finnish war reparations.

**20 December**

Mannerheim makes it clear to the Soviets in a letter that, going forward, Finland and the Soviet Union do not have common military goals.

**27 December**

Soviet forces surround Budapest.

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**1945****23 January**

Soviet troops reach the Polish-German border.

**13 February**

Soviet forces conquer Budapest.

**15 February**

British forces reach the old France-German border on the Rhine.

**3 March**

The Finnish government belatedly notes that the country has been in a state of war with Germany since 15 September 1944.

**17 April**

President Mannerheim appoints the third government of Prime Minister Juho Paasikivi.

**18 April**

German resistance in the Ruhr collapses.

**20 April**

Minister of the Interior Yrjö Leino hands the persons on the list drawn up by the Allied Control Commission to the Soviets.

**25 April**

The final shots of the Lapland War are fired in Kilpisjärvi.

**27 April**

Siilasvuo informs Mannerheim that all German troops have been evicted from Finnish territory, and declares the Lapland War over.

**30 April**

Hitler commits suicide.

**8 May**

Nazi Germany surrenders.

**6 August**

The US drops a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima.

**6 August**

The Soviet Union acknowledges Finland diplomatically.

**9 August**

The US drops a nuclear bomb on Nagasaki.  
The Soviet Union declares war on Japan.

**10 August**

Japan surrenders unconditionally.

**18 August**

The US recognises Finland diplomatically.

**12 September**

Mannerheim resigns for health reasons.

**19 September**

The Allied Control Commission receives recommendations that Karelia should be returned to Finnish control. The ceded lands remain in Russian hands to date.

**8 October**

The Soviet Union extends the deadline for Finland to pay its \$300 million war reparations. The reparations will finally be repaid in full in September 1952.

**15 November**

The Finnish war crimes trials begin in Helsinki. Former president Risto Ryti is among those sentenced.

**12 December**

The US grants Finland its first national dollar loan.

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**1947**

Parliamentary elections end the reign of terror by the Red VALPO (secret police).

**28 January 1951**

Marshal of Finland, Gustav Mannerheim, dies in Lausanne, Switzerland.





# CHAPTER 1

## THE RETURN TO WAR

### THE INTERIM PEACE: 1940–41

The 1940 truce between the Soviet Union and Finland, which concluded the conflict known as the Winter War, came at a high price for Finland. Nearly 10 per cent of the country's total pre-war territory had to be relinquished and some 12 per cent of the population had to be evacuated from the ceded lands. According to the terms of the Moscow Peace Treaty, the Soviet Union gained control of the whole Karelian Isthmus including Finland's second biggest city, Viipuri. Two other major towns, Käkisalme and Sortavala, were lost, along with the part of Karelia north of Lake Ladoga. Further north, the lands east of Suojärvi, Salla and Kuusamo were similarly forfeited. On the Barents Sea, Kalastajasaarento (the Rybachy Peninsula) now belonged to the Soviet Navy, which had also demanded the leasing of Hanko harbour on the southernmost tip of Finland. The

A captured T-34 *Sotka* tank paraded at Pihkalanjärvi. Although territory was lost, the repatriated armour remained. The large Finnish swastikas had been painted on the turret and forward armour to help identify their few own tanks. (Courtesy of the private collection of Esa Muikku)



An aerial photograph of Hanko village taken a few days before the harbour was handed over to the Soviets as part of the Moscow Treaty. The village is located on the most southerly point of Finland. Gaining a foothold here considerably increased the Red Navy's influence on the Gulf of Finland. (SA-Kuva)

Soviet Navy's grip on the Gulf of Finland was further tightened when strategically important Suursaari and several other large islands were handed over.

The Soviets' victory had cost them dearly; even the most conservative estimates cite over 200,000 killed with post-war Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev claiming that the total fatalities resulting from the Winter War had exceeded one million men. The Finns buried 24,918 of their countrymen, while 9,562 of the total 43,557 wounded would remain permanently disabled.

The 420,000 refugees, mainly from Karelia, were granted only ten days by the Soviet Union to transfer themselves across the new borders. Moving this host would have been impossible without considerable help from Sweden. People simply had to grab what possessions and domestic animals they could, and leave their ancestral homes behind.

Once again the Finnish nation showed solidarity by providing for these displaced compatriots. Large swathes of privately owned lands were nationalised and redistributed to the refugees. The war, and the hugely unpopular truce, undoubtedly knitted the nation together more tightly. By now, the old hatchets of the Finnish Civil War had been well and truly buried, and veterans all over the country formed popular Brothers in Arms association. This did not sit well with Stalin, and already by May 1940 a countermovement entitled the Finnish–Soviet Union Peace and Friendship Society had been established. The secret goal of this organisation would be to wage a propaganda war and increase tensions, which could create political justification for armed intervention by the Soviet Union.

The Finnish executive in the meantime doubled the duration of national service from one to two years, and started to increase the military budget considerably. However, obtaining foreign weapons and support still proved challenging.

Finland found itself politically isolated after the Winter War. In order to ensure the country's neutrality in future conflicts, lobbyists doubled their efforts in creating a joint Nordic defensive union with Sweden, Norway and Denmark. This was an initiative the Finnish government had been keen to realise since before the war. Immediately after signing the armistice, the Finns again approached the embassies of all their neighbouring countries. The Soviet Union strongly objected to the creation of the defensive union, which it saw as a means of preparing for another conflict. At the end of March, after threatening each of the countries in turn, the Soviets made a declaration that any nation joining this defensive union would be considered to have adopted a foreign policy opposing the peace and the Soviet Union. This effectively squashed the opportunity to form a Nordic alliance.

The plight of Finland was soon overshadowed by the start of the German blitzkrieg: on 9 April 1940, Germany commenced its invasion of Denmark and Norway. This in turn stirred the Finnish Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim to criticise Soviet policy towards the Nordic countries. Had the proposed defensive union become reality, it would have most likely also benefitted the Red Army by deterring Hitler from his conquests. The lack of a credible defence force had inspired the Germans to capture bases along the Arctic Ocean, and to threaten the Soviet bases in Murmansk.

Sweden in turn approached Finland in May with ideas for a military alliance. Again, the Soviet Union torpedoed this move as incongruous with the terms of peace. Germany, in the meantime, was working hard to leave Finland politically isolated. By now Hitler had begun to form plans that had no place for a neutral Finland.



(1867–1951)



## CARL GUSTAF EMIL MANNERHEIM COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF

### MARSHAL AND PRESIDENT OF FINLAND

Baron Carl Gustav Emil Mannerheim was born on 4 June 1867. His military career started at the age of 14 upon admittance to Hamina Cadet School in Finland from where he was to rise to serve in Grand Duke Nicholas' 15th Alexandrian Cavalry Regiment and the Tsar's

Chevalier Guard. Mannerheim served in the front lines during the Russo-Japan war in 1904–05, and again in World War I. In 1917, Lieutenant-General Mannerheim fell out of favour with the new revolutionary Russian government. He was relieved of duty that autumn, retired from service and returned home in 1918.

When Finland declared independence, the Senate appointed Mannerheim as the Chairman of the Military Committee and the Supreme Commander of the government's White Guards. He soon led them to victory in the Civil War, and serving briefly as a regent of the state, travelled widely in order to gain political support for his young country's independence.

Humanitarian pursuits occupied Mannerheim; he led the Finnish Red Cross from 1919 to 1951, sat on its international board, and founded the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. He was the Bank of Helsinki's chairman until 1934, and was also a board member of Nokia Corporation. In 1931, Mannerheim was appointed to Finland's Defence Council, and in 1933 he received the rank of field marshal. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Army in 1939, a position he then held throughout World War II. In 1942, he received the title Marshal of Finland. Mannerheim accepted the presidency in 1944 when President Ryti stepped down to enable Finland to seek a peace agreement to end the war.

To this day Mannerheim is revered as a national hero and as the saviour of Finland's independence. In 2004, 53 years after his death, a survey conducted in Finland named Mannerheim as the greatest Finn of all time. Such is the high regard in which this 'Father of Finland' is held.

As Hitler's troops now occupied Denmark and Norway, both Finland and Sweden were completely surrounded by territory either in German or Soviet hands. The Soviet Union sent an ultimatum to Romania demanding the cessation of its eastern parts of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina. On 27 June, after only a day's deliberation, the demands were met in full.

Even more worrying for the Finns was the fate of the Baltic states. To begin with, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were forced to grant the Soviets the use of several military bases. Once established, the Soviets used these bases as jumping-off points, and proceeded to occupy these three small states by 17 June. A month later each nation, seemingly of its own initiative, requested official annexation by the Soviet Union. These requests were fully met.

Even after all of their demands in the aftermath of the Winter War had been met, the Soviets kept pressuring the Finns for further concessions. In addition to assorted reparations, these demands comprised repairs to production facilities in the occupied territories and the handing over of the nickel mines in the Petsamo region.

Not satisfied with mere monetary compensation, Stalin's minions now presented a long list of political and social demands, dictating for instance who should become the next president and listing those who should step down from their current positions.

The Red Army also committed other provocations; for instance, on 14 June 1940, a Finnish passenger plane, *Kaleva*, was shot down on its return trip from Estonia. The plane was clearly marked and was practically over

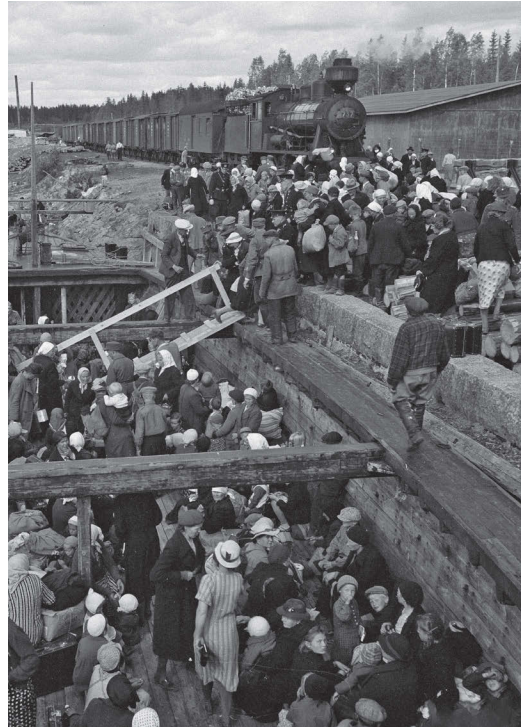
Finnish territorial waters for the duration of the whole flight. There were no survivors and no bodies were ever recovered. Post-war investigations have revealed that the Soviets seemed to be after the diplomatic mail that the plane was carrying. Eyewitness accounts described how their surface vessels tracked the falling plane and quickly recovered the sealed mail packages on board.

By the summer, Finland's fortunes were about to turn permanently. Hitler turned his gaze towards the East. Nobody in the German high command seemed especially concerned that they were now being ordered to plot the invasion of the USSR – a formal ally with whom, only a year previously, Hitler had planned to split control of Europe. The 22 July 1940 diary entry of the Chief of the Army High Command, Colonel-General Franz Halder, made it clear that the Germans now considered Finland a viable route of attack to the Soviet Union.

The most urgent part of the German plans was the transfer of troops from the West to the Eastern Front. After the Battle of Britain had been lost and the invasion of the British Isles deemed impossible, Hitler started to accelerate his plans for the second front. He seemed to have believed that the fall of the Soviet Union would also cause Great Britain to capitulate, rather than continue fighting alone.

The initial objectives for Operation *Barbarossa* were the conquests of Ukraine, Belarus and the Baltic countries. The borders of Finland were to expand to the shores of the White Sea. At this stage of planning, no one in Finland had been consulted. Hitler wanted *Barbarossa* to be completed within five months and assigned 120 divisions for this task. The Germans took it for granted that both Romania and Finland would join them in the attack, and therefore implemented a complete reversal in their foreign policy during the summer of 1940. Without Finland, which had the longest border with the Soviet Union, *Barbarossa* would not be viable.

Romania's support was secured on 30 August when Hitler gave assurances that its sovereignty would be retained, whilst guaranteeing that the Soviets would take away no more of their homelands. From 7 October, German officers were deployed among Romanian forces as military advisors. These consultants had soon arrived in such numbers that the Soviets clearly considered their treaties with the Germans violated.



The Finns took great care and pride in relocating the hundreds of thousands of countrymen forced to flee the lands ceded to the Soviet Union in 1940. While many had to make the arduous journey by foot, all possible means of transport were utilised. This image shows the loading of barges at Vilppula in summer 1941. After a year of homelessness, many of these people would follow the advancing Finnish armies back to their ancestral lands in Karelia. (Sa-Kuva)

With Finland, Hitler proceeded with more caution, trying to conceal his real intentions as long as possible. On 17 August 1940, German Lieutenant-Colonel Josef Veltjens approached Mannerheim on Marshal of the Reich Hermann Göring's behalf. He hoped that, like Sweden, Finland would allow supplies and the German troops who were on leave from their garrisons in northern Norway free passage through the country. At the same meeting, Veltjens informed the Finns that they were free to purchase war materials and machinery through him. The Finns realised that since all other avenues for international support had been exhausted, turning their back on these would-be allies would leave them helplessly isolated. Finally they had a way of rearming the nation. The following morning, acting president Risto Ryti instructed Mannerheim to verbally accept the request for the proposed transportation of troops.

The Germans concluded that Finland must be crawling with Soviet spies, and that their current allies would have to be given some excuse for their new arrangements with the Finns. Friedrich von der Schulenburg, the German ambassador in Moscow, was instructed to tell the Soviets a plausible story about a single anti-aircraft battery being transported through Finland to counter an expected landing by the British. When he failed to deliver this message in time, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav Molotov demanded that the German-Finnish agreement, including all its secret protocols, be made available to him. On 2 October, the Moscow embassy was instructed to inform the Soviets that this agreement concerned a purely technical matter without any political implications. It was similar to the agreement reached with Sweden, allowing the transportation of troops through their territory to the garrisons in Norway. Because of its mundane nature, the Germans had not seen any need to notify their partners.

Some suspicions must have lingered, for the matter was raised again during Molotov's visits to Germany in mid-November 1940. Hitler personally addressed Molotov's concerns by disavowing any interest in Finland, except for the uninterrupted deliveries of nickel ore, cellulose and lumber. He further stressed the importance of avoiding a war that could lead to British or Swedish intervention. Hitler also reminded Molotov that they had already agreed in 1939 that Finland would belong to the Soviet sphere of influence.

During one such visit, the Soviets hosted a *soirée* at their embassy in Berlin. The festivities were interrupted by a surprise Allied bombing raid. Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop and Molotov naturally ended up sharing the same air shelter. While they waited for the all clear to sound, the two politicians resumed their talks. In order to avoid the