

## ENGLISH SUMMARIES



### **The Finnish Winter War 1939–1940: an embarrassment to the Soviet Union**

**Ants Laaneots**, Major General, Commandant of the Estonian National Defence College

As with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, Finland achieved its independence from Russia as a result of World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917. From 1809 through 1917, Finland was part of the Russian Empire, although being the Great Principality, Finland enjoyed much greater autonomy compared with other Baltic countries.

During the 2nd half of the 1930s, Europe's two superpowers – Hitlerian Germany and the Stalinist Soviet Union became extremely powerful. Both they strove to capture the world and headed towards that goal by securing their positions for doing so. The Soviet Union was by any means interested in sending Germany to war against other West-European countries, thereby contributing to weakening their positions for fighting against one another and putting into practice Stalin's long-term plan to carry out a communist "liberating operation" in Europe. It was the right time, and Stalin tried to secure the strategic positions of USSR in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, in order to ensure the successful course of war. More control over Finland would have ensured the Soviet Union the access to the immediate vicinity of Germany's vital industry – Swedish iron production region, for to be able to capture it when necessary.

The ease with which the Baltic countries and Poland were seized made the Kremlin executives dizzy with success. Without making any stops, they decided to go further and selected Finland as their next target. Leaders of the Russian Empire treated Finland, as well as other neighboring countries west of the Soviet Union as their temporarily lost regions as early as during the Russian Civil War. Therefore, aggressive invasions

were planned throughout the mid-war period to recapture these areas. With opening the Soviet Union's archives to the general public, it became clear that, since the year 1936, all operation plans by the Red Army directed against Finland and the Baltic countries were offensive.

On 17 November, the Headquarters of the Red Army issued a directive No 0205/Op to regulate the transfer of forces to the invasion of Finland. The directive assigned the specific combat missions to all the army units participating in the operation, but it did not specify the exact time and day when the operation was to start. The war council of the Leningrad Military District translated this directive into the directive No 4715 of 21 November for its units stipulating the detailed tasks of its formations.

According to the operations plan, the total strength of the Red Army forces was four corpses with altogether 425 640 men, 24 divisions, 2289 tanks, 2876 artillery pieces and mortars, and 2446 aircrafts. On the Karelian Isthmus, the 7th Army – the most powerful of the Red Army forces – was deployed. North of Lake Ladoga, the following army corpses were preparing for action: the 8th Army, (6 rifle divisions and 2 tank brigades), the 9th Army (5 divisions), and the 14th Army (3 divisions) located in Murmansk. According to the directive of 15 November issued by Voroshilov, the deployment of forces to the assembly area of the operation was to be completed by 20 November.

The first two months of operation were quite shocking for the Soviet authorities – after the Finnish forces had achieved a series of remarkable victories in the northern part of Ladoga and Karelia, and blocked the advancement of Russian forces along their main defence line on the Karelian Isthmus.

The reasons for the failure of the initial mission plan of the Red Army involved the miscalculations of the defence capabilities of the Finnish Army, inadequate training of the forces for combat operations in vast forest areas and under harsh winter conditions, scattered deployment of forces and consequent inefficiency of attacks. During the planning phase, the following aspect were not taken into consideration: the peculiarities of the combat area, sparse network of roads and the hardly traffickable terrain, which did not allow quick maneuvering or to convene forces in a specific place and carry out offensive operations with large formations. Although that the Red Army far outnumbered the Finnish forces, Russian commanders could not realize their full potential into a great success. After the defeats of December 1939, the Kremlin decided to order an

operational pause for to make detailed preparations for a new major assault.

The peace treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union was signed on 13 March 1940 at 0200 hrs, and it entered into force on the same day at 1100 hrs by the Finnish time. At that very moment, also the ceasefire began. Stalin retained to his maximum pre-war territorial requirements, and thus for Finland, the treaty was more like a dictatorship.

For decades, researchers have discussed the issues related to the end of the Winter War. Some of them have suggested that the possible English-French intervention was the reason why the Kremlin dictator stopped fighting and signed the peace treaty with Finland. This was quite a departure from their ordinary practice of annexing and occupying the whole territory of a small country. On the other hand, after researching the materials in the military archives opened up after the collapse of the Soviet Union, some researchers confirm that the real cause was Stalin's intent to attack Germany.

Unlike the Baltic countries, Czechoslovakia and Poland, the Finns were able to put up military resistance to the aggressor, and do it very effectively. The whole world was holding their breath worrying about the small heroic nation's fight against the Stalinist hordes coming from the east.

The Finnish main defence line introduced by Mannerheim – the system of massive fortifications dispersed evenly and in depth along the line with the emphasis on the Isthmus – proved right. On the Isthmus, they could not have used any other suitable defence method, and the mobile defence together with extensive guerilla war in Karelia guaranteed success to the Finnish Army at the beginning of the Winter War. Despite inadequate armament, especially in artillery ammunition, anti-aircraft and anti-tank means, the Finnish Army was highly motivated to defend their country, well-prepared and trained for combat operations in their own territory.

John Keegan, a professor of war history at the famous Royal Military Academy of Sandhurst, has described the Finnish tactics as follows: "The Finns – probably the most militant and definitely the most uncompromising and tough of all European nations – proceeded in their snowy domestic forests, moved around the enemy forces, applying the so-called *motti* tactics or the encirclement of enemy forces. This enabled to encircle and cut off the enemy forces from their other units, and thereby the enemy forces constantly lost their orientation and were demoralized... While the main forces of the Finnish Army were defending the

Mannerheim line in the Karelian Isthmus, ... the independently acting Finnish units attacked and destroyed the Russian divisions on the eastern flank of the front extending from Lake Ladoga to the White Sea.”

The high fighting capability of the Finnish Army on the one hand, and the enormous losses of the Red Army both during the Winter War and the Continuation War on the other hand shocked even the ruthless dictator Stalin. At the Teheran summit of the Big Three – Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, held in 1943, Stalin even had to acknowledge the small nation’s heroic fighting for its independence. In 1943, Stalin said to Roosevelt and Churchill: “the nation that has fought for its independence as fearlessly as the Finns, deserves ... respect”.

### **On the Role of Religion in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, Considering Israeli Religious-Political Movements as an Example**

**Severin Israel**, Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt), Signals instructor of the Estonian Defence Forces Training and Development Centre of Communication and Information Systems, ENDC

This article focuses on the role of religion in Israel and on its possible influence on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first part introduces the historical and religious background of Israel as the Promised Land for the Jews, for to understand the goals and actions of the religious movements. The author compares and contrasts two religious movements that are represented in the Israeli Parliament. These two groups are the ultra-Orthodox Jews and the religious Zionists. In both cases the author analyses the movements' attitude towards the conflict, their part in the election process and their participation in the governing coalition. The author concludes that both these groups have a certain effect on the Israeli politics, which has to be considered while handling the conflict, because these movements can affect the issues dealing with Palestine and the Palestinians.

## **Basic principles for developing the concept of handling the killed in action**

**Indrek Lõo**, Second Lieutenant (2nd Lt), Staff Officer of Field Equipment Division, Materials Service, Logistics Centre of the Estonian Defence Forces.

Handling of deceased personnel involves both objective and subjective aspects. The objective aspects include all the qualities of human remains that have to be taken into account when handling them.

The main subjective aspect covered by this research is the military environment where death may occur. Estonian legal acts do not cover all the aspects as to handling deceased personnel. In the future, special training should also be introduced in the Estonian Defence Forces for to develop the competences and skills needed for handling killed in action.

By examining respective concepts in the US Army and the Defence Forces of Finland, it can be said that the logistical channel of handling of deceased personnel should involve the following procedures: searching, confirming the fact of death, identification and evacuation of remains, handling of personal belongings, organization of information, burial, providing needed materials and acting in diverse unspecified situations.

The first Geneva Convention and STANAG 2070 should also be taken into account when developing the concept for handling deceased personnel.

## **Teaching the basics of translation to the Estonian Defence Forces at the Estonian National Defence College as a part of the Intensive English Course, Level 3**

**Mari Kelve**, Assistant at the Translator and Interpreter Training Centre of Tallinn University

The module of teaching basics of translation was first introduced at the Estonian National Defence College in the autumn of 2003. Basics of translation are taught to the Level 3 students of the intensive English courses for the Estonian Defence Forces. Level 3 is the only level on which students can be expected to have sufficient knowledge of the English language to translate from it. However, this does not mean that any Level 3 participant would be capable of achieving satisfactory translation skills. The working languages for the module are English (the

NATO working language) and Estonian (the official language of the Republic of Estonia).

The module consists of 25 lessons in classroom; the students are also expected to work a lot on their own. The module does not turn students into translators – as this would be impossible – but aims to provide them an insight into the discipline of translation. A special emphasis is laid on classroom discussion and co-operation between participants. Students learn about the objective and subjective criteria for assessing the quality of translations, sources that provide help to translators, textual analysis, problems on the word level, problems with content, issues with structure and information density. At the end of the course, students translate two full texts. The group discusses both translations in classroom and students also receive individual feedback.

## **Estonian cavalry in the inter-war period**

**Urmet Paloveer**, Project Manager, Tartu University History Museum

Although cavalry has played an important role throughout the military history, it has apparently become history and there will be no place for it in the modern army. The Estonian cavalry was formed in 1917 and ended its existence in 1940, so it existed during the years when the best days of the cavalry were slipping to the past.

In 1917, when the Estonian national regiments in the Russian (Tsarist) Army emerged, also an Estonian cavalry unit was formed. In spring 1918, the German occupation forces dissolved the Estonian cavalry regiment like any other Estonian unit. When the War of Independence broke out, the formation of the Estonian cavalry regiment started again. During the war it proved necessary. The most glorious operation for it was a grandiose ramble at the end of May and at the beginning of June, which started near Võru and ended in Jakobstadt (Jēkabpils). This classical cavalry operation hurled the enemy terminally out of Estonian borders and liberated Northern-Latvia.

After the war, the Estonian cavalry was cut down with only one regiment remaining. There were quite significant structural changes in the regiment between the two world wars. Often those changes were made to modernize the cavalry suiting the contemporary army less and less. Some officers were sent to cavalry courses to Poland or Hungary, from where more modern approaches for the specific force category were imported.

During the two decades between the two wars, the regiment instructed recruits. In addition to building up and improving its permanent residence in Tartu and summertime residence in Värskä, conditions of soldiers' instruction were also made better. Non-commissioned officers for the cavalry, together with artillery- and infantry personnel, were taught at the Non-commissioned Officers' School (*Allohvitseride Kool*) (before 1921 it was named the Cavalry Non-commissioned Officers' School – *Ratsaväe Allohvitseride Kool*, in the second half of the thirties it became known as the Battleschool – *Lahingukool*).

Since the year 1923, there was no cavalry class at the Military School (*Sõjakool*) and the cavalry was completed with artillery or infantry officers. There were some special courses held in Estonia for them to offer cavalry training.

For more than twenty years of its existence, Estonian cavalry created a favorable impression in the Estonian military history. During the War of Independence, it proved itself as a valuable military force. The post-war developments include two decades of improvement and modernization following the examples of European cavalries.