

Collier's

April 13, 1940

p. 82

What the Finns Won



WE SUPPOSE debate will go on for years about whether the Finns or the Russians won their 105-day war of late 1939 and early 1940. Here is our contribution to the debate.

We think the Finns won all the phases of the war except those included in the peace treaty—and that the treaty was a minor matter in the long view of it all. It was as if a 98-pound flyweight had stood up to Joe Louis for six furious rounds, after which the flyweight's seconds had thrown in the towel and the referee had perforce given Joe the decision. The world would give the flyweight the decision.

Before throwing in the towel, the Finnish army under Baron Mannerheim and Gen. Wallenius took the following concrete packages out of Joseph Stalin's Red army:

An estimated 100,000 killed, an estimated 500,000 wounded; 1,486 tanks captured or destroyed; 587 planes destroyed; 295 artillery guns captured.

The Finnish losses in men and materials were unanimously described by competent observers as phenomenally small. Given anywhere near the 2,000,000 men Stalin could have thrown into the fight, the Finns would most likely be staging victory parades on Moscow's Red Square about now.

They are staging victory parades in the hearts of millions of men and women now, and will be doing so for a long time to come. For the Finns smashed two legends that had overshadowed the hearts of millions for twenty years—the legend of the inevitability of Communism throughout the world and the legend of the invincible Red army.

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When Red Russia attacked democratic Finland, Finland rose almost to a man, woman and child, and fought like a tiger for the right to live its own life. When the Red army set forth on its first imperialistic conquest, it began by making all the mistakes that kids in military schools are earliest taught not to make, and it ended by taking a little territory over bloody carpets of its own wounded and dead.

The Finns demonstrated to the world the criminal folly of Stalin's purges of most of the Red army's best officers. They showed up the superman idea for what it was worth, which in our estimation is precisely nothing; they gave new life to the idea that you're not a fool needing a dictator to run you, and neither am I, perhaps, and probably the two of us co-operating with millions like ourselves can run our country and our lives better than any one Mr. Big could run them.

For themselves, the Finns won the right to live. The Forgotten Man at the end of the war was one Otto Kuusinen, a renegade Finnish Bolshevik whom Stalin at the war's beginning swore to make the Red governor of a puppetized Finland. The peace was concluded by the regularly elected democratic Finnish government that had prosecuted the war. As for the dark predictions that Russia will be coming back in six months or so to gobble up the rest of Finland—we may easily be wrong, but we can't picture the Russians tackling the Finns again for another thirty years.

The Finns who battled in Karelia, and around Viipuri, and on the far-flung Arctic and sub-Arctic fronts, and the civil population that backed them up, have entered into the company of Heroes of All Time, whose glory does not fade.

They have also earned the gratitude of the civilized world . . . which, we would urgently suggest, had better make some swift and generous initial payments on that debt of gratitude by pouring money, food, clothing, medicine and building materials into the republic of Finland.

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