

**Finland in Crisis:  
Finnish Relations with the Western Democracies, 1939-1941**

by

**Mylon Ollila**

**A thesis  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfilment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
History**

**Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2012**

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## **Author's Declaration Page**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

This thesis examines Finland's relations with Britain and the United States from 1939-1941. During this period, Finland engaged in two wars against the Soviet Union. In 1939-1940 Finland defended itself against a Soviet attack with the emotional and material support of Britain and the United States. By 1941 Finland was once again at war with the Soviet Union. The geopolitical situation had changed so significantly that Finland found itself aligned with Germany against the Soviet Union. Consequently Finnish relations with the western democracies were strained, although Britain and the United States had previously supported Finland against the Soviet Union. This thesis examines the differences in foreign policy and public opinion in Britain and the United States and the nature of their relations with Finland from 1939-1941.

## **Acknowledgements**

This period of study at the University of Waterloo has been a valuable experience in my personal and professional development. My thesis supervisor, Alex Statiev, was the central influence in this development. I could not have hoped for a better mentor. He made himself available at all times to address concerns or problems with my work, and trusted me to conduct my research with complete independence. I have learned a lot from him, and would like to thank him for the hard work he put into the revision of my thesis, and the helpful career advice that he has given me. I would also like to thank Professors Dan Gorman and Andrew Hunt for generously agreeing to participate on my thesis panel.

I would like to thank Donna Lang for her unlimited patience in guiding me through the bureaucratic processes of graduate studies. I would also like to thank the University of Waterloo for the monetary support granted to me during my studies.

Finally I would like to thank my parents, Harri and Sharon Ollila, and my wife Melina for their continued support throughout this period.

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## Introduction

On November 30, 1939, Soviet troops interrupted the relative quiet of the ‘phony war’ when they crossed the border into Finland. At a time when Britain, France and Germany were technically at war but thus far remained inactive, this blatant act of Soviet aggression caused an explosion of activity amongst the international press. The world followed this remarkable event to its conclusion – the first sustained action of the Second World War. Over 300 foreign correspondents in Finland covered what came to be known as the ‘Winter War.’<sup>1</sup> Though Finland was previously little known to much of the world, throughout the winter of 1939-1940 readers around the globe anxiously followed stories of the heroic little nation battling alone in the cold north against the Soviet Union. The Winter War distracted the west from the trepidation of war with Germany. Although the Winter War was an isolated affair, the international press and much of western public opinion associated the Finnish struggle with the global struggle against aggression, and found inspiration in the valour of Finnish resistance.

The Winter War is renowned because of its popularity in the west and the phenomenal successes of the small Scandinavian neutral against the military power of the Red Army. However, the sequel to the Winter War that began in June 1941 is virtually unknown to the western public. In 1941 Finland once again engaged the Soviet Union under much different circumstances: Russia was now a member of the Grand Alliance, while the Finnish cause was sponsored by Nazi Germany. Britain, who had been one of Finland’s chief supporters in 1939-1940, declared war on Finland in December 1941. The British public that Finland had so inspired

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<sup>1</sup> Otto Vehvilainen, *Finland in the Second World War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 55.

now turned on Finland, labelling it a betrayer and an ‘agent of aggression.’ The United States did not declare war, but Finnish-American relations underwent serious tension in 1941-1944.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of Finnish support in the west and to understand why it underwent such a dramatic reversal in 1941. This study will argue that the overall geopolitical situation in 1941, rather than exact nature of the Finnish struggle, was the primary factor for souring the traditionally strong relations between Finland and the western democracies. When the Red Army invaded Finland in 1939, Stalin acted on the conditions of a secret protocol in the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact. Although a military alliance did not exist between Germany and the Soviet Union, public opinion in the west perceived the Soviet Union to be aligned with Hitler in the European war because of the Non-Aggression Pact, the Nazi-Soviet partition of Poland in 1939, and its aggression in the Baltic region. Consequently, the west perceived the Winter War to be a clear-cut case of good versus evil, in which Finland fought on the side of the Allies in the war against world-wide aggression.

By 1941, the geopolitical shift caused by the failure of British war policy in Scandinavia and the German invasion of the Soviet Union brought with it a shift in allegiances and, subsequently, a shift in western attitudes toward Finland. The perspective of the British public was inseparable from its own war and thus when the Soviet Union became an ally of Britain, Finland became an enemy. The exact nature of the Finnish war, whether it was just or whether Finland had other options, was inconsequential to British opinion. The only fact that mattered was that Finland was at war with Britain’s ally with the support of Britain’s enemy.

This study also explores the contrast in the attitudes and foreign policy of Britain and the United States in their respective relations with Finland from 1939-1941. It argues that their

vastly different worldviews, as well as roles in the Second World War, led to very distinctive relationships with Finland. British policy toward Finland was determined by political realism, power politics, and the situation on the fronts. Finland was relatively unimportant to London, and because of Britain's heritage of imperialism and penchant for power politics, the British War Cabinet approached both Finnish wars looking for a way to use Finland to its strategic advantage.

United States' policy and public opinion was more idealistic, along the lines of the Atlantic Charter. The United States valued such concepts as political and economic liberalism, the right of self-determination, and opposition to totalitarianism. America believed that a liberal international economy was essential for American prosperity and that spheres of influence could potentially limit American commerce. As a small liberal democracy at war with America's ideological nemesis, Finland came to represent American ideals of the promotion and defence of democracy and liberal capitalism.<sup>2</sup> This positive image of Finland based on shared values survived the duration of the war, even when Finnish and American national interests became diametrically opposed. United States public opinion influenced Washington's foreign policy, which was sympathetic to Finland's situation. Even though the United States accepted the Soviet Union as an ally against a more immediate threat, it tolerated the Finnish war against the Soviet Union because the Finns fought for independence: a principle consistent with American values.

Although the second Finnish war lasted until 1944, this study looks primarily at Finnish relations with the western democracies in 1939-1941 because those were the most relevant years for British and American policy toward Finland. Britain and the United States both determined

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<sup>2</sup> R. Michael Berry, *American Foreign Policy and the Finnish Exception* (Helsinki: Talouselama & Suomen Ulkomaankauppa, 1987), 120.

their respective policies toward Finland from June to December 1941. After 1941, Finland drew up defensive positions and its relations with Britain and the United States remained mainly static until 1944.

The English-language historiography on the Finnish-Soviet wars is sparse. As of yet, no historian has made a comparative analysis of Finnish relations with the western democracies from 1939-1941. Most literature is devoted either to narratives of the Winter War or Finland's road to co-belligerency with Germany, whereas Finnish-western relations are little more than a side note. Even the most comprehensive studies only cover certain aspects of this topic. Travis Beal Jacobs looks exclusively at American-Finnish relations in the Winter War, whereas R. Michael Berry looks at relations between these two states from 1941-1944.<sup>3</sup> Jukka Nevakivi and Thomas Munch-Petersen examine the roles of Britain and France during the Winter War.<sup>4</sup> Anthony Upton and Peter H. Krosby provide a detailed history of Finnish-German relations in 1940-1941; examine the conflicting pressures of Britain, Germany and the Soviet Union; and discuss the limited options available to a small state that pursues national interests amidst a great power conflict.<sup>5</sup>

The history of Anglo-Finnish relations is particularly unexplored. There is currently no comprehensive analysis of Anglo-American attitudes toward Finland in 1939-1941. This study is based on documents from British, Soviet, German and United States' foreign offices; British

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<sup>3</sup> Travis Beal Jacobs, *America and the Winter War 1939-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981); R. Micheal Berry, *American Foreign Policy and the Finnish Exception* (Helsinki: Talouselama & Suomen Ulkomaankauppa, 1987).

<sup>4</sup> Jukka Nevakivi, *The Appeal That Was Never Made* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1976); Thomas Munch-Petersen, *The Strategy of Phoney War* (Stockholm: Risberg Tryckeri, 1981).

<sup>5</sup> Peter H. Krosby, *Finland, Germany, and the Soviet Union, 1940-1941* (United States: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968); Anthony Upton, *Finland in Crisis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964).

cabinet and Parliamentary debates; public opinion polls; memoirs and diaries; and newspapers and journals of the United States and Britain. This pioneering comparative study is a contribution to the history of Finland. It also sheds light on the public opinion, foreign policy, and power politics of the western democracies and the interaction between great and small states in total war.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **The Road to Intervention: America and the Winter War**

While relaxing on a Caribbean cruise in late February 1940, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt sent a go-ahead wire to federal lender Jesse Jones, instructing him to authorize a twenty-million dollar federal loan to Finland.<sup>6</sup> The loan would ultimately come too late to aid Finland in its struggle against the Soviet Union; yet it was the first time since isolationists seized control of Congress that representatives had passed a measure for direct intervention in a European conflict. As the first act of U.S. intervention in the Second World War, the loan reflected the growing willingness of Americans to accept a wider role in foreign affairs. Americans were so moved by Finland's resistance to the Soviet attack in 1939 that their sympathy for the Finns and outrage and indignation toward the Soviets outweighed their aversion to foreign entanglement. Finland and the United States had shared friendly relations and mutual respect since President Woodrow Wilson first extended recognition in 1919. In contrast, many Americans either despised, or at least distrusted, the Soviet Union's communist regime. This aversion intensified after the Soviet nonaggression treaty with Germany. Because of America's well-established friendship with Finland and anticommunist sentiments, the Finnish cause received widespread sympathy from Americans that culminated in limited government intervention.

Throughout the interwar period and into the late 1930s, strong isolationist sentiments characterized American attitudes and policies. Their reluctance to become involved in world affairs was not the result of ignorance or lack of interest. Americans had never before in their

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<sup>6</sup> "WAR & PEACE: For Finland," *Time* (March 11, 1940), <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,789653,00.html#ixzz1HFKllyMJ>.

history been so well-informed of foreign affairs or followed world events so closely.<sup>7</sup> Neither was there any semblance of spiritual neutrality. Americans openly condemned the policies of aggressor nations and shared a hatred for all forms of totalitarianism, dictatorship, and religious intolerance; yet a spirit of separateness from world affairs persisted.<sup>8</sup> The aftermath of the First World War left Americans disillusioned, embittered and committed to nonentanglement in foreign wars. Promises of a better future and the safety of American ideals had justified the sacrifices of war; yet the country watched as the interwar period gave rise to economic depression, international tension, aggression and conflict.<sup>9</sup>

A Gallup poll taken in 1937 showed that seventy percent of Americans believed that participation in the First World War had been a mistake.<sup>10</sup> Americans concluded that the European system of alliances and spheres of influences was corrupt and war was inevitable on that continent. As William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason pointed out, “Americans, having once believed, erroneously, that war would settle everything, were now disposed to endorse the reverse fallacy that war could settle nothing.”<sup>11</sup> International lawyers reconsidered the traditional concept of neutrality in light of America’s experience in the First World War. They concluded that nations at war no longer respected neutrality and argued that only more restrictive neutrality policies, which limited trade with belligerents, could keep the United States out of future European wars.<sup>12</sup> As Senator Hamilton Fish argued, “the surest way to become involved in war .

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<sup>7</sup> William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation 1937-1940* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1952), 11.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

<sup>10</sup> Gallup Poll, January, 1937. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut.

[http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data\\_access/ipoll/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html).

<sup>11</sup> Langer and Gleason, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Robert A. Divine, *The Illusion of Neutrality*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 57.

... is to ship munitions of war.”<sup>13</sup> These sentiments found public support and culminated in the unprecedented legislation of 1935-37. The neutrality laws established strict government control over the shipment of munitions, forbade the export of arms or munitions to any belligerent nation, and prohibited loans or credit to warring nations.<sup>14</sup>

Although international tensions mounted in the late 1930s, isolationist solidarity held. Americans were unwilling to involve themselves in world affairs even as Mussolini attacked Ethiopia; Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland and annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia; Italy, Mexico, Germany, and the Soviet Union intervened in the Spanish Civil War; and Japan invaded China. President Roosevelt’s 1937 speech, in which he suggested a ‘quarantine’ against aggressor states, elicited an overwhelmingly negative response from the American public. The public reaction was reflective of America’s unwillingness to participate with the international community to prevent the spread of aggression.<sup>15</sup>

The Winter War was part of a series of events that challenged the isolationist argument. Although technically neutral and unwilling to become involved, Americans had an emotional stake in European affairs. Furthermore, as another European war became imminent, Americans grew concerned that neutrality legislation could lead them into a silent partnership with aggressor states.<sup>16</sup> In July 1939, President Roosevelt asked the Senate to revise the Neutrality Act through independent legislative action. He suggested that a repeal of the arms embargo would

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<sup>13</sup> Divine, 29.

<sup>14</sup> Langer and Gleason, 14.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Divine, 200.

persuade Hitler from further aggression, but his efforts were blocked by the congressional dominance of the isolationist/pacifist coalition.<sup>17</sup>

The signing of the Nazi-Soviet nonaggression pact and the outbreak of war validated internationalist arguments and changed the power equation between Roosevelt and his isolationist opponents.<sup>18</sup> Although the debate was still intense, faith that there would be no war in Europe had collapsed, and the nonaggression pact evoked strong sympathy for democracies.<sup>19</sup> A Gallup poll taken after the dual invasion of Poland found that eighty-four percent of Americans wanted to see the Allies win the war in Europe, fourteen percent had no opinion, and only two percent sided with Hitler.<sup>20</sup> Fifty-six percent of Americans wanted Congress to repeal the arms embargo.<sup>21</sup> Immediately prior to the outbreak of war, isolationists had controlled congressional foreign policy decisions and blocked Roosevelt's attempted repeal of the arms embargo. Yet after war was declared, they failed to prevail on any major issue.<sup>22</sup>

It was within this political climate that the Winter War entered public discourse and left its impression on American politics. The Soviet invasion of Finland established further emotional, economic and political ties between America and affairs in Europe. After the outbreak of war in Europe, internationalists prevailed over isolationists by repealing the arms embargo. Yet with the advent of the Winter War, congressional focus shifted from the

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 161.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 161; 164.

<sup>19</sup> Langer and Gleason, 192.

<sup>20</sup> Gallup Poll, October, 1939.

<sup>21</sup> Gallup Poll, October, 1939.

<sup>22</sup> Benjamin D. Rhodes, *United States Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1941*, (United States: Praeger Publishers, 2001), 164.

isolationist-internationalist debate to a debate between interventionism and noninterventionism.<sup>23</sup> Finland's resistance evoked enormous sympathy from the American public. For the first time since the neutrality legislation of the 1930s, Congress approved limited government intervention in a European conflict.

American sympathy for the Finnish cause was due to a number of factors. Most Americans were predisposed to anticommunist sentiments, which were intensified by the Nazi-Soviet Pact and the Soviet invasion of Finland; they were impressed with Finland's defiance of the Soviet Union and its initial successes on the battlefield; the United States had long since established friendly relations with Finland; and shared values and ideals created a positive image of Finland in the United States. Since the First World War, few European nations were viewed by the United States in such a favourable light.<sup>24</sup>

"We have a particularly friendly feeling for Finland and have a right to," stated Chairman Pittman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in October 1939. "It has demonstrated its friendship and its scrupulous sense of honor."<sup>25</sup> After Woodrow Wilson's recognition of Finland in 1919 it rapidly gained respect in the United States.<sup>26</sup> Through the 1920s Finland demonstrated capitalist and democratic ideals that resonated with Americans. Through progressive agrarian reform legislation, Finland enabled nearly ninety percent of its farmers to become independent by distributing land among the peasants.<sup>27</sup> Finnish agricultural production subsequently rose by

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<sup>23</sup> David L. Porter, *The Seventy-sixth Congress and World War II 1939-1940* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1979), 91.

<sup>24</sup> Benjamin D. Rhodes, "The Origins of Finnish-American Friendship, 1919-1941." *Mid-America*. LIV (January, 1972), 3.

<sup>25</sup> William V. Nessly, "Four Nations Request Kremlin to be Mild in Demands," *The Washington Post* (October 13, 1939), 1.

<sup>26</sup> Rhodes, *Mid-America*, 4.

<sup>27</sup> Travis Beal Jacobs, *America and the Winter War, 1939-1940* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), 3.

an average of four-hundred percent during the interwar period and industrial production also experienced significant growth.<sup>28</sup> Finland received further publicity with the success of its Olympic athletes. Paavo Nurmi, a long-distance runner, broke records in America and later became the symbol of the 1940 Olympic Games, scheduled for Helsinki.<sup>29</sup> In addition, Finnish immigrants had established many thriving Finnish-American communities in places such as Michigan's Upper Peninsula, parts of the Midwest, and Florida.

The primary cause of American respect for Finland prior to the Winter War was the payment of the Finnish debt. At the close of the First World War, Finland experienced food shortages. In 1919 it bought \$9,000,000 worth of U.S. food.<sup>30</sup> In 1923, as representatives of various countries began coming to Washington to make refunding agreements, Finland was the first nation to make arrangements on its debt. Although economic depression strained international relations, Finland and America maintained a model relationship. Furthermore, when other nations defaulted on their loans in the 1930s, Finland remained the only country to continually make payments toward its war debt.<sup>31</sup> Although the Finnish debt was relatively small, the United States was impressed with Finland's integrity. The *New York Times* declared that, "Finland, through regular payments of her war debt installments to this country, is very popular in the United States."<sup>32</sup> Senator Clark, a Democrat of Idaho, went as far as to state that "Finland is the only friend we have in Europe."<sup>33</sup> In October 1939, *Time* applauded Finland's

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Edwards, *The Winter War* (New York: Pegasus Books, 2008), 31.

<sup>29</sup> Jacobs, 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Active Neutrality," *Time* (October 23, 1939)

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772243,00.html#ixzz1HFMQ2ZSx>.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> "Moderation is Aim," *New York Times* (October 12, 1939), 1.

<sup>33</sup> "Russia Invades Finland," *The Hartford Courant* (December 1, 1939), 1.

status as “the U.S.’s only non-welshing ‘war debtor.’”<sup>34</sup> “In Washington, if nowhere else in the U.S.,” *Time* further mentioned, “Finland is the national baby of 1939 that has taken the place of 1914 Baby Belgium.”<sup>35</sup>

Overwhelming sympathy for Finland in the Winter War was not only due to favourable relations between the two countries, but to active anticommunism that persisted at all levels in the United States. Before 1939 Americans passively disapproved of the Soviet system. However, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact produced a spike in anticommunist hostility in the United States. The politically right-wing journal *The New Republic* even asserted that Americans sympathized with the Finnish cause “not because they love Finland but because they hate Russia.”<sup>36</sup> Americans disliked the Soviet Union because they felt its communist regime threatened their cherished values of capitalism, religion and democracy.<sup>37</sup> From the Russian Revolution in 1917, throughout the 1930s, and even after the United States had recognized the Soviet Union in 1933, Americans remained suspicious, and the American press continually scorned the regime.<sup>38</sup> Throughout the 1930s the Soviet Union failed to fulfill its recognition pledges. It strained relations with the United States by spreading propaganda.<sup>39</sup> It also refused to provide the United States with most-favoured-nation treatment in commercial relations.<sup>40</sup> Negotiations over Russia’s war debts collapsed in 1935 and the anger of American officials was widely publicized.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> “Active Neutrality, *Time*.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>36</sup> “Charity for Finland,” *The New Republic*, vol. 102, no. 6 (February 5, 1940), 163.

<sup>37</sup> Porter, 92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 92; Jacobs, 13.

<sup>40</sup> Porter, 92.

<sup>41</sup> Jacobs, 13.

Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated in his memoirs that “We had official relations with Moscow but they rested on no bedrock of friendship and cooperation.”<sup>42</sup>

Anticommunist sentiments were particularly strong among Catholics and most of American Protestants, conservatives, the American Federation of Labor, and most patriotic organizations.<sup>43</sup> Catholics considered communism to be a direct assault on the foundations of the Church.<sup>44</sup> The 1930s marked an increasing obsession with communism in the Catholic community, and as David O’Brien states a “sometimes paranoid concern with the Soviet menace, at home and abroad [sic].”<sup>45</sup> Recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933 generated widespread disapproval from Catholics, and unanimous opposition from the Catholic press.<sup>46</sup> Editor of the *Sign*, Reverend Harold Purcell, wrote in 1933 that Catholics must do what they could “to prevent our Christian Government from entering into diplomatic or trade relations with the anti-Christ and anti-God Bolsheviks.”<sup>47</sup> After Germany and the Soviet Union had signed the nonaggression pact, Father Coughlin, an influential Catholic leader, proclaimed in his weekly radio show that “two abominable systems have pledged their mutual support . . . Now the forces of anti-God and anti-Christ have consolidated.”<sup>48</sup> Coughlin continued to equate the “forces of anti-Christ” as “the red and brown bolshevism of the north” born from the “unholy loins” of evil.<sup>49</sup> He further depicted the pact in apocalyptic terms by encouraging Americans to ask “What of the future of

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<sup>42</sup> *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 306.

<sup>43</sup> Jacobs, 12.

<sup>44</sup> George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency 1932-36* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), 126.

<sup>45</sup> David J. O’Brien, *American Catholics and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 81.

<sup>46</sup> Flynn, 126.

<sup>47</sup> Flynn, 129.

<sup>48</sup> “Coughlin Charges Anti-God Forces Are Now Joined,” *The Hartford Courant* (August 28, 1939), 12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

Christianity?”<sup>50</sup> Protestants likewise considered ‘Godless communism’ to be a danger to American principles. Many churches issued public condemnations.<sup>51</sup>

Americans, even liberals, widely feared communism and shared distaste for the Soviet Union.<sup>52</sup> By the late 1930s, Americans began to merge images of communism and fascism. To Americans, they both represented repression, aggression, terror, totalitarianism, and a general affront to American values.<sup>53</sup> The term “red fascism” that became popular during the Cold War was actually born out of the late 1930s.<sup>54</sup> A Gallup poll from June 1938, a year prior to the nonaggression pact, found that Americans considered communism worse than fascism.<sup>55</sup> After the nonaggression pact, this tendency to equate communism and fascism and to see the Soviet Union as an enemy became even more common.

The *New York Times* referred to the nonaggression pact as a “gross betrayal.”<sup>56</sup> It echoed popular notions that the Soviet Union was indeed an enemy and claimed that the two aggressor states had entered a “virtual alliance.”<sup>57</sup> The dual invasion of Poland shocked Americans and they viewed it as evidence of Nazi-Soviet compatibility.<sup>58</sup> Public discourse in America blurred the two ‘isms’ as a dual threat to western democracies, regardless of their opposing ideologies. “At last the issue stands clear,” the *Times* continued, “Hitlerism is brown communism, Stalinism

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>51</sup> Robert M. Miller, *American Protestantism and Social Issues, 1919-1939* (USA: University of North Carolina Press, 1958), 118-119.

<sup>52</sup> Richard M. Fried, *A Nightmare in Red*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 49.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), June, 1938.

<sup>56</sup> “The Russian Betrayal,” *New York Times* (September 18, 1939), 15.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 15.

is red fascism...the only real 'ideological' issue is one between democracy, liberty and peace on the one hand and despotism, terror and war on the other.”<sup>59</sup>

Their fears confirmed by world events, Americans clearly favoured drastic action against domestic communists from 1939-1941. In December 1939 public opinion polls indicated that seventy-five percent of Americans wanted Congress to sponsor the Dies Committee for at least another year.<sup>60</sup> The Dies Committee, established in May 1938, had been given authority to investigate subversive and 'un-American' propaganda.<sup>61</sup> Fifty-three percent thought that an investigation of communist activities in the United States warranted highest priority, compared with only twenty-three percent who were more concerned with Nazi activities.<sup>62</sup> Gallup polls from 1939-1940 indicated that fifty-two percent of Americans were in favour of “doing away” with the Communist Party in the United States and the majority believed that it was under orders from Moscow.<sup>63</sup> Seventy-three percent believed that it should be illegal for communists to hold public office.<sup>64</sup> A Roper/Fortune survey demonstrated that eighty-eight percent of Americans wanted government action against “communist sympathizers.” Of those polled, thirty-eight percent favoured deporting or jailing them, fifty percent wanted the government to keep track of them, and only three percent believed the government was already doing enough.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid, 15.

<sup>60</sup> Gallup Poll, December, 1939.

<sup>61</sup> Fried, 47.

<sup>62</sup> Gallup Poll, December, 1939.

<sup>63</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), August, 1940; Gallup Poll, November, 1939.

<sup>64</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), November, 1939.

<sup>65</sup> Roper/Fortune Survey, June, 1940. The Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, University of Connecticut. [http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/data\\_access/ipoll/ipoll.html](http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu.proxy.lib.uwaterloo.ca/data_access/ipoll/ipoll.html)

Much of the legal and administrative groundwork for the McCarthy era had roots in the anticommunism of the late 1930s, which reached a peak from 1939-1940.<sup>66</sup> Fear of a possible communist fifth column led to political sniping and red baiting. The Hatch Act, passed in 1939, denied federal employment to members of any organization that advocated overthrowing the government, and was applied to include the Communist Party.<sup>67</sup> The government came down hard on domestic communists during the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Communist Party members received unusually stiff jail sentences and were indicted for crimes that would typically go unnoticed, and strikes incited sharp government reaction.<sup>68</sup>

Americans watched in concern as events led up to the Winter War. The *New York Times* echoed suspicions of a “secret understanding” behind the nonaggression pact that would precipitate a Soviet “partition of Rumania or a more extended drive on the Balkan states.”<sup>69</sup> As Lithuania and Estonia were absorbed, the *New York Times* referred to Stalin as “something more than an apt imitator of Hitler” and predicted that his actions “foreshadowed” what was in store for the other Baltic states.<sup>70</sup> The paper, as events unfolded, expressed fear that an invasion of Finland could lead to a “Soviet surge” in Scandinavia which “could mean . . . the extinction of Western civilization in all that region.”<sup>71</sup> Widespread anticommunist sentiments and friendly relations with Finland combined to evoke enormous American sympathy for the Finnish cause.

In the fall of 1939 Stalin presented a list of demands to Finland on the basis of Leningrad’s security. He argued that the victor who emerged from the world war would

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<sup>66</sup> Fried, 52.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>69</sup> “The Russian Betrayal,” 15.

<sup>70</sup> “Stalin Collects,” *New York Times* (October 3, 1939), 18.

<sup>71</sup> “Moderation is Aim,” *New York Times*, 1.

inevitably attack the Soviet Union, and because of Finland's geography, it was a potential base of operations for an outside power. For this reason, it was essential to Soviet security that the Finns cede enough territory to the Soviet Union so that Leningrad would be out of artillery range from the Finnish side. Stalin also demanded that Finland cede the islands in the Gulf of Finland, the western part of the Fisherman's Peninsula near Petsamo, and the peninsula near Hanko on Finland's southern coast.<sup>72</sup>

The Soviet Union threatened Finland but most observers doubted that Stalin would resort to war in violation of Finland's neutrality.<sup>73</sup> The Finnish Foreign Minister Eljas Erkkö stated, "I am convinced that the Russian Government does not want anything to happen any more than we do."<sup>74</sup> Finland assumed it would be protected by its neutral status. Stalin's refusal to respect the rights of a neutral was particularly unnerving to Americans. "There is no secret made of the concern with which Russian penetration of Finland would be regarded here," stated the *New York Times* on October 12. "She is held to represent Western civilization . . . and her absorption by Russia, it is believed, would cause a wave of resentment greater even than was the case when Poland was overrun."<sup>75</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Finland on November 30, 1939 ignited immediate and widespread outrage in the United States. If Americans held anticommunist views before, this unprovoked attack brought those sentiments to new heights. Ambassador William Phillips wrote in his diary "I can imagine nothing which could bring about greater indignation in America against the Communists than this cold-blooded attack against a county for which we have the greatest

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<sup>72</sup> Max Jakobson, *Finnish Neutrality* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1968), 11.

<sup>73</sup> "The International Situation," *New York Times* (Oct 12, 1939) 1.

<sup>74</sup> "Active Neutrality," *Time*.

<sup>75</sup> "Moderation is Aim," *New York Times*, 1.

admiration and respect.”<sup>76</sup> The American press unanimously condemned the attack. The *Los Angeles Times* decried the “monstrous Russian aggression” and praised “plucky little Finland” for its stand.<sup>77</sup> The *New York Times* called the attack a “red blitzkrieg,” and equated the invasion of Finland to Hitler’s actions in Europe.<sup>78</sup> In Washington, the *Post* accused Stalin of waging war “for the extension of communism,” and voiced concerns of communist subversion in the United States.<sup>79</sup> “By invading Finland,” stated the *Hartford Courant*, “the Soviet Union has stripped the last mask off its belligerent imperialism,” an act “more reprehensible than the conduct of Germany toward Poland.”<sup>80</sup> “In bold, crude, barefaced mendacity,” proclaimed the *New York Herald Tribune*, “the Government of the Soviet Union” has “no peer in history.”<sup>81</sup>

The Winter War generated a strong emotional tie to international events in a nation that desired to remain uninvolved in world affairs. American moral indignation over the invasion of Finland had reached a peak of intensity unmatched since the German invasion of Belgium in 1914. Even isolationists were moved.<sup>82</sup> “The change in public opinion here is remarkable,” Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle wrote in his diary five days after the invasion. “The Russian invasion of Finland seems to have stopped everyone in their tracks . . . The pacifists of last month are urging all kinds of measures against Russia. Plainly, the neutrality of this country is not as solid as it was a week ago.”<sup>83</sup> A Gallup poll from December 1939 indicated that eighty-eight percent of Americans sympathized with Finland, eleven percent had no opinion or

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<sup>76</sup> Jacobs, 67.

<sup>77</sup> Polyzoides, “Early Russian Attacks on Finland Recalled,” *Los Angeles Times* (December 4, 1939), 2.

<sup>78</sup> “Red Blitzkrieg,” *New York Times* (December 3, 1939), 85; *Ibid*, 87.

<sup>79</sup> Mark Sullivan, “Russian Menace,” *The Washington Post* (December 5, 1939), 9.

<sup>80</sup> “The Invasion of Finland,” *The Hartford Courant* (December 1, 1939), 12.

<sup>81</sup> Langer and Gleason, 330.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 330.

<sup>83</sup> Adolf A. Berle, *Navigating the Rapids 1918-1971: From the Papers of Adolf A. Berle* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973), 275.

sympathized with neither, and only two percent of Americans sympathized with the Soviet Union.<sup>84</sup>

To the astonishment of Americans and the entire world, the Finnish Army put up effective resistance. Finnish valour impressed Americans and elicited even more enthusiastic support as the David and Goliath struggle captured the national imagination. “In the long record of human courage,” wrote *The Washington Post*, “there has been nothing more heroic than the stand which Finland, with a total population less than that of North Carolina, is making against a country with as many inhabitants as North and South America combined.” The *Post* went on to state that Finnish resistance “defends against destruction the ideals and standards on which the United States was built.”<sup>85</sup>

As it became clear that the Finnish Army would continue to hold at least temporarily, Americans saw an opportunity to help. Newspapers demanded not only humanitarian, but economic and military aid. “People who last fall were denouncing ‘that madman in the White House who is trying to get us into war,’” *Time* wrote, “were now impatient with merely feeding & clothing the Finns. ‘Bullets, not butter,’ was their cry.”<sup>86</sup> The *New York Times* argued for an immediate loan of “planes and cannon,” and other military necessities.<sup>87</sup> *The Washington Post* claimed that a defence loan for war supplies would meet “unquestionable” support from the public, lest the “forces of ruthless aggression . . . reach the shores of America itself.”<sup>88</sup> *Wall*

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<sup>84</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), Dec, 1939.

<sup>85</sup> “Help Finland,” *The Washington Post* (December 23, 1939), 10; The *Post* greatly exaggerated this statistic.

<sup>86</sup> “WAR & PEACE: For Finland.”

<sup>87</sup> “The Defense of Finland,” *New York Times* (December 12, 1939), 26.

<sup>88</sup> “Help Finland,” 10.

*Street Journal* declared that Finland “must – and will – receive support from neutral countries as well as from Britain and France.”<sup>89</sup>

The American Red Cross, and the hastily created Finnish Relief Fund chaired by former president Herbert Hoover, immediately began to provide aid and solicit assistance. Enthusiastic support greeted both groups.<sup>90</sup> Hoover declared a “Finland Day” on December 11 and by the following day over 1,200 daily newspapers had offered to act as collection agencies.<sup>91</sup> The Finnish Relief Fund alone managed to raise \$3,500,000 for Finland and there were several organizations at work besides Hoover’s.<sup>92</sup> Major General John O’Ryan started a drive for “Fighting-Funds for Finland” with the goal of \$10,000,000 and managed to raise over \$300,000 in less than three weeks.<sup>93</sup> Labour unions observed Finnish Labor Day and raised \$200,000 while American industries raised a further \$600,000 dollars.<sup>94</sup> *Time* declared that “a U.S. citizen who had neither danced, knitted, orated, played bridge, bingo, banqueted or just shelled out for Finland was simply nowhere socially.”<sup>95</sup> Americans formed committees, collected, and sponsored concerts, auctions, balls, dinners, benefits and theatricals to raise money. As *Time* stated, “Finland was the fashion.”<sup>96</sup>

Although officially neutral throughout the Winter War, the U.S. Government, like the American public, were far from neutral in spirit. Throughout the development and course of the Winter War, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States reached their lowest point

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<sup>89</sup> B.H. McCormack, “Following the News,” *Wall Street Journal* (February 6, 1940), 4.

<sup>90</sup> Jacobs, 78.

<sup>91</sup> “Hoover Appeals for a Finland Day,” *New York Times* (December 12, 1939), 16.

<sup>92</sup> Porter, 93.

<sup>93</sup> “WAR & PEACE: For Finland.”

<sup>94</sup> “Finnish Labor Day to be Observed Here,” *New York Times* (February 7, 1940), 4; “WAR & PEACE: For Finland.”

<sup>95</sup> “WAR & PEACE: For Finland.”

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

since recognition.<sup>97</sup> Isolationist control of Congress eroded further as America's involvement in foreign affairs progressed from mere sympathy to a policy of intervention. Moral indignation, the desire to help Finland, and public demand eventually prodded Congress into limited intervention against an aggressor for the first time in the Second World War.

Finland first inquired about the possibility of a loan in September 1939, after the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland. Worried about Soviet aggression, Foreign Minister Hjalmar Procope asked Secretary Hull for a military loan of \$50 to \$60 million.<sup>98</sup> However, Washington did not want to aggravate the Soviet Union. Hull especially urged caution, for although much of America regarded the Soviet Union as a virtual enemy, he did not want to risk pushing it further into the arms of Germany. "I could not but feel that the basic antagonisms between Communist Russia and Nazi Germany were so deep, and Hitler's ambitions so boundless, that eventually Russia would come over to the side of the Allies," Hull explained in his memoirs. "We had to be careful not to push her in the other direction."<sup>99</sup> American action in the Winter War was therefore restrained by Hull's cautious policy to "retain as good relations with the Soviet Union as possible, and avoid the impression that the United States was either a present or a potential enemy."<sup>100</sup>

Although Finland repeatedly asked for loans as the Soviet Union expanded into the Baltic region, Washington chose a more prudent course of action. On October 12 Roosevelt issued a message to Moscow stating that "the President expresses the earnest hope that the Soviet Union will make no demands on Finland which are inconsistent with the maintenance and development

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<sup>97</sup> Langer and Gleason, 321.

<sup>98</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Secretary of State, September 15, 1939 (860d.51/357), *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS), 1939*, I, 956.

<sup>99</sup> Hull, 707.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 709.

of amicable and peaceful relations between the two countries, and the independence of each.”<sup>101</sup> The press release was greeted with widespread approval throughout the public and in Congress.<sup>102</sup> “For a friendly, gallant, self-respecting and greatly respected republic in peril of its life,” the *New York Times* commented, “we could hardly do less.”<sup>103</sup>

Roosevelt’s message received stern criticism from Foreign Commissar Molotov. He stated that it was “in violation of American neutrality,” and reminded Roosevelt that the Soviet Union had given Finland its independence in 1917 but that the Philippines had yet to receive theirs from the United States.<sup>104</sup> Molotov’s comments immediately provoked a sharp reaction in the United States and may have influenced the Congressional debate on neutrality revision. Earlier in October, Democrat Representative Luther Johnson of Texas had noted that the continued Russian expansion westward was resulting in unfavourable reaction toward Congressional isolationists in their home districts.<sup>105</sup> Several House changes had been made in favour of repeal, and Johnson attributed them to developments in the Baltic region.<sup>106</sup> After Molotov rebuked the President, the commissar’s remarks evoked a response from Capitol Hill. Since Molotov had emphatically stated his desire for the United States to retain its embargo, many representatives reacted aversely. Representative John McCormack of Massachusetts changed his position on the embargo, stating that “as Americans we should put our country in a position where the results of our law do not help the anti-God forces of the world and do not

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<sup>101</sup> The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt), October 11, 1939 (760d.61/253a: Telegram), *FRUS*, I, 967.

<sup>102</sup> *The Washington Post* (October 13, 1939), 1.

<sup>103</sup> “We Speak for Finland,” *New York Times* (October 13, 1939) 20.

<sup>104</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt) to the Secretary of State (760d.61/373: Telegram), *FRUS*, I, 987.

<sup>105</sup> *The Washington Post* (October 13, 1939), 1.

<sup>106</sup> “Senate Gets Plan to Relax Neutrality Act Shipping Ban,” *The Washington Post* (October 12, 1939), 1.

penalize those that stand for the existence . . . of democracy.”<sup>107</sup> Congress did not want an arms embargo that favoured aggressor states and on November 3, agreed on a final version of the neutrality legislation.<sup>108</sup>

Although his previous statements had achieved nothing more than rebuttal, Roosevelt issued yet another statement on November 29, motivated by an increasingly aggressive Soviet posture. “This Government is following with serious concern the intensification of the Finnish-Soviet dispute,” read the statement Hull sent to Moscow. “It would view with extreme regret any extension of the present area of war and the consequent further deterioration of international relations.” The telegram further appealed that “Without in any way becoming involved in the merits of the dispute, and limiting its interest to the solution of the dispute by peaceful processes only, this Government would, if agreeable to both parties, gladly extend its good offices.”<sup>109</sup> The Finnish government gladly accepted the American offer but the Soviet Union found no need for good offices.<sup>110</sup>

Roosevelt, like his fellow Americans, reacted in outrage to the Soviet attack. He called it a “dreadful rape” and confirmed that “The whole of the United States is not only horrified but thoroughly angry.”<sup>111</sup> At a press conference on December 1, he stated that “it is tragic to see the policy of force spreading, and to realize that wanton disregard for law is still on the march.” He continued to call on “all peace-loving peoples” to “unanimously condemn this new resort to

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<sup>107</sup> Jacobs, 46.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 46.

<sup>109</sup> Secretary of State to Charge in the Soviet Union (Thurston), November 29, 1939 (760d.61/516a: Telegram) *FRUS*, I, 1003-1004.

<sup>110</sup> Hull, 706.

<sup>111</sup> Jacobs, 67.

military force as the arbiter of international differences.”<sup>112</sup> In a telegram to the Soviet Union he asserted, “The ruthless bombing from the air of civilians . . . has sickened the hearts of every man and woman, and has profoundly shocked the conscious of humanity.” His statement called upon the Soviet Union, asking them “publically to affirm its determination that its armed forces shall in no event and under no circumstances, undertake the bombardment from the air of civilian populations or of unfortified cities.”<sup>113</sup> His statements received widespread approval, although *Time* complained that his words “lagged far behind U.S. public opinion.”<sup>114</sup>

In the political sphere, the Soviet attack on Finland immediately led to demands that the United States break off diplomatic ties with Moscow.<sup>115</sup> Republicans led the assault.<sup>116</sup> Senator King of Utah stated, “My country will no longer grasp the bloody hands of Stalin,” while Senator Vandenberg asserted, “There is no rational alternative except to drive every trace of Communism and Naziism out of the U.S [sic].” Herbert Hoover asked, “Why all this tenderness toward Russia?”<sup>117</sup> Republicans also seized the opportunity to attack the administration.<sup>118</sup> They made their denunciations retroactive and insisted that the administration should never have recognized the Soviet Union in the first place.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Steinhardt), December 1, 1939 (760d.61/641: Telegram) *FRUS, The Soviet Union, 1933-1939*, 799.

<sup>113</sup> The Secretary of State to the Charge in the Soviet Union (Thurston), November 30, 1939 (740.00116 European War, 1939/106b: Telegram), *FRUS, The Soviet Union, 1933-1939*, 798-799; It should be noted that this statement was quite hypocritical considering the policy of the U.S. Air Force at that time and especially U.S. policy later on in the war.

<sup>114</sup> “THE PRESIDENCY: Reaction,” *Time* (December 11, 1939).

<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,762996,00.html#ixzz1HFQBmsie>

<sup>115</sup> Langer and Gleason, 332.

<sup>116</sup> Jacobs, 69.

<sup>117</sup> “THE PRESIDENCY: Reaction.”

<sup>118</sup> Memorandum by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat) to the Under Secretary of State (Welles), December 5, 1939 (760d.61/739), *FRUS*, I, 1023.

<sup>119</sup> “THE PRESIDENCY: Reaction.”

Yet Roosevelt moved cautiously. He preferred to utter protests on Finland's behalf rather than to take decisive action against the Soviet Union to avoid the risk of solidifying the nonaggression treaty.<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, a break of diplomatic ties would deprive the United States of a useful source of intelligence, hinder any future possibilities to influence events through diplomatic channels, and ultimately would not aid Finland. In February, a motion for the recall of the American Ambassador was defeated by the narrow margin of 108 to 105 in the House of Representatives.<sup>121</sup> Such an impulsive proposal reflected the general mood.<sup>122</sup>

Although the Roosevelt administration was genuinely concerned for Finland, it was in no position to help. Relations with the Soviet Union had already reached a low point and the broader considerations of the war in Europe required Roosevelt to act cautiously. Furthermore, Hull anticipated that if the administration proposed a loan, Congressional isolationists might consider such assistance as the first step toward helping England and France.<sup>123</sup> Yet at the suggestion of the Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, the administration arranged for a credit of \$10,000,000 from the Export-Import Bank. A larger loan would have had to be approved by Congress.<sup>124</sup> Roosevelt, although hesitant to take action against the Soviet Union, also declared a "moral embargo." On December 2 he stated his hope that U.S. manufacturers would not export airplanes and airplane equipment, including all materials used in the manufacture of planes, to "nations obviously guilty of such unprovoked bombing," though he did

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<sup>120</sup> Porter, 94-95.

<sup>121</sup> Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 191.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid*, 191.

<sup>123</sup> Porter, 94.

<sup>124</sup> John Morton Blum, *From the Morgenthau Diaries: Years of Urgency 1938-1941* (Boston: Riverside Press, 1965), 130.

not mention the Soviet Union by name.<sup>125</sup> He also personally intervened to help Finnish attempts to purchase war material, which had been previously unsuccessful because American manufactures were already overburdened by orders.<sup>126</sup> On behalf of Finland, he convinced the United States Navy to yield priority on 44 Brewster pursuit planes.<sup>127</sup>

The public was overwhelmingly supportive of Roosevelt's actions. Yet as the Finns continued to resist the Soviet advance, newspapers, Members of Congress, and much of the public demanded further action. "Finland needs guns, not butter," proclaimed the *Wall Street Journal*, and went on to encourage Americans to subscribe to a private loan for military defence.<sup>128</sup> Americans also debated the possibility and nature of a large government loan because it was unclear how aid could be consistent with neutrality. Some demanded an immediate military loan and others a non-military loan.

Many Americans were evidently more concerned with preventing communist aggression and aiding Finland than maintaining strict neutrality. The repeal of the arms embargo symbolized America's sympathy for the Allies and lack of spiritual neutrality. Yet during the Winter War that sentiment intensified. A Gallup poll taken in December 1939 showed that fifty-five percent of Americans believed that the government should directly intervene by lending Finland \$60,000,000 to purchase military supplies in the United States: approximately the same percentage of Americans who in October supported repeal of the arms embargo.<sup>129</sup> Secretary Morgenthau mentioned to his staff regarding government intervention, "I don't mind saying I

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<sup>125</sup> Langer and Gleason, 330-331.

<sup>126</sup> The Minister in Finland (Schoenfeld) to the Secretary of State, December 30, 1939 (760d.61/888: Telegram) *FRUS*, I, 1038.

<sup>127</sup> Jacobs, 119.

<sup>128</sup> "Talking About Aiding Finland," *Wall Street Journal* (February 21, 1940), 4.

<sup>129</sup> Gallup Poll (AIPO), Dec, 1939.

don't know whether it is neutral or unneutral, but I don't know where we could spend \$50 million to better advantage than to give it to the Finns to fight our battle to keep these fellows [the Russians] from getting to the Atlantic." He expressed blind fear that "once they get to the Atlantic, God help England and then we are in the soup . . . if we don't do it . . . goodbye Finland, goodbye Sweden, goodbye Norway [sic]."<sup>130</sup>

Although Roosevelt privately supported a loan to Finland, he withheld administration endorsement from any bill for aid to Finland introduced in Congress. He was influenced by the always cautious Secretary Hull, and was reluctant to expose himself to congressional attack during an election year.<sup>131</sup> Instead, Roosevelt let Congress take the initiative.<sup>132</sup> The bill, submitted by Senator Prentiss M. Brown, was introduced on January 8, 1940.<sup>133</sup>

Without the leadership of the president, the bill remained under debate in Congress from January 8 until February 28, 1940, yet it passed nonetheless.<sup>134</sup> However, support for the bill waned when it became obvious that a Soviet victory was inevitable.<sup>135</sup> In its final altered form, the bill consisted of an increase in the funds of the Export-Import Bank and an allocation of \$20,000,000 to Finland, none of it to be used for the purchase of arms or munitions.<sup>136</sup>

Finland needed immediate aid in the form of military supplies. The loan certainly symbolized America's good intentions but it did nothing for Finland's most pressing needs. In retrospect, the movement to aid a victim of aggression likely impacted the United States more

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<sup>130</sup> Blum, 130.

<sup>131</sup> Langer and Gleason, 336; 338.

<sup>132</sup> Jacobs, 128.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 132.

<sup>134</sup> Langer and Gleason, 338.

<sup>135</sup> "Talking About Aiding Finland," 4.

<sup>136</sup> Langer and Gleason, 338.

than Finland, for it marked a turning point in congressional discourse. In 1939 internationalists and isolationists had debated whether to maintain the ban on munitions sales. In the neutrality revision that followed, Congress shifted from an isolationist stance to an internationalist stance. International events, including Soviet expansion in the Baltic region and undeniably American sympathy for Britain and France, coincided to weaken isolationist control of Congress: they failed to prevail on any major decision after August 1939. After the Soviet Union attacked Finland, Congress moved further still from isolationism. It moved from the internationalist-isolationist debate, and entered a debate between interventionists and noninterventionists: a debate which interventionists ultimately won.<sup>137</sup>

At the special session in which the arms embargo was repealed, only indirect aid by private American businesses was approved.<sup>138</sup> On February 28, 1940, for the first time since isolationists took control of Congress, a measure for direct federal intervention in a European conflict was passed to aid the victim of an aggressor state. Although they rejected military aid, representatives and the American people were more supportive of limited federal intervention in the conflict between Finland and the Soviet Union than they had been for repeal of the arms embargo.<sup>139</sup> A Gallup poll showed that by February, fifty-eight percent of Americans favoured the loan, although Finland's military situation was clearly hopeless by that point.<sup>140</sup>

The Winter War demonstrates the pre-Cold War strength of anticommunism in the United States. Ideologically, Finland received overwhelming support against communist

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<sup>137</sup> Porter, 4.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid*, 103.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid*, 125.

<sup>140</sup> "Loan to Finland Backed in Survey," *New York Times* (February 7, 1940), 4.

Russia.<sup>141</sup> The conflict strengthened anticommunism further still. Republicans attacked Roosevelt's domestic policies through retrospective denunciation of Soviet recognition, similar to the way they would denounce the Yalta Agreements in the 1950s. Furthermore, interventionists concentrated on ideological considerations to help pass the measure for intervention, which for some, no doubt, was a motivating factor. "To hell with Stalin and to hell with Hitler! . . . the Finns . . . are fighting to stop anti-Christ and the hosts of hell led by Beelzebub," shouted Michigan's Representative John Dingell moments before the House passed the measure at a vote of 168 in favour with only 51 opposed.<sup>142</sup>

"Mum or numb were 1939's Isolationists," *Time* stated in March 1940. "Whether America likes it or not, she has become involved in the worldwide struggle for the preservation of democracy . . . the Finnish loan makes a precedent that cannot possibly be erased and marks a milestone America's course of alleged isolation."<sup>143</sup> As Max Jakobson remarks, the Winter War was part of "the challenge to isolation:" one of several incidents that eventually led to the end of isolationism.<sup>144</sup> The emotional response to the Soviet attack on a neutral country that Americans so respected helped erode the barriers that they had erected to prevent foreign entanglements.<sup>145</sup> The Finns won over both internationalists and isolationists and formed a bond of friendship with Americans that would survive the duration of the Second World War. The Brown Act was an incomplete victory for interventionists because it approved only a non-military loan; but it demonstrated that America had grown more willing to become involved in world events. It is a landmark in the overall shift from widespread isolationist sentiments of the interwar period to

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<sup>141</sup> Porter, 113.

<sup>142</sup> "THE PRESIDENCY: Reaction."

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> Jakobson, 197.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

direct participation in the Second World War. However, despite this setback for the isolationists, the renewed fighting between Finland and Russia in 1941 would eventually become a pillar of the isolationist argument for nonentanglement.

## **Chapter 2: Britain and the Winter War**

“Finland was regarded as an important piece in the strategy of the Western powers,” stated former Foreign Minister of Finland Vaino Tanner in his memoirs. “To be sure, we ourselves had never imagined that their aid was offered to us for the sake of our fine blue eyes.” To the United States, the Winter War posed only legal and moral problems because it remained aloof from the European war. American limited intervention was an emotional response motivated by sympathy for the Finnish cause. Although Britain shared genuine sympathy for the Finns, London could not afford to take such a lofty approach to the Finnish conflict.<sup>146</sup> The United States had no vital interests at stake in Scandinavia. In contrast, because of Britain’s own involvement in the war, its policy toward Finland was dictated by political realism, opportunism and considerations of vital national interest. Britain formed its policy toward the Winter War through the prism of its own war with Germany. Britain’s motives and purposes for aiding Finland differed from those of the United States. Britain aided Finland not out of sympathy but because of geopolitical considerations. Aid to Finland was politically expedient, both domestically and globally; it served vital interests and furthered Britain’s cause in the Second World War.

Sympathies aside, London had more interests at stake than the independence of a small neutral country in northern Europe. Pre-war negotiations, power politics and ‘horse-trading’ with the Soviet Union demonstrate that Britain would not hesitate to sacrifice the independence of other states to the Soviet sphere of influence for a strategic advantage against Germany. After

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<sup>146</sup> Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 197.

Germany occupied Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939 and Italy invaded Albania only days later, this new series of aggression prompted London and Paris to approach Moscow on April 18, despite their suspicion of Stalin's motives.<sup>147</sup> The Soviet Union welcomed their proposals for cooperation and suggested a pact of mutual assistance between all three powers. Included in its proposal, the Soviet Union demanded the right to guarantee its neighbours, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, from eventual German aggression. The states bordering the Soviet Union immediately objected.<sup>148</sup> The Finnish government followed the talks with anxiety, and protested against the proposed Soviet guarantee, concerned that a Soviet guarantee would immediately be followed by demands to meddle in Finnish affairs.<sup>149</sup>

On May 15, Soviet Foreign Minister V.V. Molotov made it clear that Moscow considered Finland not a Nordic state, but part of the Baltic group to which the Soviet Union wished to extend guarantees.<sup>150</sup> The British Ambassador in Russia, Sir William Seeds, disputed Molotov's assertion but also cautioned Molotov to avoid any measures that might arouse Finnish suspicions and cause Finland to accept a guarantee from Germany. Molotov in turn suggested that the association of Great Britain and France with the Soviet Union would weaken Finland's suspicions.<sup>151</sup> As a result of Molotov's uncompromising attitude, the British Foreign Office seriously considered ending the talks. The Foreign Office feared that an agreement with the Soviet Union would provoke Hitler and anger the Soviet border states. Furthermore, Britain had

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<sup>147</sup> Jukka Nevakivi, *The Appeal That Was Never Made* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 1976), 8.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>149</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 30, 1940 No. 336, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs (BDFA)*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 113.

<sup>150</sup> Nevakivi, 9.

<sup>151</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 30, 1940, No. 336, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 113.

a very low estimation of the Soviet Union's capacity to wage war.<sup>152</sup> Nevertheless, London and Paris wished to avoid a pact between the Soviet Union and Germany, and guarantees to Poland and Rumania against German aggression would be empty without Soviet backing. Above all, if there was to be a war, the western powers wanted desperately to involve the Soviet Union, lest at the end of the war, with England and Germany weakened, it would be in a position to dominate Europe.<sup>153</sup>

Molotov communicated to London that the Soviet Union required without exception, as vital to its own security, the right to defend against aggression those countries bordering the Soviet Union. An agreement with the Soviet Union could therefore only be bought at the expense of the border countries – including Finland.<sup>154</sup> Fear of an impending Soviet-German agreement and domestic pressure coincided with French demands to reach an agreement on almost any terms.<sup>155</sup> Towards the end of June, the British government ceded to nearly all of Molotov's demands. In cooperation with France, it submitted a formula that gave the Soviet government the right to decide upon the need of "assisting" its neighbouring countries.<sup>156</sup> Britain even agreed to assist the Soviet Union if the event that it wished to 'rescue' one of its neighbours.<sup>157</sup>

All that remained was for Britain to convince the Finns to look with goodwill on the negotiations and write off any theoretical disadvantages as the price to ensure peace;<sup>158</sup> yet the Finns considered such a price unacceptable.<sup>159</sup> The Finnish Prime Minister Kyösti Kallio

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 80.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

<sup>154</sup> Jakobson, 83.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>156</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 30, 1940, No. 336, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 113.

<sup>157</sup> Jakobson, 86.

<sup>158</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 30, 1940, No. 336, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 114.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid*, 85.

publically stated that the Finnish government would regard as an aggressor any state that would guarantee Finland against its will.<sup>160</sup> This Finnish attitude stubbornly persisted through the remainder of the war and the Finnish government authorized a significant increase in spending towards defence-works against the Soviet Union.<sup>161</sup> As far as Helsinki was concerned, a conclusion of terms with the Soviet Union would have brought down the current Finnish government, ruined the British position in Finland and thrown the country into German arms.<sup>162</sup> However, a much worse turn of events for Finland occurred with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact on August 22, 1939. For the Finns, the power constellation that they most feared became a reality; Germany ceded their country to the Soviet sphere of influence and Finland's only real source of outside aid was the ill-prepared western alliance.<sup>163</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Finland evoked an outburst of pro-Finnish sympathy in Britain that lasted for the duration of the Winter War. Public sympathy, though it necessitated outward gestures of support by the British government, did not exceed the level of moral outrage expressed by Americans. In contrast to American public opinion, the British public was far less anticommunist. British news reporting from 1939-1940 occasionally expressed anticommunist sentiments but British indignation toward communism was reserved in comparison to the fiery conviction of the American press. Prior to the outbreak of war, the British had heartily responded to Winston Churchill's proposals in the summer of 1939 for an alliance with the Soviet Union to deter Hitler from further aggression. Certain circles even feared at the time that a failure to

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid, Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 30, 1940, No. 336, 113.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 116.

<sup>163</sup> Nevakivi, 16.

orchestrate such an alliance might be the downfall of the Chamberlain government.<sup>164</sup> Before the Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, the public demonstrated few scruples in regard to the small countries of Eastern Europe and were not suspicious of Soviet motives.<sup>165</sup>

American sympathy was shaped by anticommunist sentiments and shared values whereas the British, engaged in war themselves, viewed the Finnish-Soviet conflict as a component of the world war. After the Nazi-Soviet pact, British public opinion turned against the Soviet Union. The public tended to interpret the Soviet agreement with Germany as an alliance rather than a treaty of nonaggression. The inclination to view the Soviet Union as an enemy allied with Hitler led to the perception that Finland was fighting on the same side as Britain.

The Winter War had the further appeal of offering an exciting diversion from the boredom of the ‘phoney war’ to a small Scandinavian nation defending itself against a great power.<sup>166</sup> At a time when Britain was technically at war but little was happening, the Winter War caused a sensation for the international press. Foreign correspondents in Finland portrayed the Winter War as a battle between good and evil that captured imaginations all over the world, not the least in Britain.<sup>167</sup> The Finnish underdog fought for its democracy and freedom: the expressed cause of the Allies, which they had not had yet the chance to fight for.<sup>168</sup> From December 1, 1939 to March 16, 1940, *The Times* and *The Manchester Guardian* kept the public informed on the Winter War on a daily basis, while *The Sunday Times* reported on the conflict in every issue.

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<sup>164</sup> Max Jakobson, *The Diplomacy of the Winter War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 84.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, 84.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>167</sup> Vehvilainen, 55.

<sup>168</sup> Jakobson, 4.

“If your country is attacked,” Lord Baldwin had assured the Finnish ambassador to Britain in November 1939, “there’ll be a real storm here in this country.”<sup>169</sup> His words were confirmed only weeks later when British press expressed near universal outrage at the invasion of Finland. “All the resentment felt against the Soviet Government for the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact was fanned into flame by the latest exhibition of brutal bullying and aggression,” remarked Churchill in his memoirs.<sup>170</sup> The Soviet attack was decried by *The Manchester Guardian* on December 1 as “an act of entirely unprovoked aggression,” without “a shadow of an excuse.”<sup>171</sup> *The Times* called the Soviet attack “a moment of indefensible outrage.”<sup>172</sup> This “act of naked territorial aggression,” ranted *The Times*, is “an offence that administers yet one more shock to the battered fabric of international morality.”<sup>173</sup> “The friends of Finland,” *The Times* went on, “must include all the free nations of the world.”<sup>174</sup>

*The Times* habitually equated the aims and crimes of Germany with the Soviet Union. Both were undemocratic dictatorial regimes engaged in aggressive territorial expansion. Although the Soviet Union was not even in a military alliance with Germany, the public tended to perceive it as collaborator of Germany and an enemy of Britain. *The Times* claimed that, “the mask must now seem to be finally withdrawn. Stalin, like his colleague at Berchtesgaden, employs the trick of representing his intended victim as a provocative mischief-maker . . . in contrast with this hypocrisy, the straightforward brigandage of the eighteenth-century

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<sup>169</sup> G. A. Gripenberg, *Finland and the Great Powers: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), 84.

<sup>170</sup> Winston Churchill, *The Gathering Storm* (Canada: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 543.

<sup>171</sup> “Soviet Action Condemned,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 1, 1939), 1.

<sup>172</sup> “The Invasion of Finland,” *The Times* (December 1, 1939), 9.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

partitioners of Poland seems clean and respectable.”<sup>175</sup> “In circumstances of unprecedented gravity, violence, and confusion,” it stated, “two great nations are indulging in an orgy of predatory aggression.”<sup>176</sup>

Even the leftist British trade union and labour movement was quick to publicize its allegiance to Finland and condemn Soviet aggression. The National Council of Labour issued an official statement to condemn the invasion, insisting that British Labour “repudiates utterly these claims of the Government of the U.S.S.R.”<sup>177</sup> In contrast to the Soviet Government’s betrayal of socialism, British Labour called to attention “the splendid achievements of the Finnish nation in social legislation and in the building up of a trade union, co-operative, and political organisation of the working class on the foundations of true democracy.”<sup>178</sup> It heartily endorsed material support, stating that “the League Council . . . calls upon the free nations of the world to give every practicable aid to the Finnish nation in its struggle to preserve its own institutions of civilisation and democracy.”<sup>179</sup>

The Christian churches of Great Britain, represented by the Bishop of Worcester, the Archdeacon of London, the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Moderator of the Federal Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England, and the President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of England issued a public statement to the Lutheran Archbishop of Finland expressing their sympathy for Finland’s cause. “We are filled with indignation,” it read, “at the assault made upon your nation, threatening not only your homes and

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<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>176</sup> “Finland at Geneva,” *The Times* (December 11, 1939), 9.

<sup>177</sup> “Labour Attack on Russia,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 8, 1939), 9.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

your lives, but the independence of your country.”<sup>180</sup> The statement continued to praise Finland’s “brave stand” and endorsed the just cause of Finland: “We recognize that Finland is defending precious principles – righteousness and truth in international relations, freedom in the conduct of life, and the very cause of civilisation . . . we, too, are engaged in a bitter struggle for the same principles as yourselves.”<sup>181</sup>

The Soviet bombing of Finnish civilians produced further outrage and newspapers published dramatic reports of aerial attacks. A *Sunday Times* January headline read “Children Wear White Coats to Hide from Machine-Gunners.”<sup>182</sup> It asked the reader to “visualize farm girls stumbling through the snow for the uncertain safety of their frozen cellars . . . bombs falling on frozen villages unprotected by a single anti-aircraft gun; men standing helplessly in front of blazing buildings with no apparatus with which to fight the fires, and others desperately trying to salvage their belongings from burning wreckage.”<sup>183</sup> *The Times* also reserved special reproach for the indiscriminate bombing and insisted that, “it is the obvious duty of every Government which values the service which Finland is rendering to civilization to supply her with the maximum number [of combat aircraft] in the minimum of time.”<sup>184</sup>

As the Finns demonstrated a capacity to resist, the public began to consider the broader implications of continued resistance. Along with general sympathy and, as Churchill recalled, “enthusiasm for the gallant Finns,” many concluded that continued resistance would serve British interests; yet continued resistance was only possible if the Finns were to receive

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<sup>180</sup> “The Archbishop of Finland’s Appeal,” *The Manchester Guardian* (February 12, 1940), 4.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>182</sup> “Finland Under Red Air Terror,” *The Sunday Times* (January 21, 1940), 1.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>184</sup> “Finland’s Fight for Civilization,” *The Times* (January 30, 1940), 7; It should be noted that this statement is misleading because the indiscriminate bombing of cities was a major policy of the Royal Air Force from very early on in the war and Allied aerial bombardments killed far more civilians than Soviet air attacks ever did.

substantial aid.<sup>185</sup> “In spite of the Great War which had been declared,” Churchill stated in his memoirs, “there was a keen desire to help the Finns by aircraft and other precious war material and by volunteers from Britain.”<sup>186</sup>

The British press widely began to claim that Finland was fighting for the same values as the Allies. *The Times* stated that “the assistance given to Finland by many countries, including . . . Great Britain, has been given because . . . Finland is defending other values besides her own – namely, the justice and civilization of the West.”<sup>187</sup> At the very least, *The Sunday Times* pointed out, Finland would serve British interests because “the Finnish war will levy some toll on Russia’s stocks of raw materials and finished goods,” and thereby divert valuable resources away from Germany.<sup>188</sup> *The Sunday Times* considered the diversion of resources a “reason . . . why we should give Finland all the assistance that is possible,” since “the motive of Germany’s agreement with Russia was to insure herself against the effects of the British blockade.”<sup>189</sup> “The more deeply Russia is tied up with the Finnish entanglement the less energy she will have to assist Germany,” continued *The Sunday Times*, “does it not follow that we owe to the wonderful resistance that the Finns are making a debt not only of admiration and of the most benevolent neutrality but of gratitude for the assistance that they are rendering to our cause at sea? [sic]”<sup>190</sup>

*The Manchester Guardian* proclaimed that only Finland was standing in the way of “a German-Russian ascendancy in Northern Europe that will be a direct menace to British communications and strategic points in the Northern Atlantic” and “secure Scandinavian

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<sup>185</sup> Churchill, 543.

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid*, 543

<sup>187</sup> “Finland Sticking to Her Guns,” *The Times* (December 8), 7.

<sup>188</sup> “German-Soviet Trade Pact a Broken Reed,” *The Sunday Times* (December 3, 1939), 11.

<sup>189</sup> “Germany’s Radical Vice,” *The Sunday Times* (January 7, 1940), 8.

<sup>190</sup> “A Vital Connection,” *The Sunday Times* (January 7, 1940), 8.

supplies for Germany.”<sup>191</sup> Dominance of Scandinavia would further enable Germany “to prepare for the offensive against Great Britain on a much broader basis than at present, and with far greater possibilities of waging more extensive naval and aerial warfare.”<sup>192</sup> “The defeat of Finland would be prejudicial to the interests of this country,” it stated, because it would have “a distinct bearing on the further course of the wider European conflict.”<sup>193</sup> The press increasingly tied Finland’s struggle to the Allies’ war with Germany, a connection that it claimed the public was also beginning to make. The *Guardian* asserted that “it is at last realised that the Finnish war is an offensive of the German-Russian coalition against the Western Powers . . . help will have to be given because the independence of Finland has become a major strategic interest and an important economic interest of the Western Powers.”<sup>194</sup>

The British press widely endorsed aid to Finland on the basis that it was another front in the world war. “Finland’s cause is our cause,” stated *The Guardian*, “we are concerned with the defence of Mannerheim’s Line as well as Maginot’s.”<sup>195</sup> *The Times* also pointed out early on that “there is much . . . short of war that can and must be done by other countries to help Finland in her need. . . . only a small diversion of British and French resources should ensure their triumph in the air, and consequently their triumph in defence.”<sup>196</sup> As the conflict drew to a close, the press overwhelmingly criticized the government’s lack of aid for Finland.

Finland occupied the front pages all throughout the conflict. Several newspapers, including the *Evening Standard*, complained that the public was so caught up in the Finnish

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<sup>191</sup> “Germany Preventing Sweden From Acting,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 5, 1939), 9; “Countries that have Supplied Finns with Arms,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 7, 1939), 7.

<sup>192</sup> “Ultimate Dangers in Finland,” *The Manchester Guardian* (February 27, 1940), 5.

<sup>193</sup> “Countries that have Supplied Finns with Arms,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 7, 1939), 7.

<sup>194</sup> “Position of the Allies in Northern Europe,” *The Manchester Guardian* (December 23, 1939), 9.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>196</sup> “Finland at Geneva,” *The Times* (December 11, 1939), 9.

struggle that it would cause them to forget their own war; yet it is clear that many considered the Finnish war to be another front in the wider European conflict.<sup>197</sup> The public supported the Finnish Red Cross with gifts of money and goods and collections across Britain gathered large quantities of clothes, shoes, medicine and other supplies. Even Churchill demonstrated his support by sending his skis.<sup>198</sup> G.A. Gripenberg, Finnish Ambassador to Britain, recalled generous anonymous donations, school teachers who pledged ten percent of their salaries to Finland – even a letter containing seventeen shillings and sixpence which read “I am only a poor milkmaid, and so I can’t send you more than this.”<sup>199</sup> Finland funds were established and British citizens donated generously. When the House of Commons announced that British subjects would be free to volunteer to fight in Finland, over 2,000 applications were immediately received. After the Finland Aid Bureau was established to process applications, recruits averaged 50 per day for the next two weeks.<sup>200</sup>

Official reactions to the Soviet invasion were more reserved. London did not think Finland could resist more than a few days and its main concern was whether or not the conflict was likely to affect British interests. Neville Chamberlain stated to the War Cabinet on December 1 that in his opinion the invasion very likely presaged a hasty submission to Russian demands.<sup>201</sup> General Edmund Ironside, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, expected that, although the Finns might continue guerrilla actions for some time, they would not withstand Russian air attacks.<sup>202</sup> On December 2 the War Cabinet considered the implications of the Soviet

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<sup>197</sup> Gripenberg, 90.

<sup>198</sup> Gripenberg, 91-92.

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, 92

<sup>200</sup> “For Finland,” *The Manchester Guardian* (February 15, 1940), 7.

<sup>201</sup> W.M. (39) 100th Conclusions, December 1, 1939, 272.

<sup>202</sup> W.M. (39) 102nd Conclusions, December 3, 1939, 288.

invasion of Finland. It concluded that as long as Russian expansion was confined to Finland, it would have no adverse effects on British interests, and could possibly even drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and Germany.<sup>203</sup> Chamberlain wrote in his diary that “I am as indignant as anyone at the Russians’ behaviour, but I am bound to say that I don’t think the Allied cause is likely to suffer thereby.”<sup>204</sup>

In the opinion of the War Cabinet, good relations with the Soviet Union outweighed their distaste for Soviet aggression against Finland. Churchill, Halifax, and Chamberlain, among others, believed that close ties between the Soviet Union and Germany would not last. Halifax explained to Gripenberg only hours before the invasion that, “Soviet Russia and Germany will never be able to cooperate.”<sup>205</sup> It would be in Britain’s best interests to avoid hostilities with the Soviet Union at all cost because the latter would likely find itself on the side of Britain in war against Germany. In the first weeks of the Winter War, London was under the conflicting pressures of public opinion and the desire to avoid a breach with the Soviet Union. The Winter War was entirely inconvenient for the British government.

Despite London’s political priorities, it could not avoid the political necessity of sending aid to Finland. World opinion necessitated a public stance on the Russian invasion if Britain was to keep its moral position intact. From a purely military point of view, there was no reason to aid Finland since Britain’s resources were already insufficient for its own needs and Finland was not expected to hold out against the Soviet Union; yet from a political point of view, Cabinet had no choice but to send some token gesture of support to Finland. Halifax pointed out on December 4

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<sup>203</sup> W.M. (39) 101st Conclusions, December 2, 1939, 280.

<sup>204</sup> Gripenberg, 103-4.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

that it was in Britain's interests to give Finland some measure of help in order to avoid moral embarrassment.<sup>206</sup> Cabinet decided on December 5 that it would be "very desirable" to give Finland some assistance in the form of 20 Gladiator fighter planes, despite the risk of straining Britain's relations with Russia.<sup>207</sup> "The political effect of such a gesture might be very considerable," suggested Chamberlain, particularly in regard to the Scandinavian neutrals, who currently supplied both Germany and Britain with iron ore.<sup>208</sup> Cabinet hoped they might be induced to intervene on the side of Finland.<sup>209</sup> Since Americans were particularly outraged at the Russian invasion, Cabinet also concluded that aid to Finland might also be the best way to "produce a good moral effect on the United States" and enlist American sympathy for the Allied cause.<sup>210</sup>

The situation of the British government became even more difficult after Finland's appeal to the League of Nations. In Halifax's opinion it was "unfortunate that these meetings should take place, since they could not produce any useful result, and would still further damage the League."<sup>211</sup> The instructions given to Richard Butler, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office and leader of the British delegation at Geneva, reflect the embarrassing situation of the British government. Since, in his own words, his chief concern was "to keep our moral position intact," he was to condemn Russian aggression without reservation.<sup>212</sup> However, Butler was also instructed to resist the imposition of sanctions against the Soviet Union but to be

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<sup>206</sup> W.M (39) 103rd Conclusions, December 4, 1939, 295.

<sup>207</sup> W.M. (39) 104th Conclusions, December 5, 1939, 305.

<sup>208</sup> W.M (39) 103rd Conclusions, 296.

<sup>209</sup> W.M. (39) 113th Conclusions, December 13, 1939, 408.

<sup>210</sup> W.M (39) 103rd Conclusions, 296; W.M. (39) 112th Conclusions, December 12, 1939, 395.

<sup>211</sup> W.M. (39) 103rd Conclusions, 296.

<sup>212</sup> Thomas Munch-Petersen, *The Strategy of Phoney War*, (Stockholm: Risberg Tryckeri, 1981),71.

prepared to follow the general lead if other states thought they should be imposed.<sup>213</sup> The question of sanctions never actually came up and Butler was eventually forced to save face by voting with the other states for the expulsion of the Soviet Union from the League. Since the League's resolution urgently appealed to every member to provide Finland with aid, and since Butler supported the resolution, it was clearly impossible to avoid further gestures of aid toward Finland.<sup>214</sup>

The Winter War did not appear to offer any semblance of opportunity for the Allied cause until Finnish resistance materialized. Although aid was politically expedient, the War Ministry and other departments considered it a waste to send weapons to Finland because they would soon be lost.<sup>215</sup> Military experts and the British government greeted initial victories throughout the first half of December with scepticism. Although the Swedish General Staff estimated that Finland could hold out for six months, if supplied with arms, the Foreign Office remained doubtful. It was only after Ironside confirmed the Swedish view that it would indeed be difficult for the Russians to prevail at this time of year, and after consecutive Finnish victories in the field, that it became clear that aid to Finland was strategically as well as politically expedient.<sup>216</sup>

As long as Finland showed a capacity to resist, it was in Britain's best interests to delay the Russian victory for as long as possible, while avoiding hostilities with the Soviet Union. Soviet expansion into the Baltic would not directly affect British interests; but Cabinet feared that the invasion of Finland may be a prelude to further expansionist schemes in South-East

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<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, 71; W.M. (39) 103rd Conclusions, 297.

<sup>214</sup> Text of the Resolution adopted by the Assembly on December 14, 1939, Enclosure 1 in No. 266, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 49.

<sup>215</sup> Gripenberg, 104.

<sup>216</sup> Nevakivi, 48.

Europe and Asia. The American State Department informed the British Ambassador that early evidence showed that the Soviet Union wanted to settle the Finnish question quickly in order to obtain a free hand to interfere in the Balkans.<sup>217</sup> Furthermore, at this point, the real relationship between Germany and the Soviet Union was still subject to speculation. Thomas Snow, the British Minister in Helsinki suggested to Halifax that any failure of the German-Soviet combination may further erode their partnership.<sup>218</sup> In his diary, Ironside expressed his opinion on December 25 that, “the solution rests with Finland. If we can keep Finland on her legs we shall certainly stop any combined advance in the Balkans.”<sup>219</sup> Because of the unexpected difficulties faced by the Soviet Union in Finland, and the ever-growing drain on its resources, it was clear to London that as long as the conflict lasted, Russia would be unable to pursue other goals. A Chief of Staff report on December 31 concluded that, “such a commitment is likely to diminish [Russia’s] ability to threaten British interests in the Middle East.”<sup>220</sup>

Although they had not yet engaged the Germans, Allied wisdom had determined that while Germany was stronger on land and in the air, the Allies were superior economically and at sea. Thus, the Allied staff in April 1939 developed a broad strategic policy that recognized that the only offensive weapon which the Allies could effectively use was economic. Economic pressure could be brought to bear through an external blockade and strategic bombing. Since air attacks were still restricted to military targets, it was necessary to concentrate on the blockade.<sup>221</sup> The strategy that emerged required the Allies to remain on the defensive on the western front,

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<sup>217</sup> W.M. (39) 101st Conclusions, 280-1.

<sup>218</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, December 17, 1939, No. 254 (N 197/1/56), *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 28.

<sup>219</sup> *The Ironside Diaries 1937-1940*, Colonel Roderick Macleod and Denis Kelly, eds., (London: Constable and Company Ltd, 1962), 188.

<sup>220</sup> Military Implications of a Policy Aimed at Stopping the Export of Swedish Iron Ore to Germany, W.P. (39) 179, December 31, 1939, CAB 66/4/29, 19.

<sup>221</sup> J.R.M Butler, *Grand Strategy*, (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1976) Vol. II, 71-2.

because they lacked both the political will and military strength to pursue an offensive strategy. The Allies would seek to contain Germany while waiting for it to attack the Soviet Union. In the meantime, the Allies would take advantage of their naval superiority by enforcing the economic blockade on Germany. The Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW) estimated that because Germany's economy currently ran at an unsustainable capacity, the economic blockade would further weaken Germany while the Allies mobilized and grew in strength.<sup>222</sup>

The Scandinavian countries directly affected the blockade because Sweden exported iron ore to Germany through Norwegian ports. Under the war trade agreements, Sweden was allowed to export iron ore to Germany but not exceeding prewar levels.<sup>223</sup> The main iron field was the Kiruna-Gällivare district, close to the northern Finnish border. Sweden shipped ore in part from the ice-free port of Narvik on the Norwegian coast and in part from the Swedish port of Luleå in the Gulf of Bothnia, which was closed by ice throughout the winter.<sup>224</sup> German shipping proceeded along the Norwegian coast under the protection of Norway's territorial waters throughout the winter months and constituted a major leak in the blockade.<sup>225</sup>

Following the outbreak of war, the MEW concluded that the main weakness of Germany's economy was a shortage of labour and essential raw materials, including iron ore.<sup>226</sup> From 1936-1938 Sweden had provided between 52.1 and 59.1% of Germany's total imports of iron ore.<sup>227</sup> In 1938 Germany imported approximately 22 million tons of iron ore, of which 9 ½ million came from sources now closed by the blockade. The MEW estimated that current

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<sup>222</sup> Munch-Petersen, 26.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid*, 28.

<sup>224</sup> Butler, 91.

<sup>225</sup> Churchill, 531.

<sup>226</sup> Butler, 72.

<sup>227</sup> Munch-Petersen, 21.

German stocks of ore were likely very low and in order to avoid an industrial breakdown, Germany had to import a minimum of 9 million tons of ore from Sweden during the first year of war.<sup>228</sup> However, no amount of pressure could induce Sweden to stop ore exports entirely. The Swedish government feared that if it voluntarily cut off supplies to Germany, Germany would invade in order to safeguard its vital supplies of iron ore.<sup>229</sup>

The export of iron ore from Sweden to Germany was a major problem for the Allies. Churchill in particular had wanted to cut off Scandinavian supplies to Germany since September 1939. At the Allied Supreme War Council in Paris on December 19, the French Premier Edouard Daladier brought forward new evidence in support of the MEW's estimate. Baron Fritz Thyssen, a German steel magnate exiled in Switzerland, claimed that the Allies could achieve a swift victory by seizing the Swedish ore fields.<sup>230</sup> The German war industry, deprived of vital supplies of iron ore, would soon collapse.<sup>231</sup> Rather than simply cutting off the Narvik shipments of ore, which would only be effective throughout the winter months, Daladier proposed that the iron fields be seized in conjunction with armed intervention in Finland.<sup>232</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff and the MEW strongly supported Daladier's proposal. The MEW's report concluded that a stoppage of Narvik traffic would curtail Germany's supply of ore by 1 million tons during the four winter months; but Germany would still be able to obtain the 9-10 million tons a year essential to its war economy.<sup>233</sup> However, if the entire exports of the Gallivare iron fields in northern Sweden were closed, Germany would be confined to the

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<sup>228</sup> Butler, 91-2.

<sup>229</sup> Munch-Petersen, 29.

<sup>230</sup> Nevakivi, 64, 68.

<sup>231</sup> W.M. (39) 122nd Conclusions, December 22, 1939, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/4, 1.

<sup>232</sup> Nevakivi, 68.

<sup>233</sup> Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, W.P. (39) 168, December 20, 1939, CAB 66/4/18, 2.

Grangesberg deposit, which would at most yield 5 million tons a year instead of the 9 million that the German industry needed. The only source from which Germany could replace Swedish ore would be the Soviet Union; yet deliveries from the Soviet Union were not likely to exceed 1 million tons of poor quality ore before 1941. The MEW estimated that such a closure “might well bring German industry to a standstill and would, in any case, have a profound effect on the duration of the war.”<sup>234</sup>

Churchill argued that cutting off of Germany’s ore supplies was “worth all the rest of the blockade” and provided the chance to shorten the war and to avoid “immeasurable bloodshed” on the western front.<sup>235</sup> However, he suggested a plan to take immediate action against the port of Narvik in addition to seizing the iron ore fields. Halifax agreed that “we cannot fight this war on the basis of allowing Germany to break all the rules while we keep them” and enthusiastically supported any plan considered vital to the prosecution or shortening of the war.<sup>236</sup> The Chiefs of Staff considered the military implications of the larger project of stopping all ore traffic from Sweden. If the Allies successfully seized the Gällivare iron fields, Germany, because of the desperate circumstances in which it would find itself, would undoubtedly react violently. According to the Chiefs of Staff, Germany would likely bomb southern Sweden in an attempt to coerce the Swedish government, which would in turn force Sweden onto the side of the Allies. It would be a great advantage to the Allies to open a Scandinavian front, away from Western Europe.<sup>237</sup> If the Allies were to carry out the plan to take the Gällivare iron fields, it meant they would land a force at Narvik and send it down the railway. Such a landing was unlikely to

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<sup>234</sup> W.P. (39) 179, 3.

<sup>235</sup> W.M. (39) 122nd Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 2.

<sup>236</sup> W.P. (39) 168, 1.

<sup>237</sup> W.M. (39) 122nd Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 2.

succeed without the consent of Norway.<sup>238</sup> Cabinet concluded that the Allies should give all possible assistance to Finland to enlist Scandinavian sympathy, and urge Sweden and Norway to do the same in order to further involve them in the Finnish conflict.<sup>239</sup>

The Prime Minister was evidently enthralled with Thyssen's memorandum and the chance to deal "a mortal blow to Germany," but felt compelled to exercise caution.<sup>240</sup> He suggested that the way to enlist the Scandinavians was not through their fear of Germany but their fear of Russia, to whom they were more vulnerable. Anti-Russian sentiments were also very strong in Scandinavia, while anti-German feelings were not. Therefore, the danger of Russian aggression should be greatly exaggerated and they should be urged to increase their assistance to Finland. They would probably realize that further assistance to Finland would mean an increased threat from Russia, and in this case the Allies could offer a guarantee of protection.<sup>241</sup> Then, as the Chiefs of Staff suggested, while Finland was in danger of collapsing, the Allies would announce their intention to intervene. They would request passage that Norway and Sweden, out of sympathy to Finland, would presumably grant. Then Allied troops would secure the Gallivare iron fields while on route to Finland.

The Chiefs of Staff recommended by the end of December that, despite the risks involved, the project for the complete stoppage of the export of Swedish iron ore to Germany should indeed be carried out. This plan would allow the Allies to finally seize the initiative and undertake offensive operations which might well prove decisive. "The opportunity is a great one," concluded the Chiefs of Staff, "and we see no prospect of an equal chance being afforded

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid*, 4-5.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid*, 7.

to us elsewhere.”<sup>242</sup> They also warned that if their recommendation was accepted, halfway measures would not suffice: Scandinavia would have to be regarded, for the time being, as the decisive theatre of war. Other than security at home and in France, all else would have to be relegated to second place.<sup>243</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff concluded that Scandinavian cooperation was absolutely essential to the success of the operation. The entire report rested on the assumption that the Scandinavians would readily cooperate. A military expedition inland from Narvik in the face of either Norwegian or Swedish opposition was simply “not a feasible operation.”<sup>244</sup> It was likely to succeed as long as the Allies had Scandinavian cooperation and acted fast enough to secure the key positions before the Germans or the Russians.

The Chiefs of Staff believed that Allied operations in northern Sweden would provoke a German attack on southern Norway.<sup>245</sup> There was also the possibility that intervention in Scandinavia might lead to hostilities with Russia; yet the Chiefs of Staff concluded that, “the risks involved . . . are small compared with the opportunity now offered of achieving the early defeat of Germany.”<sup>246</sup> Despite the Chiefs of Staff’s recommendations, Cabinet remained divided over the details of the operations and they re-invited the Chiefs of Staff to reconsider the implications of Germany seizing bases in southern Norway.

On January 4, the Swedish Minister handed Halifax a memorandum containing the response of the Swedish government to the Allies’ December 27 *demarche* concerning aid and

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<sup>242</sup> W.P. (39) 179, 21.

<sup>243</sup> W.M. (40) 1st Conclusions, January 2, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/1, 1.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

the offer of assurances.<sup>247</sup> Sweden avoided any reference to Allied assurances and only stated that, in their opinion, the best way to help Finland was by “maintaining with firmness that policy of neutrality which the Swedish Government declared on the outbreak of war on the 1st September 1939.”<sup>248</sup> Cabinet decided that in order to hearten the Swedes, every effort must be made to support Finland. If the Allies could prevent a Finnish collapse, Sweden would see that the Allies could provide real help if Sweden was threatened by Germany or Russia. In due time, helping Finland might encourage the Scandinavians to rely on the offer of Allied assurances.<sup>249</sup> However, Sweden was reluctant to cooperate because it feared becoming involved in the broader war. Swedish newspapers throughout January suggested that the Allies were trying to create a Scandinavian front and manipulate Sweden into entering the war against its will.<sup>250</sup> These observations made the Swedes and Norwegians increasingly wary of the political dangers associated with helping the Finns.<sup>251</sup> Although the Scandinavians had not accepted the Allied offer of assurances, plans for intervention continued to proceed upon the assumption that Scandinavian cooperation would be forthcoming.

British policy throughout January was characterized by indecision and lack of leadership. Ironside confided in his diary that in Cabinet “we do talk a lot of nonsense these days. . . . What a curious thing it is that we have no more strategic ideas than building up an enormous army in France, protecting England, and waiting to see what the Germans are going to do.”<sup>252</sup> However, Halifax reassured Cabinet that Swedish cooperation would materialize when Finland was near

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<sup>247</sup> Viscount Halifax to Mr. Montagu-Pollock, January 4, 1940, No. 250 [N 240/2/63], *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 19.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

<sup>249</sup> Mr. Mallet to Viscount Halifax, February 8, 1940, No. 320 [N 1697/9/56], *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 88-9.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, Viscount Halifax to Mr. Montagu-Pollock, January 4, 1940, No. 250, 20.

<sup>251</sup> Nevakivi, 74.

<sup>252</sup> Ironside, 193-4.

defeat. When the threat from Russia became intensified, “no doubt Sweden would be very ready to ask for our aid.”<sup>253</sup> In the meantime, Cabinet’s only policy was to continue to aid Finland and to use the threat of action against Narvik to pressure the Scandinavians to involve themselves further in Finland’s cause.

On January 18, Halifax received a dispatch from British Minister Thomas Snow that the whole of Finland’s available manpower had already been used. Field-Marshal Carl Mannerheim estimated that based on current resources Finland could not hold out for more than a short time.<sup>254</sup> Liaison officer Brigadier Ling, after spending two weeks at Mannerheim’s headquarters gave a pessimistic report on the realities of the situation in Finland. Mannerheim told him he needed at least 30,000 fresh soldiers before the winter was over if Finland was to last into the spring.<sup>255</sup> Meanwhile, public opinion in Britain was increasingly in favour of helping Finland by every possible means and London was under considerable pressure to do more for the Finns.<sup>256</sup> The dual weight of Ling’s report and public opinion forced Cabinet to intensify assistance to Finland. If Finland fell it would be disastrous for Britain’s plans to occupy the Gallivare iron fields. For the first time, Cabinet began to seriously consider including a component of the expeditionary force solely intended to support Finland.<sup>257</sup>

The French government was far more willing to accept involvement in the Finnish war. On January 18 the French Ambassador Charles Corbin handed Halifax an *aide-mémoire* which complained of the absence of any positive decision to take action against the Narvik traffic. It pointed out that action was morally justified and adopted Churchill’s argument that the stoppage

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<sup>253</sup> W.M. (40) 10th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 16.

<sup>254</sup> Mr. Snow to Viscount Halifax, January 10, 1940, No. 283 [N 712/1/56], *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 59.

<sup>255</sup> Nevakivi, 83.

<sup>256</sup> Mr. Mallet to Viscount Halifax, January 19, No. 304 [N 1048/9/56], *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Vol. 2, 81.

<sup>257</sup> Nevakivi, 83.

of Narvik traffic might provoke a German reprisal which would then give the Allies an opportunity to land an expeditionary force and occupy the iron fields. The French were also in favour of directly assisting Finland. On January 22 the French government suggested aid to Finland not only in the form of material but through military intervention. The French proposed that the Allies oversee a Polish attack on the Soviet-occupied Finnish port of Petsamo. The Poles could land troops that were presently stationed in France. The Allied expeditionary force could then be landed either at Narvik, if Norway agreed, or at Petsamo if Norway refused.<sup>258</sup> If Norway refused, a French brigade of Chasseurs Alpains, two Foreign Legion battalions, four Polish battalions, and one or two British brigades could combine operations with the Finns to take Petsamo.<sup>259</sup>

The Chiefs of Staff rejected the French proposals out of hand. The Petsamo project was a difficult operation and it was likely to involve the Allies in hostilities with the Soviet Union. In addition, it would probably not afford any decisive measure of assistance to the Finns and would bring the Allies no closer to securing the Gallivare iron fields.<sup>260</sup> Daladier expounded on the Petsamo project at the Supreme War Council meeting on February 5 and emphasized that if the British turned it down, something else must be done immediately to help the Finns. Daladier's sense of urgency was related to French domestic politics. Unlike Chamberlain, Daladier had a strong anti-Soviet pressure group against him and was more inclined to accept hostilities with the Soviet Union. Morale in France was low, the French grew restless with the general lack of operations, and public opinion was highly sympathetic to the Finns. Daladier had been Prime Minister of France for much longer than the usual term of office, which had given rise to

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<sup>258</sup> Munch-Petersen, 122-3.

<sup>259</sup> Nevakivi, 89.

<sup>260</sup> W.M. (40) 32nd Conclusions, February 3, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/24, 2.

political intrigues on the part of those who wished to see a change in office. Daladier wished to capitalize on pro-Finnish sentiments and increase his popularity in France by doing something to help the Finns.<sup>261</sup>

Evidently both Allied governments were under considerable political pressure to do more for Finland and Ling's reports highlighted Finland's urgent need for men and material. At the Supreme War Council in February, both Daladier and Chamberlain agreed that public and world opinion made it imperative to sustain Finland. Finland's collapse would be a severe blow to morale in Britain and France and would be seen throughout the world as a setback for the Allies because of the public perception that the Finns fought for the Allied cause.<sup>262</sup> It would likely have very serious political consequences for both leaders. On February 2 the War Cabinet stumbled upon a new policy that combined aid to Finland with the plan to occupy Gallivare. Until that point British policy planned to gain control over Swedish ore by offering to protect Sweden and Norway from a Russian or German attack following, or near, the collapse of Finland. Now Cabinet realized that the same goal could be achieved under the pretext of aiding Finland through the Narvik-Lulea railway. British efforts thus far to threaten and offer assurances to the Scandinavians had failed and there was nothing to lose by pursuing the same objective by other means.<sup>263</sup>

Chamberlain explained to Daladier the British plans for the dispatch of three divisions to Scandinavia to give assistance to the Finns, before the break-up of ice in the Baltic allowed the

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<sup>261</sup> W.M. (40) 35th Conclusions, February 7, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/25, 1.

<sup>262</sup> Munch-Petersen, 128.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid*, 128.

Germans to act.<sup>264</sup> The Allies would immediately make full preparation for the expedition. In the meantime, it would be arranged for Finland to issue an appeal to the world for assistance when the Allies were ready to embark. Finland would address Norway and Sweden in particular, its nearest neighbours and most likely the next victim of Russian expansion. The Allies would then approach the Scandinavians and publically request passage across their territories in order to answer Finland's appeal for aid. Global sympathy for Finland would place enormous pressure on the Scandinavians to grant passage to the Allies. Allied forces would then land at Narvik and Trondheim and move up to Finland through Boden, above the Gulf of Bothnia in northern Sweden. This route would bring the Allies within very close vicinity to Gallivare, where troops could secure the iron fields. All of these plans were extremely time-sensitive if the first contingent of troops was to be ready to arrive in Scandinavia in order to forestall the Germans.<sup>265</sup>

On February 16 the Chiefs of Staff updated the War Cabinet on the progress of the expeditionary preparation. Given the limitations of transport and loading, the earliest date on which the expeditionary force could disembark in Norway would be March 20, which meant that the process of loading store ships would have to begin by March 1 and the decision to dispatch the force would have to be made by March 11 at the latest. If the expeditionary force was to provide any useful assistance to the Finns it would have to arrive in Norway no later than April 3, which meant that the War Cabinet would have to decide before March 25.<sup>266</sup>

Despite the many serious risks involved the Chiefs of Staff considered the pay-off well worth the danger. "Our main object was the ore fields in Northern Sweden," the February 18

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<sup>264</sup> W.M. (40) 35th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 1-2.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid*, 2, 3.

<sup>266</sup> W.M. (40) 43rd Conclusions, February 16, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/30, 2-3.

War Cabinet minutes concluded, “and we had to find some pretext for getting a footing in Scandinavia in order to secure these fields.”<sup>267</sup> Even in the worst possible situation – if Sweden did not resist a German invasion and refused to invite Allied assistance – Churchill was determined that Allied troops should still try to force their way into the northern iron fields.<sup>268</sup>

Throughout the planning stages of the operation, the War Cabinet had assumed that Finland would willingly cooperate, and would welcome assistance. Meanwhile, unknown to London, Moscow for the first time became willing to negotiate. On January 29 Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet Minister in Stockholm, communicated to Helsinki through Sweden that the Soviet government was not opposed in principle to a settlement, although the demands would be significantly harsher than they had been prior to the war. Stalin did not want to become involved in the great power war. Since Moscow became aware of possible Allied intervention as early as the beginning of January, it is likely that the Soviet government wished to conclude the war before the western powers could intervene, in order to avoid hostilities with Britain and France. The Soviets planned a new offensive in February to apply heavy military pressure while opening negotiations.<sup>269</sup>

By February 12 Moscow informed Helsinki of its demands: annexation of the whole of the Karelian Isthmus, an area north of Ladoga, and also the lease of the Hanko Peninsula where the Soviets sought to build a naval base. If the Finns rejected the terms the Soviets would continue their onslaught while raising the demands of the peace terms. For the Finns there was little alternative to negotiations at this point. In the meantime, Helsinki requested armed

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<sup>267</sup> W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, February 18, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/32, 3.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid*, 4.

<sup>269</sup> Munch-Petersen, 129.

assistance from Sweden for a second time on February 13. The only ideas Helsinki had of Allied intervention plans came from ambiguous and unpromising reports from Paris and London.<sup>270</sup>

By mid-February, London realized that the Finns might not be as willing to cooperate with the Allies as the War Cabinet had assumed. Finnish collusion was necessary to make an international appeal; but since the Russian offensive was already breaking Finnish defences and Allied intervention would involve Finland in hostilities with Germany, it was possible that limited assistance from the Allies might not be worth the risk of becoming trapped between two great powers.<sup>271</sup> At this time Britain had also received reports that Germany and the United States considered mediating an end to the conflict. It was in British interests for Finland to fight as long as possible so the western powers could secure their objective in Gallivare.<sup>272</sup>

These anxieties caused indecision in London over when Finland should be informed of Allied intentions. There was doubt that Sweden would accede to the request for passage unless Finland was on the verge of collapse. There was also small chance of Sweden granting passage unless it was sure that Allied aid was substantial, in which case it would be desirable to hold staff meetings with Sweden as soon as possible; yet if Sweden was aware of Allied intentions, it would undoubtedly pressure Finland not to accept the offer of intervention and no doubt leak information to Germany since their military advisors were in constant touch with the German army.<sup>273</sup> Cabinet decided that the request for passage should be made immediately after the Finnish appeal and that the Allied force be as large as possible<sup>274</sup>. It was imperative that the Swedes be impressed by the size of the commitment: any assistance must be deemed worth

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<sup>270</sup> *The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim* (London: Cassell and Company Ltd, 1953), 381.

<sup>271</sup> W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 7.

<sup>272</sup> Munch-Petersen, 138.

<sup>273</sup> W.M. (40) 52nd Conclusions, February 26, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/38, 4.

<sup>274</sup> W.M. (40) 43rd Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 5.

having or the Swedes would likely reject it. A large force was also necessary to defend southern Sweden and hopefully even deter a German invasion.<sup>275</sup> Therefore, Cabinet decided that the Finns should be informed when in crisis, but with enough time for them to make a decision and not so much time so that the plans were leaked out to the Germans.

On February 18, Cabinet agreed to communicate the Allies' intervention plans to Mannerheim through Brigadier Ling, but not to inform the Finnish government officially. Ling was scheduled to arrive in Finland on February 19. The Allied force that was to be sent solely to Finland would initially number about two brigades, due to transport limitations, but would eventually rise to a total of three brigades. Because of maintenance difficulties the Allied forces would not be permitted to operate below the "waist line" in southern Finland, although it was there – at the Mannerheim Line – that the Finns most needed reinforcements. Cabinet worried that Mannerheim might not consider the acceptance of Allied forces worthwhile. Only substantial aid would be worth hostilities with Germany. Furthermore, Sweden would probably cease aiding Finland if Mannerheim accepted Allied intervention because Sweden's armaments were currently being resupplied by Germany, who would undoubtedly stop supplying Sweden if Finland aligned itself with the Allies. On the other hand, Cabinet expected that Mannerheim might try to use the threat of Allied intervention to squeeze more aid out of Sweden and as a lever in negotiations with the Soviet Union.<sup>276</sup>

Despite these misgivings, Cabinet went ahead with the plan and hoped for the best. Cabinet trusted that Mannerheim would see more than numbers, although the Allied assistance was limited. He might realize that the Allies were placing themselves wholly on the Finnish side

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.

<sup>276</sup> W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, 6-8.

and that it might have a “very great” moral effect on the war. Brigadier Ling could also point out that the size of the intervention force was reduced by the transport limitations, which Mannerheim new full well, and assure Mannerheim that the “whole strength” of the Allies would be forthcoming.<sup>277</sup>

Ling was instructed to inform Mannerheim that the British and French governments were preparing an intervention force that would be ready around the middle of March. He was to assure Mannerheim that Sweden and Norway would yield to a public appeal, so long as the timing of the appeal was closely coordinated with the date on which the Allies would be ready to intervene. To prevent Sweden from pressuring Finland to accept an early peace or Mannerheim from using the threat of intervention as a bargaining device, Cabinet’s instructions to Ling stated that “you are to impress on him the importance to Finland that this project should not be prejudiced by . . . acceptance of invitations from any neutral powers to accept mediation for an early peace.”<sup>278</sup> Lest Finland pursue peace, Ling was to point out that “the Allied intervention would give the Finns a chance of beating the Russians rather than having to accept unfavourable terms of peace.”<sup>279</sup> Despite London’s insistence, the policy it tried to persuade the Finns to follow was suicidal. It served only British interests for Finland to continue the war on the promise of such a meagre British commitment.

By the end of February, Finland was faced with three options: the initiation of peace negotiations, the possibility of military assistance from Sweden, and the aid offered by Britain and France. Vaino Tanner, the Finnish Minister of Foreign Affairs was not pleased with the

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<sup>277</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

<sup>278</sup> Instructions to Brigadier Ling, W.M. (40) 45th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, i.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, i.

Allied offer of assistance. He feared it would influence opinion against pursuing peace.<sup>280</sup>

Mannerheim also expressed apprehension about western aid. According to Tanner, Ling did not give sufficiently detailed or exact reports and he did not think that Sweden and Norway would agree to grant transit rights. He stated in a memorandum that “in the opinion of the defense council, the inadequately prepared aid of the Allies should be assigned last place.”<sup>281</sup> It was not in Finland’s interest to be drawn into the war between the great powers for promises of limited aid. Mannerheim knew full well that if Finland became involved in a war with both Germany and the Soviet Union, Britain would not be able to offer much assistance and the transport facilities would likely be unavailable.<sup>282</sup> He recommended that if the Finnish government should consider making an appeal for aid, the Finnish military command should first request the details of the exact amount, time and the manner in which intervention would be carried out.<sup>283</sup>

On February 24, Brigadier Ling, with British envoy Gordon Vereker, officially introduced the intervention plan to the Finnish government. They promised an expeditionary force of 20,000 men to Finland with twice the normal firing capacity to be ready to leave on March 15 and arrive in Finland a month later. On Mannerheim’s suggestion, the Finnish government tried to use the threat of intervention as a lever to pursue its other options: to get easier peace terms from the Soviet Union and military aid from Sweden. Although Molotov told Helsinki that western aid would probably never materialize, the Soviet government cautiously tested the British resolve to intervene.<sup>284</sup> Also on February 24, the Soviet Ambassador to Britain

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<sup>280</sup> Vaino Tanner, *The Winter War: Finland Against Russia, 1939-1940* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 149.

<sup>281</sup> *Ibid*, 153.

<sup>282</sup> Mannerheim, 282.

<sup>283</sup> Tanner, 153.

<sup>284</sup> Nevakivi, 121-2.

asked the Foreign Office to transmit the conditions of peace to Finland, although they were already known by the Finnish government. The Ambassador ominously warned that a refusal to do so might have an unexpected influence on their countries' relations.<sup>285</sup> Halifax refused and stated that the Foreign Office considered the terms unacceptable. Britain had no wish for Finland to pursue peace; yet rather than have the Finns find out after the war that Britain had withheld peace terms from them, Cabinet decided to tell Finland about the demarche but not to communicate the terms.<sup>286</sup>

In the meantime, the Foreign Office avoided releasing details of the planned intervention to the Finnish government. To Gripenberg, Halifax would only note that the implementation would depend upon "the general situation" and the position taken by Norway and Sweden. Cabinet authorized only vague replies to Finnish questions of the details of the intervention, and if Britain would guarantee Finland's territorial integrity. On February 26, Cabinet agreed to notify Finland that, "whereas it was impossible to guarantee anything, the Finnish Government could be sure that, if our two countries were both in the war together as Allies, we should do everything in our power to maintain the integrity of Finland, and that the whole resources of the British Empire would be exerted in the common struggle."<sup>287</sup> Gripenberg shared the apprehension of the Finnish government for the Allied proposal. Finland desperately needed external assistance but it was possible that Allied intervention would put Finland in an even worse position in the long term. If Finland became a major theatre of war, it faced the possibility that the Allies, who up to this point had demonstrated only timidity and indecision, would not intervene with sufficient strength or in time to provide effective assistance. The Allies had

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<sup>285</sup> Mannerheim, 383.

<sup>286</sup> W.M. (40) 52nd Conclusions, February 26, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/38, 1.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, 2.

ulterior motives for helping Finland, regardless of their expressed opinion that a Finnish defeat would be catastrophic for the principles they were fighting to preserve.

Mannerheim strongly recommended that Finland conclude peace with the Soviet Union while it still had an army and the threat of intervention to play as a trump card. If either of these advantages were lost by continuing the war, the possibility of attaining an acceptable peace would be significantly reduced; but first, the Finnish Cabinet preferred to assess the details of the intervention and determine whether the Allies could even get through to Finland across Norway and Sweden.<sup>288</sup> In a visit to Stockholm on February 27, Tanner tentatively asked about the possibility of Allied transit. He was told to expect no military aid, that Sweden would refuse to grant transit rights, and that if the Allies were to attempt passage without permission, Sweden would end up at war with both Finland and the Allies on the side of the Russians.<sup>289</sup>

On February 28, only a few hours before the Soviets delivered a peace ultimatum, the War Office corrected the statement made by Vereker and Ling. The Allies would not send 20,000 troops; rather, only 12,000-13,000 could be expected, and they would not reach Finland until the end of April. At the same time, both London and Paris put pressure on Finland not to accept the Soviet ultimatum. The French government communicated to Finland that if they accepted peace, the French would no longer offer assistance and would consider Finland as having moved over to the German side.<sup>290</sup> Daladier instructed the French envoy to exaggerate the size of the expeditionary force in order to force the Finns to ask for help, even though the French were not responsible for the military plans. He made the ridiculous promise that there would be

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<sup>288</sup> Mannerheim, 365.

<sup>289</sup> Nevakivi, 124.

<sup>290</sup> *Ibid*, 124.

50,000 men in Finland by the end of March to serve under Mannerheim in any area of Finland.<sup>291</sup> Daladier also pressured Britain to do more, saying that he would be forced to resign if the Allies could not intervene. Ironside wrote with disgust in his diary on March 11 that “they [the French] are absolutely unscrupulous in everything.”<sup>292</sup>

By March 1, the Finnish government felt that it had 24 hours to make a decision and wanted definite guarantees that Allied assistance would be substantial, arrive on time, and reach Finland regardless of Scandinavian attitudes.<sup>293</sup> Helsinki informed London that in order to make a decision, the Finnish government would have to know if the Allies could immediately dispatch 100 bombers. The British answer soon made it clear that they did not have 100 bombers to spare, which raised doubts about the capacity of the Allies to provide effective assistance. Halifax spoke in vague terms and gave misleading information to Gripenberg. He claimed that 50,000 troops could be sent over the period of two weeks and up to 13,000 could be in Finland by the end of March. When Gripenberg asked if the troops would be placed under Mannerheim’s command and allowed to operate in southern Finland, he replied ambiguously that the troops would be used wherever they were needed and “there is no British soldier who would not gladly serve under such a great soldier” as Field-Marshal Mannerheim.<sup>294</sup> In regards to the question of what the Allies would do if the Scandinavians refused to grant transit rights, Halifax stated non-specifically that, “the British and French governments will exert the strongest possible pressure

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<sup>291</sup> Gripenberg, 127.

<sup>292</sup> Ironside, 226.

<sup>293</sup> Munch-Petersen, 156.

<sup>294</sup> Gripenberg, 133.

upon the governments in Oslo and Stockholm. Even if they refuse, it does not necessarily mean that the Allies will abandon their plans to come to Finland's assistance."<sup>295</sup>

Even by March 4, London continued to give contradictory and unclear answers. The British government tried to pressure Finland to reject peace negotiations and continue fighting. Britain refused to release any bombers to Finland until it publically appealed for aid. The Defence Minister urged Finland not to begin negotiations and pointed out that if they sent bombers and Finland concluded peace, the British bombers would be wasted. If, however, a new Allied front was created in Finland, then Britain would naturally pour all its resources into the area. Despite London's best efforts to blackmail Finland, the dilemma for the Finns was that it could not continue fighting without bombers, and it would be foolish to appeal for help without a concrete guarantee that the Allies would provide substantial assistance. The Swedes in the meantime were desperate for Finland to conclude peace on any terms in order to keep the great power war out of Scandinavia.

By March 6, the Finnish government established contact with the Soviet government. Since Finnish interest in intervention plans was quickly fading, Finland would be willing to conclude peace if the terms were acceptable. If the demands were unacceptable, Finland would fight on. The Finnish government instructed Gripenberg to ask if the proposed appeal to the Allies could be made as late as March 12, so that the Finns could hear the terms and deliberate the wisest course of action. In a meeting with Halifax on March 7, Gripenberg explained the difficult situation of the Finnish government. The British government finally agreed to release 50 Blenheim bombers for immediate flight to Finland after Gripenberg assured Halifax that the

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<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*, 127.

planes might have the psychological impact necessary to convince the Finnish government to make the appeal.<sup>296</sup>

Two days later the British government revealed the planes would only be released on condition. The Foreign Office notified Helsinki that the British government had learned that the Finns were conducting peace negotiations with the Soviets. London issued an ultimatum: if the negotiations led to peace, Britain would have no objections; but if they did not, the British government would release the 50 Blenheim bombers. Eight bombers were ready to be flown to Finland four days after the Finnish government had appealed to the Allies for military aid. The remaining 42 would be sent within the next ten days. The Allies were willing to send an expeditionary force to Finland as long as a request was made by March 12.<sup>297</sup> They failed to appreciate the time pressure of the Finnish military condition. By February 16 the Red Army had broken through the first and major defence of the Mannerheim line and the second defence by February 29. By March 6 the Red Army had crossed the Finnish Gulf, cutting off Viipuri and the Finnish forces on the Karelian Peninsula. Given the urgency of Finland's situation, the British reply only demonstrated that they did not have the capacity to provide the aid Finland needed. The Finns were unconvinced that the Allies really intended to help or were even able to do so. The Finnish government gradually lost interest in Allied intervention. According to Gripenberg, after the British government communicated its ultimatum, "Finland's fate had been sealed."<sup>298</sup>

The War Cabinet appreciated the difficulty of the Finnish situation and on March 11 even agreed to issue a public statement to pressure Moscow to offer more lenient terms. Chamberlain

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<sup>296</sup> *ibid*, 134-5.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid*, 135.

<sup>298</sup> *ibid*, 136.

stated in the House of Commons that the Allies “are prepared, in response to an appeal from them for further aid, to proceed immediately and jointly to the help of Finland, using all available resources at their disposal.”<sup>299</sup> The statement did not contain any reference to the condition that the Scandinavians grant passage. Therefore, if the Finns asked for assistance, a Scandinavian refusal would present a potentially embarrassing situation; yet it would have appeared weak to publically state that Allied action depended on Scandinavian permission. In light of this problem, Chamberlain thought that if the Finns appealed it would be “fatal” to abandon the expedition simply because of a diplomatic refusal from the Scandinavians. “It would be said that we had never meant business at all,” he predicted, “and that our offer of assistance had been a mere sham.”<sup>300</sup> It is evident that, given the possible domestic repercussions that would follow inaction, Chamberlain was committed to carry out the intervention plans even in the face of limited Scandinavian resistance if the Finns appealed.

Churchill concurred. He believed that the Norwegians would not seriously oppose a landing if Britain tried to force its way in. The expedition leader could go ashore and inform the authorities of the Allies’ intention to land while in the meantime the troops could disembark. If the troops were opposed and the railways disabled, Britain would still be in possession of a useful harbour and could continue to try to persuade the Scandinavians to let the troops advance further; but in all likelihood, Churchill maintained, “it would be a matter for persuasion and cajolery.” If worst came to worst and the British could advance no further than Narvik, or even if

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<sup>299</sup> W.M. (40) 65th Conclusions, March 11, 1940, Confidential Annex, CAB 65/11/10, 12.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

they could not land, the blow to their prestige would be small compared a scenario where Britain abandoned the expedition altogether.<sup>301</sup>

Ironside agreed that the troops could easily disembark while the commander in charge argued with the port authorities. He suggested that Cabinet should leave it up to the commander to judge whether the opposition was serious enough to justify abandoning the project. The first move after embarking would be to seize the railway station and try to immediately move the troops up to the Swedish border. A simultaneous landing would be made at Trondheim, quite far from Finland, where the troops could immediately proceed since the port had easy access to roads, unlike Narvik. The expeditionary force was unlikely to meet with opposition if it used the element of surprise to disembark and take position while the Norwegians decided what action to take.<sup>302</sup> “I can see our big Scots Guards shouldering the sleepy Norwegians out of the way at 5 a.m. in the morning,” Ironside commented in his diary, “It seems inconceivable that the Norwegians should put up any resistance if they are in any way surprised.”<sup>303</sup>

Although in the end London finally decided to take action to aid Finland, the Finns concluded peace before British plans could unfold. The Finnish war offered the Allies a chance not only to take the initiative but to turn the tide of the war; yet the Chamberlain government failed to act in a timely manner even though reports from Finland made it clear that the window of opportunity was narrow. The War Cabinet never carried out its risky plans because of indecision, timidity, and hesitancy to act: characteristics the Chamberlain government consistently demonstrated. It constantly took the middle path and avoided decisions, which led to

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<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, 4-5.

<sup>302</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

<sup>303</sup> Ironside, 226.

endless debate and lack of direction in Cabinet. Ironside made the frustrated observation in his diary that “Our War Cabinet is quite incapable of running any strategy. None of them, except Winston, know anything about even elementary strategy. They are dilatory and will not take a decision. . . . I suppose it is the Prime Minister who is so unmilitary which is at the bottom of it all.”<sup>304</sup> On March 12 he complained that “Cabinet presented the picture of a bewildered flock of sheep faced by a problem they have consistently refused to consider. Their favourite formula is that the case is hypothetical and then they shy off a decision. I came away disgusted with them all.”<sup>305</sup>

British assistance was too little and too late. London realized the importance of impressing Sweden with the size and strength of the force intended for southern Sweden; yet Cabinet made the mistake of assuming that Finnish cooperation would be forthcoming no matter the size of the expeditionary force. When Finland was in crisis, Allied troops were too far off and their numbers too small to tempt Finland to accept Allied intervention. In the end the Finns were unnerved by Allied intervention because it promised to plunge Scandinavia into world war, in which the prospect of receiving sufficient external aid would be unlikely.

Though the world sympathized with Finland, and the western democracies were a major source of aid, it is clear that major differences in motivation existed between the democracies of the west. The United States, the most powerful neutral, had no strategic considerations at stake in Scandinavia. American aid was thus based entirely on sentiment. US aid did not amount to much, but pro-Finnish sentiments carried through until the end of the Second World War. British citizens, on the other hand, sympathized with Finland but were preoccupied with their own war.

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<sup>304</sup> *Ibid*, 210.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid*, 227.

They tended to view the Finnish war through the framework of the war with Germany. In contrast to American aid, British aid was motivated by political expediency and geopolitical considerations rather than sentiment. Token aid to Finland was unavoidable for London. The British public considered Finland to be an ally fighting for a common cause and the League of Nations mandate endorsed all free nations to send as much aid as possible. London could barely spare the resources but to ignore the conflict would have damaged morale at home and angered the sympathetic neutrals. As Britain sunk resources into Finland and the Finns held back the Russians, it became imperative to sustain Finland for the sake of Allied morale; public opinion would have seen a Finnish collapse as a major Allied defeat.

Above all, the most important reason for aid was the chance for a strategic initiative that the Finnish war offered the Allies in their war with Germany. Clearly this opportunity was the major goal. Aid to Finland was simply a pretext for the Allies to gain a strategic advantage over Germany. In the British plan to bring the war to Scandinavia, London attempted to exploit the neutrals in the national interests of Britain; and by pressuring Finland to reject the peace terms and continue fighting into March, the Allies intended to sacrifice Finland in order to gain a foothold in Scandinavia. However, as Gripenberg noted in his memoirs, “It was natural for the allied governments to look at the war in Finland primarily against the background of their own efforts to defeat Germany.”<sup>306</sup> Mannerheim likewise admitted that “Finland had no reason to take exception to these views,” because like Britain, Finland in turn had its own priority: to use the

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<sup>306</sup> Gripenberg, 104.

threat of intervention as a bargaining tool with Russia.<sup>307</sup> Sympathies aside, Britain and France had much more at stake than the independence of small powers.

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<sup>307</sup> Mannerheim, 375.

### **Chapter 3: The Aftermath of the Winter War**

London's tentative planning and hesitancy could not keep up to the pace of the Winter War. Britain's inability to reach a decision or offer serious aid to Finland disappointed the Scandinavian countries. After Finland concluded peace with the Soviet Union it thus outlived its usefulness to British war strategy. Britain discontinued trade with Finland, which forced Helsinki to reorient its economic policies to favour Germany. Furthermore, though the intervention plans were not timely enough or of sufficient strength to be of use to the Finns, London's designs did expose Norway to attack because it threatened German vital interests in Scandinavia. Inconceivably, British intelligence then failed to detect Germany's preparations for the invasion of Norway and Denmark. In the battle for Norway that followed, Britain proceeded to demonstrate military inadequacy, lack of imagination, and poor organization, though it had naval superiority and its invasion force had greater numbers. Instead of gaining a foothold in Norway and completing the economic blockade of Germany, Britain left Norway in the lurch, unable to provide them more than a thousand rifles.<sup>308</sup> The geopolitical shift left Finland caught between the great powers of Germany and the Soviet Union. After the Allied debacle in Norway, Finland's fate depended on future developments between Germany and the Soviet Union.

Traditionally, Finland was oriented toward the western democracies. Only months before reaching peace with Moscow it had firmly rejected German support. Although pro-German circles existed, especially within the military and upper ranks of Finnish society, the largest political party in Finland, the social democrats, had long been anti-fascist. The fascist Lapua

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<sup>308</sup> Nevakivi, 158.

Movement and its successor, the IKL, were unpopular. Helsinki had a record of opposition to Hitler and the Nazi regime, especially after the Molotov-Rippentrop pact. Prime Minister Risto Ryti was a well-known anglophile and Foreign Minister Vaino Tanner was notoriously anti-German.<sup>309</sup> Since its independence, Finland's defensive plans had been based upon the assumption that it could delay an aggressor state until external assistance could help defeat it, which Helsinki assumed would be the western democracies. The main potential danger was always the Soviet Union.<sup>310</sup> The Winter War shattered those illusions. In the first months of the war, Finland was left to fight on its own with only token gestures of aid from the Allies. Towards the end of the war the Allies demonstrated that they would assist Finland only so far as it would further their own interests.

Despite disappointment with the Allies, the feeling pervaded in Finland that Germany had sold them out to the Soviet Union in 1939. The indifference of the German press to the fate of Finland led Finns to resent Germany, and public opinion in Finland regarded Germany as an enemy: an ally of the Soviet Union.<sup>311</sup> The British minister in Helsinki claimed that "hatred of Germany" dominated Finnish sentiments.<sup>312</sup> Gripenberg reassured London in March 1940 that there were many reasons for the Finnish nation to dislike the Germans; and in regard to the German treatment of Finland in the Winter War the Finns "would never forgive the Germans."<sup>313</sup> Likewise the Finnish government and military command deeply resented Germany's position in the Winter War. The Finnish military was convinced that German officers directed the February

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<sup>309</sup> Anthony Upton, *Finland in Crisis* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964), 102.

<sup>310</sup> Nevakivi, 162.

<sup>311</sup> Waldemar Erfurth, *The Last Finnish War* (Washington: University Publications of America, Inc., 1979), 4.

<sup>312</sup> Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 221 (N 33/9/56), March 16, 1940, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, The Soviet Union and Finland, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States January 1940-December 1941, 401.

<sup>313</sup> *Ibid*, Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 34 (N 3838/3838/56), March 29, 1940, 439.

offensive on the Karelian Isthmus because the Soviet tactics corresponded to German drill patterns. In February, the Finns shot down a pilot without papers and with a German insignia in his breast pocket; in another instance, all that was found on a pilot were German cigarettes from a factory in Munich. Although his assumptions were false, Mannerheim took these anomalies as “concrete instances” that pointed to an even higher level of Soviet-German coordination than originally believed.<sup>314</sup>

In a meeting of the German Economic Policy Department in March 1940, the German Foreign Minister to Helsinki confirmed that the feelings of the Finnish government toward Germany were “decidedly unfriendly.” According to the Foreign Minister, Helsinki still pinned its hopes, as in the past, on the western powers. Finland would need to rely heavily on trading partners for its reconstruction. Though Germany wished to expand its economic relations with Finland, it expected that Britain would gladly strengthen its ties with Scandinavia by increasing its trade with Finland. The Germans believed that Finland would reject their proposals to expand their economic relationship in favour of increased trade with Britain.<sup>315</sup>

Finland did not expect or invite assistance from Germany. Even after the Allies failed to provide meaningful assistance in the Winter War, Finland continued to look to the democracies for arms and material support. In Finland’s pre-war trading economy, Britain was its principle partner, taking most of its exports and supplying the bulk of Finnish imports.<sup>316</sup> Helsinki believed that an Allied victory would inevitably restore its lost frontiers and remove the threat of Soviet aggression. Immediately after the Moscow Peace Treaty, Finland entered negotiations for

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<sup>314</sup> Ibid, Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 34 (N 3838/3838/56), March 29, 1940, 439

<sup>315</sup> Memorandum by an Official of the Economic Policy Department, No. 16 (2110/456728-32), March 28, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D (1937-1945) Volume IX, The War Years, March 18-June 22, 1940, Department of State (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1956), 32-33.

<sup>316</sup> Upton, 60.

a war trade agreement with Britain. Under the agreement, Britain would protect Finnish maritime trade, while Finland would limit its trade with Germany.<sup>317</sup> This agreement shows Finland's willingness to politically bind itself to the Allies. While Finland concluded the war trade agreement with Britain, Finnish-German trade remained virtually at a standstill.<sup>318</sup>

Finland desperately needed strong external economic support for reconstruction and to rebuild its defensive capabilities. The cessation of territory to the Soviet Union involved the immediate evacuation of 450,000 people into the new Finnish frontiers and the loss of some of Finland's best forests. Soviet air raids had destroyed hundreds of civilian houses and inflicted serious industrial damage. British Foreign Minister Vereker reported from Helsinki that "economic and social problems confronting the Finnish Government . . . are appalling in their magnitude" and pleaded with London to offer assistance.<sup>319</sup> Furthermore, despite the Moscow Peace Treaty, Helsinki remained suspicious of Moscow's encroachment on Finnish independence and set about re-establishing defensive lines. Security remained Finland's priority after the Winter War because Helsinki was even less inclined to trust the Soviet Union than it was before. The British legation in Helsinki reported in March 1940 that Finland feared that at any time it might once again be forced into a defensive war. The Finnish government believed that the Soviet Union's foreign policy was driven by territorial ambitions that stretched as far as the Atlantic, and that only the threat of Allied intervention won them peace.<sup>320</sup> In reality however, the Soviet goals were limited: Stalin sought to restore the territory of the Russian empire as it had been before 1914. This meant, however, the annexation of Finland. Gripenberg

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<sup>317</sup> Vehvilainen, 77.

<sup>318</sup> Monthly Report on Economic Conditions in Finland, March 1940, No. 47E (5402/3835/56), *B DFA*, 453, 460.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid*, Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 221 (N 33/9/56), March 16, 1940, 401.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid*, Monthly Report on Economic Conditions in Finland, March 1940, No. 47E (5402/3835/56), 453.

communicated to London that Helsinki considered the peace treaty no more than an “armed truce” since the Soviet Union did not achieve its war aims. At any moment the Finns might have to renew the struggle.<sup>321</sup>

The United States continued to aid Finland after the peace treaty, but its aid was ineffective in light of Finland’s tremendous need. The United States was simply too far removed geographically to do Finland any practical good as a trading partner. The Export-Import Bank’s loan of 20,000,000 was still in effect and since Finland resumed its neutral status after the peace treaty the United States allowed it to purchase surplus stock from U.S. arsenals.<sup>322</sup>

Unfortunately for Finland, London did not reciprocate Helsinki’s desire to expand the Anglo-Finnish relationship. After the Moscow Peace Treaty, Finnish importance in British policy rapidly shrank to pre-war proportions.<sup>323</sup> If Finland had been disappointed with Britain’s inability to supply arms and material in the Winter War, it was to be far more disappointed by the lack of British support after the peace. Even before the German occupation of Norway, Britain abandoned Finland despite clear warnings that if it left Finland isolated the Finns might very well have to turn to Germany for support. Only days after the peace treaty, the British commercial secretary in Helsinki, E.R. Lingeman, reported that the Finnish economy would have to lean increasingly on the Germans “in spite of hatred for Germany” if the Allies did not support it after the peace. He warned London that the Finnish attitude toward Germany would be dictated by Allied policy toward Finland.<sup>324</sup> On April 5, Lingeman confirmed that if big power politics

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<sup>321</sup> WM (40) 69th Conclusions, March 15, 1940, CAB 65/6, 106.

<sup>322</sup> Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 41 (N 5427/446/56), April 5, 1940, *B DFA*, 452.

<sup>323</sup> Nevakivi, 150.

<sup>324</sup> Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 221 (N 33/9/56), March 16, 1940, *B DFA*, 401.

had closed the British market to Finland, Britain could not expect Finland to keep the status quo in its relationship with Germany.<sup>325</sup>

After the conclusion of peace, London immediately forbade the delivery of war material to Finland. The Foreign Office asked that not only the goods en route to Finland but also the goods already delivered to Finland be returned.<sup>326</sup> The Finnish legation in London protested vigorously since the goods had already been purchased and were now legally the property of the Finnish government.<sup>327</sup> Under the arrangements, the material technically became the property of Finland at the port of loading.<sup>328</sup> Britain eventually decided to drop its demand for material already in Finland to be returned, but only after the German invasion of Norway closed shipping routes. At least four ships destined for Finland were unloaded in Allied ports.<sup>329</sup>

Now that Finland could no longer be used as a stepping stone to Scandinavia, London turned its attention to Norway and Sweden in an attempt to keep the plans for Narvik alive by offering British protection to the Scandinavians against Russia.<sup>330</sup> “Our real objective was, of course, to secure possession of the Galivare ore fields,” confirmed Churchill to Cabinet on March 14. “Up till now we had had assistance to Finland as ‘cover’ for such a move on our part.”<sup>331</sup> As far as Churchill was concerned, Britain’s only interest now in Scandinavia was to exploit the threat of continued Russian aggression to manipulate Norway and Sweden. The official resolution eventually read, “Although it was undesirable to hurt the feelings of Finland, it

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<sup>325</sup> Ibid, Memorandum by the Commercial Secretary, No. 40 E, 449.

<sup>326</sup> Nevakivi, 148.

<sup>327</sup> Gripenberg, 144.

<sup>328</sup> WM (40) 68th Conclusions, March 14, 1940, CAB 65/6, 100.

<sup>329</sup> Nevakivi, 148.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid, 149.

<sup>331</sup> WM (40) 68th Conclusions, Confidential Annex, March 15, 1940, CAB 65/12/12, 1-2.

would be foolish to supply her with any further equipment. . . . We should be receiving heavy demands from Norway, which we should rather meet.”<sup>332</sup>

The German High Command would have preferred to keep the status quo in Scandinavia. Scandinavian neutrality was advantageous to Germany because it maintained essential ore traffic without overextending German resources. In September 1939 the British Chiefs of Staff felt that “it seems unlikely that Germany will initiate any attack on Norway except by way of reprisal and even then only if Norwegian neutrality were to assume such a degree of benevolence towards the Allies as to interfere with iron ore supplies.”<sup>333</sup> What could not be permitted, however, was the occupation of Norway by Britain, which Germany was prepared to prevent at all costs.<sup>334</sup> British plans to close off Swedish ore to Germany clearly jeopardized German interests enough to provoke decisive action, but London’s incompetence, hesitancy, and halfway measures virtually guaranteed that it would be impotent to prevent a German invasion of Scandinavia. London’s provocative behavior and unwillingness to commit was a dangerous combination that proved fatal for Scandinavia. German intelligence was aware that the Winter War and the League of Nations’ resolution gave the Allies an ideal pretext to disrupt ore traffic from Scandinavia. By opening Norway to attack, British war policy indirectly led to the geopolitical isolation of Finland. Thus Britain directly sped up the process which forced Finland into co-belligerency with Germany.

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<sup>332</sup> WM (40) 93rd Conclusions, April 15, 1940, CAB 65/6, 329.

<sup>333</sup> Butler, 148.

<sup>334</sup> *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs 1940*, Germany, Kriegsmarine (Great Britain: Admiralty, 1947), 13.

Moved by apprehension over British designs, Hitler ordered initial planning to commence for the invasion of Norway in December 1939.<sup>335</sup> On February 15, 1940 the Royal Navy boarded the *Altmark*, a German supply ship known to be carrying British prisoners, in Norwegian territorial waters. The Germans reasoned that if the British were prepared to violate Norwegian neutrality to rescue a few hundred prisoners then they would be all the more prepared to take similar measures to cut off vital supplies of German ore. After the *Altmark* incident, the German High Command drastically hastened its preparations for occupying Norway.<sup>336</sup>

London was entirely prepared to accept the risk of German reprisals against the Scandinavian neutrals; but it was less prepared to thwart a German attack, although it assured the Norwegians that it would regard an attack on Norway as tantamount to an attack on Britain.<sup>337</sup> London was well aware of the danger of a German attack on Norway but hesitancy and poor decision-making of the Supreme War Council delayed preventative action until too late. Immediately after the conclusion of peace in March, Churchill suggested to the War Cabinet that the Allies occupy Narvik without the pretext of helping Finland. The German High Command feared that once in Norway, the British, with its naval superiority, would be impossible to drive out.<sup>338</sup> Cabinet, however, thought that it would be politically disastrous to violate Norwegian neutrality in such a way. In a meeting of the Supreme War Council, the French urged Britain to occupy Norwegian ports and eventually agreed to mine German inland waterways, but then lost its nerve due to fear of German reprisals.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>335</sup> Butler, 114.

<sup>336</sup> *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs 1940*, 10.

<sup>337</sup> Butler, 148.

<sup>338</sup> *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs 1940*, 13.

<sup>339</sup> Ironside, 228-30.

Eventually the Supreme War Council, gingerly and belatedly, decided to take the step of mining the coastal waters of Norway 25 days after the peace of Moscow.<sup>340</sup> After laying the mines, London would prepare an invasion force and await the German response. If the Germans invaded Scandinavia, or were clearly about to do so, the Allies would then have the political justification to dispatch their force to Narvik, Trondheim, and Bergen.<sup>341</sup> Churchill optimistically felt that a German attack would be advantageous because it would justify Allied intervention in Scandinavia and put the neutrals squarely on the side of the Allies. The Allies could then apply their “overwhelming sea power” to quickly “liquidate them in a week or two.”<sup>342</sup>

Unlike the Allies, the Germans were not willing to allow the enemy to make the first move and gain the strategic advantage. Germany gave no thought to the political considerations of the Scandinavian neutrals and was thus better prepared to face the realities of war. By the morning of April 9, the Allied governments realized they had delayed too long, and that German movement had preceded a full scale invasion of Norway. Germany occupied Narvik, Trondheim, Bergen, and Stravanger, as well as Denmark.<sup>343</sup> The Allies immediately launched their chaotic Norwegian expedition with orders for naval forces to push their way into Narvik and Bergen, while Trondheim was to be left alone.<sup>344</sup> In the debacle that followed, constant political intervention in military decisions, changes of plan, and unpreparedness for the winter conditions virtually guaranteed the failure of the Allied operations.

Instead of gaining a foothold in Scandinavia and cutting Germany off from its vital resources, Britain provoked an attack that it was unable to counter because it was too weak,

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<sup>340</sup> Nevakivi, 153.

<sup>341</sup> Ironside, 245.

<sup>342</sup> WM (40) 86th Conclusions, April 9, 1940, CAB 65/6, 261.

<sup>343</sup> Butler, 126.

<sup>344</sup> WM (40) 86th Conclusions, April 9, 1940, CAB 65/6, 261.

indecisive, and unorganized. Britain's evacuation left Norway to its own defences. As far as Finland was concerned, the British failure in Norway led to its isolation between Germany and the Soviet Union.<sup>345</sup> Any country that controlled Norway would have the key position to control all trade in the Baltic Sea and the North Sea.<sup>346</sup> Petsamo was the only port left that gave Finland access to Britain and France, but Britain had cut all trade and traffic communications with Scandinavia and renounced its war trade agreement with Finland. The Norway campaign broke nearly all connections with Britain. Pro-British orientation was no longer an option if Finland wished to ensure its security and foreign trade.<sup>347</sup>

For Finland, Germany was the only remaining option to ensure its security. Finland exhausted all other possibilities. The Allies were no longer interested in Finland after the Winter War and their war policies had led to German occupation of Norway. Even though Finland had sought to strengthen its ties with Britain and France after the Winter War, it had pursued other alternatives as well. Before Germany took Norway, Finland's hope lay in a Scandinavian defensive alliance. Britain and France had offered no practical help in the Winter War and the United States was too remote to offer security. A Scandinavian defensive alliance was perhaps the best chance for Finland to remain outside the European war and guarantee its security against the Soviet Union. Immediately after Finland concluded peace with the Soviet Union, it entered negotiations for the proposed alliance with Sweden and Norway. The Scandinavians welcomed the alliance on the condition that the terms guaranteed that members of the alliance would not be endangered by another member following a policy of adventure. In other words, the treaty would

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<sup>345</sup> Nevakivi, 158.

<sup>346</sup> *Fuehrer Conferences on Naval Affairs, 1939*, Germany, Kriegsmarine (Great Britain: Admiralty, 1947), 56.

<sup>347</sup> Vehvilainen, 78.

be strictly defensive.<sup>348</sup> However, the Soviet Union disapproved of the proposal and the German occupation of Norway made such an alliance impossible.

Helsinki did not need to be pro-German to realize that rapprochement with Germany was in Finland's best national interests. Sweden was weak and Europe was divided; Germany was the only power capable of giving Finland security against the Soviet Union.<sup>349</sup> The logic of events and the political realism with which Finland approached geopolitical developments virtually predetermined that Finland would seek German security against further advances of the Soviet Union. Given the geographic position of Finland, after Germany invaded Norway Finland's fate became tied to the future developments between the great powers of the Soviet Union and Germany.<sup>350</sup> German-Finnish trade negotiations began even before the campaign in Norway was settled. With Finland's principle trading partner out of the picture, Finland would need to rely heavily on trade with Germany. In the Second World War, trade and politics were closely interdependent and Finland was brought into Germany's economic sphere. In June 1940 Finland concluded trade agreements with Germany after having to confess that the orientation of Finnish trade toward the western democracies had been a mistake.<sup>351</sup>

Finnish historians and apologists of Finnish war policy have long argued over the degree to which Finland was responsible for its co-belligerence with Germany: did Finland gamble by choosing what it perceived to be the winning side in 1940-1941, as Anthony Upton suggested, or was it simply swept along by international events, as orthodox Finnish historians such as John

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<sup>348</sup> Upton, 51.

<sup>349</sup> Berry, 94.

<sup>350</sup> Upton, 102.

<sup>351</sup> Vehvilainen, 78.

Wuorinen have maintained?<sup>352</sup> This debate has largely centred around questions of when and if Finland knew of German invasion plans for the Soviet Union, and if it participated in a defensive ‘continuation’ war or a war of revenge. However, the events and geopolitical shift after the peace of Moscow constitute the major turning point in Finland’s international orientation. Finland shared values with the democratic west and disdain for Nazism, and was determined to strengthen Finnish-Anglo relations after the war as a means of security against the Soviet Union. London, on the other hand, felt that Finland had outlived its usefulness. At the same time, Finland enthusiastically pursued a Scandinavian defensive alliance to maintain its neutrality and secure its continued independence. The attack on Norway that the Allies provoked ended Finnish trade with them, the corollary of which was increased trade with Germany. It also removed the Allies as an option for security against the USSR. Therefore, Allied war policy directly and indirectly fed the process that led to Finland’s co-belligerency with Germany. Since the defensive alliance had failed, Finland logically sought rapprochement with the only remaining power that could guarantee its security. It was not so much a matter of choice as a logical response to developments in the international situation. Since national security was Finland’s highest priority, political realism compelled Finland to look for security from the only remaining option in 1940-1941.

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<sup>352</sup> Upton; John H. Wuorinen, *A History of Finland* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965).

## **Chapter 4:**

### **Co-belligerency with Germany**

The Allied evacuation of Norway in the spring of 1940 marked the beginning of a geopolitical shift that placed Finland squarely between the totalitarian giants of Germany and the Soviet Union. As Finnish-Soviet relations once again unravelled, it was Germany, not the democracies of the west, which was in a position to assist Finland – and to exploit Finland’s situation for its own purposes. After Germany occupied Norway, the Soviet Union’s security requirements increased dramatically; it consequently stepped up its post-treaty demands on Finland. Ever suspicious of its heavy-handed eastern neighbour, the Finns stubbornly resisted Soviet demands. By the fall of 1940 Stalin’s best security option was to settle the Finnish question in the same fashion he had attempted 1939. The difference in the fall of 1940 was that Finland was able to use Germany as leverage to safeguard its independence and a Soviet invasion of Finnish territory was forestalled – but only temporarily.

Finland proved in 1939-1940 that it would fight, alone if necessary, to maintain its independence. It is therefore logical that Finland chose to retaliate against the Soviet Union as a co-belligerent of Germany; yet this action undermined Finland’s traditionally good relations with the western democracies. Although the patterns of behaviour between the Soviet Union and Finland bear a stark resemblance to the prelude to the Winter War, the international realignment of 1940-1941 ultimately led to a reversal of relations with the democracies, where Finland had found so much sympathy for its cause in 1939-1940.

In the summer of 1940, Finnish-Soviet relations quickly deteriorated as Moscow increased its security demands and Finland refused to satisfy them. “The Soviet government,”

explains Jukka Nevakivi, “saw no need to handle Finland with kid gloves after having mangled it with a mailed fist.”<sup>353</sup> Following the Peace of Moscow and Germany’s occupation of Norway, Soviet policy toward Finland fell into the same pattern of behaviour that led up to the Winter War. What the Finnish government failed to comprehend was that Moscow was not worried about the likelihood of Finnish aggression, but of a third power using Finland as a base of operations against Leningrad, with or without Finnish consent. The Peace of Moscow reflected the security needs of 1939. After Germany occupied Norway in the spring of 1940, Leningrad was even more vulnerable to invasion than before. With German victories in the west and the fall of France in the summer of 1940, the Soviet Union’s security needs grew exponentially.<sup>354</sup>

However, Finland stubbornly resisted Soviet demands. The peace treaty left Finland with a sense of isolation and insecurity, and naturally Helsinki was even more suspicious of Soviet intentions than in 1939. Finnish suspicions were confirmed when the Soviet Union obstructed Finnish plans for a Finnish-Swedish defensive alliance. Over the course of 1940 Moscow also demanded that Finland demilitarize the Aland Islands; turn over the Petsamo nickel mines to Soviet control; and cede control of Hanko, a port city on the southern coast of Finland, and to give the Soviets access to it by railway.<sup>355</sup> Moscow also aroused Finnish concern when it turned an autonomous Soviet republic of Karelia into the Karel-Finn Republic that included, along with Soviet lands, the Karelian Isthmus annexed from Finland after the Winter War. The new republic was to be headed by Otto Kuusinen, the former head of a puppet government the Soviet Union had fruitlessly attempted to set up in Finland during the Winter War. The Finns had looked on with anxiety as the Soviet Union used the same methods for the reincorporation of Moldova,

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<sup>353</sup> Nevakivi, 159.

<sup>354</sup> Max Jakobson, *Finnish Neutrality*, (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1968), 15.

<sup>355</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

annexed from Russia by Romania in 1918: the Soviets first created the Moldovan Autonomous Republic within Ukraine in 1924 and then demanded in July 1940 that Romania cede Moldova to the Soviet Union, citing the ethnic unification principle as the basis for the demand. Helsinki drew the obvious conclusion that the Karel-Finn Republic would serve the same purpose.<sup>356</sup>

The apprehension with which Finland viewed the ever-increasing Soviet demands was heightened by a Soviet attack on the Finnish passenger plane *Kaleva*. Tension grew between the two countries when on June 14 the plane was shot down on its routine passage from Tallinn to Helsinki by two Soviet aircraft. The Finnish pilot and crew, as well as all passengers were killed. The target of the attack was a French diplomatic messenger whose bag was recovered by a Russian submarine. Finland was pressured to refrain from protests or demands for compensation and officially attributed the loss of the plane to unknown causes.<sup>357</sup>

Since Hitler's penchant for eastern expansion was no secret, Stalin probably concluded that after the fall of France, Russia was now more vulnerable to German designs. At the very least he was certainly alarmed by Germany's new advantage in strength, with continental Europe at its disposal. Therefore in the summer of 1940 it was the obvious move for the Soviet Union to strengthen its perimeters.<sup>358</sup> The mutual assistance treaties made with the Baltic states in 1939 still guaranteed their own sovereignty, although these states were hostile to Moscow. On June 14, the Soviet Union offered Lithuania an ultimatum. It accused the Lithuanian government of hostile acts and conspiring against the USSR, and demanded that Lithuania allow Moscow to

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<sup>356</sup> Upton, 87.

<sup>357</sup> Mannerheim, 397.

<sup>358</sup> Upton, 104.

restructure its government. Lithuania complied and was occupied on June 15.<sup>359</sup> Estonia and Latvia were soon occupied in similar fashion. According to the later account of Lithuanian Prime Minister Kreve-Mickevicius, Molotov stated that “You must be realistic enough to understand that in the future small states will disappear. Your Lithuania together with the other Baltic states, including Finland, will be included within the honourable family of Soviet peoples.”<sup>360</sup>

In the Baltic republics, waves of Soviet propaganda and Soviet-organized left-wing political demonstrations preceded each annexation.<sup>361</sup> Although Finland had already leased Hanko to the Soviet Union in response to pressure, Helsinki worried that the entirety of Finland might be next. Meanwhile the Soviet-sponsored leftist group SNS – or the Finnish-Soviet peace and friendship society – rapidly escalated its propaganda and political activity. On June 25, when a Russo-Finnish trade agreement was due to be signed, Moscow abruptly informed the Finnish delegation that the agreement must be postponed. The following day the SNS released a statement echoing the demands and accusations previously directed at the Baltic republics.<sup>362</sup> On July 27, the German ambassador in Moscow reported that “The Soviet attitude toward Finland is characterized by the fact that the Soviet Government keeps Finland under pressure with ever new demands.” He also warned that “the further intentions of the Soviet Government are wholly obscure.”<sup>363</sup>

The activities of the SNS became increasingly alarming. The American minister in Helsinki warned Washington that the activity and propaganda of the SNS might indicate

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid, 105.

<sup>360</sup> Vehvilainen, 79.

<sup>361</sup> Upton, 105.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid, 107.

<sup>363</sup> The Ambassador in the Soviet Union to the Foreign Ministry, No. 242, B19/B003668, Moscow, July 27, 1940, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, Series D, Volume X, The War Years June 23-August 31, 1940 (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1957), 331.

renewed Soviet aggression.<sup>364</sup> In late July, Molotov demanded that Tanner resign and the SNS be granted a free hand to carry out its activity unopposed.<sup>365</sup> On July 25 the British minister in Helsinki, Gordon Vereker, expressed his concern to London over what was coming next now that Soviet-sponsored groups were agitating Finnish society and that the Soviets had pressured the Finns to permit it.<sup>366</sup> In a speech to the Seventh Session of the Supreme Soviet on the annexation of the Baltic States on August 1, Molotov warned that “if certain elements in Finnish ruling circles do not cease their persecution of those elements in Finland which are trying to strengthen good-neighbourly relations with the USSR, then our relations with Finland may suffer.”<sup>367</sup>

In early August, Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel in Germany received reports that Soviet troops had moved adjacent to the Finnish border. On August 10 he indicated his concern that a new Russo-Finnish war was a very real danger.<sup>368</sup> Western observers also saw cause for alarm. The British minister in Moscow warned London that Molotov’s references to Finland were “very foreboding.”<sup>369</sup> London expected that the Soviet Union would annex Finland as it did with the Baltic states as soon as Germany was distracted in the west.<sup>370</sup> On August 7, H.F. Arthur Schoenfeld, the American minister in Helsinki telegraphed Secretary Hull to query whether the recent Soviet activity regarding Finnish affairs was similar enough to those preceding annexation

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<sup>364</sup> The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State, 860D.00B/214, Helsinki, August 3, 1940, *FRUS*, 1941, Volume 1 (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1958), 337.

<sup>365</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>366</sup> Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 71 (N 4816/446/56), Helsingfors, July 25, 1940, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 105.

<sup>367</sup> Jane Degras, ed., *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*, Volume III, 1933-1941 (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), 466.

<sup>368</sup> Memorandum by the State Secretary No. 325 (B19/B003695), Berlin, August 10, 1940, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, 460.

<sup>369</sup> S. Cripps to Viscount Halifax, No. 558 (N 6047/1/56), Moscow, August 2, 1940, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 106.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 76 (N 6303/1/56), Helsingfors, August 6, 1940, 107.

of the Baltic countries to warrant the belief that the Soviets harboured similar intentions with regard to Finland.<sup>371</sup> When Hull forwarded Schoenfeld's concerns to the legation in Moscow, the minister replied that based on recent troop movements and the fact that every instance of Soviet aggression had been preceded by propaganda and Soviet press campaigns, "the present campaign against Finland should be regarded as ominous."<sup>372</sup>

German intervention temporarily saved Finland from another war with the Soviet Union. In Moscow, the British legation had admitted that since Finland was isolated, its fate would ultimately be determined by how much leverage Helsinki could get from Germany.<sup>373</sup> Until mid-August Germany had ignored Finland's attempts at rapprochement intended to secure its safety. When all signs seemed to point toward renewed Soviet aggression, Keitel suggested that some word of warning be issued to the Soviet Union.<sup>374</sup> According to the diary of General Franz Halder, Hitler changed his mind about Finland because of the immediacy of the Soviet threat to Finland. Since Helsinki was now under so much pressure that it would likely make any concession in return for German protection, Hitler decided that Germany would immediately agree to the sale of weapons to Finland in exchange for transit rights for German troops.<sup>375</sup>

For Helsinki, the presence of German troops on Finnish territory was a small price to pay to avert renewed Soviet aggression. In a visit to Berlin in November, Molotov confirmed Moscow's intentions for Finland when he brought up the "Finnish question." He asserted several

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<sup>371</sup> Ibid, The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (860E.00B/217), Helsinki, August 7, 1940, 338.

<sup>372</sup> Ibid, The Charge in the Soviet Union to the Secretary of State (860D.00B/219), Moscow, August 8, 1940, 338.

<sup>373</sup> S. Cripps to Viscount Halifax, No. 510 (N 6047/1/56), Moscow, July 24, 1940, *BDF*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 106.

<sup>374</sup> Memorandum by the State Secretary No. 325 (B19/B003695), Berlin, August 10, 1940, *Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918-1945*, 460.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, Memorandum by an Official of the Economic Policy Department, No. 366 (F18/108-110), Berlin, August 19, 1940, 512; *The Halder War Diary 1939-1942* (USA: Presidio Press, 1988), 245, 251.

times during his meeting with Hitler that the Finnish question was yet “unsolved” and that Stalin would like to rectify the situation with Finland along the lines of the secret protocol in the non-aggression pact of 1939; he essentially asked Hitler for a free hand in the Baltic to bring Finland under Soviet dominance. Hitler firmly replied that the geopolitical situation had changed. Germany had secured its sphere of influence but the Soviet Union had failed. Since Germany was currently dependent on Finnish nickel, it was now too late to fix that mistake and Germany would not tolerate another Soviet war with Finland under any circumstances.<sup>376</sup>

The German presence in Finland in the fall of 1940 strained relations with Britain. Beginning as early as July, the British had interfered with Finnish shipping traffic in answer to increased trade with Germany. The Royal Navy illegally seized vessels and confiscated goods. Only after American pressure did Britain agree to grant navicerts to Finnish shipping.<sup>377</sup> After the transit agreement with Germany, the British Foreign Office adopted an indignant stance toward Finland. On September 25, Halifax demanded that the British minister in Helsinki issue a formal complaint against Finland because it had granted concessions, “which amounts to direct assistance,” to an enemy of Britain.<sup>378</sup> On October 6, Halifax explained that London was outraged at Finland’s lack of “gratitude” for British help in the Winter War and condemned Finland’s economic policy, despite Britain’s contraband policy and Finland’s lack of alternative

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<sup>376</sup> Memorandum of the Conversation Between the Fuhrer and the Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, in the Presence of the Reich Foreign Minister, the Deputy People’s Commissar, Dekanosov, as Well as of Counselor of Embassy Hilger and Herr Pavlov, Who Acted as Interpreters, on November 13, 1940 (Fuh. 33/40), *Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office*, Department of State, United States of America, 1948, 234-236.

<sup>377</sup> H. Peter Krosby, *Finland, Germany, and the Soviet Union, 1940-1941* (United States: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 51.

<sup>378</sup> Viscount Halifax to Mr. Vereker, No. 524 (N 6695/6683/63), Foreign Office, September 25, 1940, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 113.

trade partners. The “Finnish Government,” he concluded, “had sold their soul to the devil and had not even got a price for it.”<sup>379</sup>

Minister Vereker, however, reminded Halifax that the evacuation of Norway was an indication that “we were abandoning northern countries to their fate.”<sup>380</sup> London “would prefer to see Finland absorbed by Russia to seeing her help the German war effort in the slightest degree.” However, Finland “cannot be gainsaid the right to seek means of keeping herself alive and free.”<sup>381</sup> Vereker tactfully pointed out that it would be unfair to forget that British policy “may have contributed to drive Finland into the arms of Germany, and that drowning men are apt to clutch at straws. Once we force Finns into making a pact with the devil,” he continued, “it would be invidious to complain that they are coming off second best, seeing that the devil is not easy person to deal with.”<sup>382</sup> He concluded by stating “I defy any country in Finland’s position not to make some attempt to trim its sail according to the wind.”<sup>383</sup>

War was not in Finnish interests. A country of three and a half million does not welcome involvement in great power contests, especially after the devastation so recently suffered in the Winter War. According to the British legation in Stockholm, by the fall of 1940 Helsinki was so desperate to avoid war that in December 1940 it suggested to Sweden that Finland surrender itself to Sweden as a vassal state, in order to enhance its security against Russia and avoid entanglement in a great power war.<sup>384</sup> Both Germany and the Soviet Union opposed the negotiations. In the end Helsinki used Germany as its only available leverage in the fall of 1940

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<sup>379</sup> Ibid, Viscount Halifax to Mr. Vereker, No. 536 (N 6718/6683/63), Foreign Office, October 6, 1940, 114.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid, Mr. Vereker to Viscount Halifax, No. 834 (N 6776/6683/63), Helsingfors, October 9, 1940, 115.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>382</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid, 115.

<sup>384</sup> Mr. Mallet to Mr. Eden, No. 262, N 3945/59/56, Stockholm, July 19, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 229.

to ward off further Soviet aggression; yet the reason for Germany's interest was to exploit the Finnish position in a war of aggression against the Soviet Union. As early as July 21, 1940, during the preliminary studies for a Russian campaign, Halder recognized that Germany could easily exploit Finland's position to draw it into the war on the German side. Hitler too, by the end of July, acknowledged that Finland must be brought in.<sup>385</sup>

The Germans did not inform Finland of the active role that they planned to assign to the Finnish Army in Operation Barbarossa until very late. Apparently, the Germans simply assumed that Finland would participate. German reasoning is not difficult to decipher: Finland could not simultaneously avoid war and maintain its independence. Since it had already proved willing to resort to war to safeguard its independence, even against overwhelming odds, it was safe to assume that Finland would not forfeit its independence without a fight. The Soviet Union had already hinted of its intention to occupy Finland: geographically, Finland was simply too close to Leningrad.

In the event of war, the Soviet Union would certainly attack and seek to occupy Finland because it currently granted passage to German troops and could be used as a base to move against Murmansk and Leningrad. There was no chance for Finland to remain neutral because it would either be occupied by Germany or the Soviet Union. If Finland refused to fight the Soviet Union and renounced the German Transit Treaty, it would have led to a conflict with Germany and placed Finland's fate in Soviet hands.<sup>386</sup> Furthermore, Germany was in a position to either starve the Finns into obedience or simply occupy Finland. In the fall of 1939 Stalin had reportedly told the Finnish delegation, "I well understand that you wish to remain neutral, but I

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<sup>385</sup> Upton, 117.

<sup>386</sup> Mannerheim, 409.

can assure you that it is not possible. The Great Powers will simply not allow it.”<sup>387</sup> After the Winter War Mannerheim believed that the only hope Finland had of remaining outside a great power conflict was a Scandinavian alliance. By March 1941 the British legation in Helsinki reported that the widespread Finnish desire to be left in peace to reconstruct a shattered national life was “pathetic but hopeful.”<sup>388</sup> Neutrality was never a realistic option. Finland had little room to manoeuvre, and its involvement in the war was more or less a foregone conclusion.

In the prelude to Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, Germany had only obliquely warned Finland of the possibility of its involvement in a future war. The Germans simply worked under the assumption that the international situation would leave the Finns no choice but to participate in the war. Until April 28, the Germans had not even planned how and where to initiate the Finns. Prior to the invasion, the Germans led the Finns to believe that war was yet improbable and a negotiated settlement benefitting Finland was to be the most likely outcome.<sup>389</sup> The German ambassador, Waldemar Blucher, expressed worry that perhaps his government’s efforts to persuade Helsinki that war was not an imminent danger were too effective. Finland was making no preparations for war, no plans for a shelter program, evacuation of Helsinki, or the buildup of essential supplies.<sup>390</sup>

On May 20 a Finnish delegation led by General Erik Heinrichs met with German officers to discuss the actions that would be taken if the Soviet Union attacked Finland. Not until the negotiations of May 25-26 did Finland know that it was expected to take part in a war of

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid, 409.

<sup>388</sup> Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 40 (N 1552/2/56), Helsingfors, March 25, 1941, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 215.

<sup>389</sup> Krosby, 170-171.

<sup>390</sup> Upton, 250.

aggression. Even in these negotiations the Germans framed war as only a vague possibility.<sup>391</sup> Berlin insisted to President Ryti that negotiations were underway and asked for a minimum and a maximum program of Finnish requests. The least that Finland wanted was a guarantee of independence and a few minor concessions from Moscow, including deliveries of grain. Its maximum program asked for a return of the 1939 frontiers with certain adjustments in the interest of Leningrad's security. Helsinki, like the rest of the world, believed that such negotiations were in progress and the deception of Finland was kept up until at least June 10.<sup>392</sup>

Although the Germans framed their proposals on a 'just in case' basis, there can be no doubt of the tacit cooperation of the Finns. In negotiations with German military leaders in Helsinki on June 3, the Finns agreed to a general arrangement for the arrival of German troops in Finland, Finnish mobilization and the division of operations between Germany and Finland. However, Finland was unprepared for an open war of aggression and it made this stipulation abundantly clear to Germany.<sup>393</sup> By June 11, only days before Operation Barbarossa, Berlin informed Finland that they had no intention of seeking a peaceful solution with the Soviet Union and the Finns were told to mobilize on June 16.<sup>394</sup>

The German invasion put the Finns in an awkward position. The Soviet Union was a genuine threat to Finland's existence and Finland would have already been at war had not Germany intervened. Furthermore, Germany had the leverage to either occupy Finland or force it into war. On the morning of June 22, Hitler's statement on German radio that German troops were protecting Finnish territory in alliance with Finnish forces complicated the Finnish position

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<sup>391</sup> Vehvilainen, 87.

<sup>392</sup> Upton, 255.

<sup>393</sup> Vehvilainen, 87.

<sup>394</sup> Upton, 270.

further.<sup>395</sup> The Finnish government stated that Finland was not at war. On June 23, Helsinki instructed Gripenberg to inform London that Finland had not taken offensive action and would not do so, although the Soviets had already attacked the island port of Kokat and two Finnish warships.<sup>396</sup> On June 24 the Soviet Foreign Office accused Finland of an unprovoked attack on Russia. Moscow threatened that it would not be forgotten and would be avenged by 200 million Russians at a future date.<sup>397</sup> Much like the prelude to the Winter War, Moscow followed its false allegations with an attack. Soviet aircraft indiscriminately bombed civilian objectives and on June 25 the Finns shot down 23 aircraft over Finland amid considerable damage.<sup>398</sup> On the same day, the Soviet Union announced the commencement of hostilities with Finland.<sup>399</sup>

Historians have long disputed the degree to which Finland was complicit in a war of aggression on the Soviet Union. The orthodox Finnish interpretation claims Finnish innocence and German manipulation. In his memoirs, Mannerheim claims that Hitler's statement was made to induce the Soviet Union to attack Finland and thereby force it into war. John Wuorinen and Waldemar Erfurth have argued that Finland was simply swept along by the international situation and had little or no knowledge of German invasion plans. After the 1960s, historians focused on the active role that Finland played to 'choose' Germany, or what Otto Vehvilainen

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<sup>395</sup> Vehvilainen, 88.

<sup>396</sup> Mr. Eden to Mr. Vereker, No. 37 (N 3070/201/56), Foreign Office, June 23, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 225.

<sup>397</sup> The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (1939/12467), Helsinki, June 25, 1941, *FRUS*, 1941, Volume 1, 42.

<sup>398</sup> Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 107 (N 3874/202/56), Helsingfors, July 1, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 228.

<sup>399</sup> Vehvilainen, 88.

calls “Finland’s decision to throw its lot in with Germany.”<sup>400</sup> Some have even suggested that Finland saw the opportunity to pursue a war of revenge against the Soviet Union.

However, with little room to navigate the affairs of great powers, Finland’s real choice was to preserve its independence at all costs. Finland was isolated from all but Germany and the Soviet Union after Britain evacuated Norway; Soviet advances in the summer and fall of 1940 clearly demonstrated Moscow’s intent to annex Finland, which Soviet-German negotiations later proved; and after using German leverage to hold off Soviet aggression, Finland’s fate was effectively tied to the future relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. If there was to be war between the two totalitarian giants, Finland would either enter the war to preserve its independence or surrender itself to foreign control. Finland’s ‘choice’ was all but inevitable – dictated by political realism and the logic of events.

Since Finland could not prevent Germany from using it as a base of operations against Russia, nor the Soviet Union from attacking Finland, the logical decision was to cooperate with Germany while pursuing independent war aims: an intelligent adaption to a situation over which Helsinki had no control.<sup>401</sup> Finland had no wish to be drawn into the greater war. Neither did Helsinki wish to choose between the western democracies, for which it had an ideological and cultural preference, and Germany, whom it relied on for its security against the Soviet Union. Therefore, Finland pursued independent objectives: trying to navigate between Germany and the democracies while fighting the Soviet Union. Finnish leaders wanted to portray the new war as a ‘continuation war,’ separate from the war of the Axis because Finland was fighting a war against Soviet encroachment that was an unavoidable continuation of the Winter War. Finland was

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<sup>400</sup> Ibid, 88.

<sup>401</sup> Upton, 268.

unwilling to sign any political agreements with Germany and never joined the Axis. It chose the term ‘co-belligerent’ to describe a relationship in which two separate entities with separate goals were at war with a common enemy.<sup>402</sup>

The official Finnish explanation of a separate war, or a war within a war, was problematic. That the new war was simply an unavoidable continuation of the last was a simplistic interpretation; yet in many ways the new war was similar to the Winter War. Finland fought for its own national interests, namely its independence and security against the Soviet Union, and technically it was a war of retaliation against Soviet aggression. In that sense the Finnish war was undeniably separate from the war launched by the Axis: a nation has a right to fight for the preservation of its independence. However, Finland’s insistence that it fought its own war separate from the greater conflict was contradictory. The Finnish war was unavoidably connected to the greater war because the Finns were under a degree of German control. The very fact that Germany refused to allow Finland to conclude a separate peace – which they did anyway in 1944 – is indicative of closer cooperation than Helsinki was willing to admit.

However, despite the considerable leverage that Germany had over Finland, the Finns were uncooperative when German directives did not overlap with Finnish objectives. Helsinki went to great lengths to preserve its independence of action from Germany. Finland was different from the minor Axis states because it retained independent military command and refused to be co-opted into fighting for German objectives. The Finnish separate war claim was not just to satisfy the Allies; it was a genuine objective. Helsinki wanted to remain as independent as possible because it feared that Germany too could threaten its independence. The Finns

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<sup>402</sup> Berry, 100.

adamantly refused to grant Germany the same nickel concession in Petsamo that they had denied the Russians, and even heavy German pressure could not break down Finnish resistance.<sup>403</sup>

In August 1941 Keitel requested that the Finnish Army should attack Leningrad from the north as the Germans attacked from the south. Mannerheim refused. On September 4, General Alfred Jodl personally visited the Finnish military command to try to convince the Finns of the necessity of their participation in the attack on Leningrad. When Mannerheim repeated his refusal, Jodl is said to have exclaimed “Can’t you then do anything to show yourself co-operative?”<sup>404</sup> The Finns continued to desist from participating in the attack even to the extent of refusing to shell the city.<sup>405</sup> In addition, Finland denied the German request cut the traffic along the Murmansk railway, a major supply route to Russia’s only ice-free port in the north. Although the Finnish Army crossed over the 1939 boundaries, to the outrage of the west, they only advanced far enough to establish a naturally defensible position between Lake Onega and Lake Ladoga. If the Winter War had taught them anything, it was that the 1939 boundary was too long for a state of three and a half million to defend. Afterwards, on December 6, 1941, the Finns halted all offensive actions despite German protests.

The power-shift in northern Europe led to Finland’s involvement in the great power war. Germany’s position in Norway and the defeat of France dramatically increased Soviet security requirements, reflected in their plans to annex Finland. Since Finland’s traditional allies were both indifferent and unable to support it against the Soviet Union, Helsinki welcomed cooperation with Germany. However, the temporary solution placed Finland in an impossible

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<sup>403</sup> Krosby, 188; 190.

<sup>404</sup> Mannerheim, 427.

<sup>405</sup> Vehvilainen, 95.

situation as relations between Germany and the Soviet Union deteriorated. Finland was caught in a great power war, in which it sought to navigate between the goodwill of Germany and the democracies by pursuing limited objectives that corresponded to its national interests. However, the reversal of the geopolitical situation would also bring with it a reversal of relations with the democracies, even though Finland fought the same enemy against which these democracies had supported it in 1939-1940.

## Chapter 5:

### Strained Relations: Finland, Britain and the United States, 1940-1941

The neutral observer would appreciate Finland's difficult situation. United States public opinion remained largely pro-Finnish. The Soviet Union followed the same pattern of aggression that began with the Nazi-Soviet pact and carried on throughout 1940. However, although public opinion in the United States and even the British Dominions remained largely sympathetic toward Finland, Finnish national interests in 1941 conflicted with the basic interests of Britain. Finland lost British sympathy in 1941. Although Finland fought for the same objectives in 1941 as it had in 1939, this time it had a different sponsor and fought in different circumstances.

In the British perspective in 1939, Finland was not simply a victim of a clear-cut Soviet attack. The British perceived Finland to be an ally in the common struggle against aggression. By 1941 the situation was quite different. Operation Barbarossa rehabilitated the image of the Soviet Union because it stood virtually alone against Nazi Germany. Britain now considered Finland a traitor, although it once again fought the same enemy. It did not matter that Finland fought for independent objectives; the Finnish cause now conflicted with basic British interests because the Soviet Union became Britain's ally. The enemy of Britain's ally became Britain's enemy, and London condemned Finland for turning to the only nation left that could guarantee its security against the Soviet Union.

Britain made it harder for Finland to secure essential materials such as aluminum, high-octane gasoline, rubber, bronze, and tin.<sup>406</sup> As the economic blockade grew tighter, Finland was obliged to curb its trade with the United States and seek the imports it needed from Germany and

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<sup>406</sup> Gripenberg, 177.

German-occupied Europe. Theoretically it should not have been in British interests to increase Germany's leverage over Finland by cutting off all ties to the west. However, on June 14 London effectively declared economic war by completing its blockade of Finland.<sup>407</sup> On June 19 *The Times* reported that Britain will no longer grant navicerts to ships destined to Finland because "Finland is not in a position to be truly independent."<sup>408</sup> By July 16, Schoenfeld informed Hull that the blockade was now "absolute" and that the British had seized substantial amounts of Finnish shipping to divert to other purposes.<sup>409</sup>

Finland and the Soviet Union traded places in the public eye. The nation that was inspired by 'brave little Finland' and outraged at Soviet aggression in 1939 demanded a declaration of war against Finland by November 1941. On June 22, after Hitler's statement about fighting alongside the Finns, Churchill declared that "Any man or state who marches with Hitler is our foe."<sup>410</sup> The same day, *The Times* incorrectly reported that Finland had participated in the German offensive. In coordination with Romanian and German troops, Finnish forces were said to be in the process of making a drive on Leningrad from the north.<sup>411</sup> The press, preoccupied with victimizing the Soviet Union, refused to criticize Soviet attacks on Finnish territory. On June 29, the *Sunday Times* actually condoned the Russian air attacks of June 25. The newspaper insisted that Finland was "very properly bombed by the Russians" and berated Finland for its "betrayal" of the Allied cause. It echoed the sentiments that Churchill expressed in his speech by declaring, "fighting on the side of our enemies is a crime." "There is no possible excuse" for

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<sup>407</sup> Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 140 (N 4695/185/56), Helsingfors, August 13, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 249.

<sup>408</sup> "Finland Included in Blockade," *The Times*, June 19, 1941, 3.

<sup>409</sup> The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (1939/13238), Helsinki July 16, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 50; *Ibid*, The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (741.60D/14,) Helsinki, July 17, 1941, 50.

<sup>410</sup> "Full British Aid for Russia," *The Times*, June 23, 1941, 4.

<sup>411</sup> "German Army Attacks Russia," *Ibid*, 4.

Finland's actions, the *Sunday Times* declared. Instead, "she was bound passively to accept the . . . bombing," which the *Sunday Times* insisted was a just consequence of Finland's relations with Germany. The newspaper concluded with an ominous warning that "the people of this country will not lightly forget this crime."<sup>412</sup> In the *Sunday Dispatch* on the same day, author H.G. Wells wrote that Stalin had very rightly attacked "the blue swastika – Finland." He criticized sentimental Americans, who spoke about "brave little Finland," for their ongoing sympathy: "What would you say if Staten Island was in the hands of a brave little power which had built a formidable defense line and could bomb New York and all its ships?"<sup>413</sup>

Finland received considerable criticism in the British Parliament as well. On July 2, Labour politician Sydney Silverman spoke out against Britain's continuation of relations with Finland. "Does not the present attitude of the Finnish Government," he questioned, "in allowing themselves to be used by Germany and themselves taking part in aggression upon Russia, contrast very unfavourably from other quarters at other times?"<sup>414</sup> Liberal politician Geoffrey Mander echoed Silverman's accusations. On July 9 he suggested that the Foreign Office make it clear that in the final peace settlement the actions of those who have directly or indirectly assisted the enemy will be taken into account. "Will the right hon. gentleman [Anthony Eden] not make it perfectly clear that people cannot have it both ways," he asked, "and that at the peace settlement we shall remember those who have been our friends and not forget those who have lined up with the enemy?"<sup>415</sup> "Are we to understand," he continued, "that Finland is now an ally

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<sup>412</sup> "We Shall Not Forget," *Sunday Times*, June 29, 1941, 4.

<sup>413</sup> *Sunday Dispatch*, June 29; quoted in Gripenberg's memoirs, 188.

<sup>414</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Volume 372, House of Commons Official Report: Session 1940-1941, June 10 – July 3, 1941, 1326.

<sup>415</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Volume 373, House of Commons Official Report: Session 1940-1941, July 8 – August 7, 1941, 144.

of Germany in the war proceeding between Germany and Russia, and that His Majesty's government does not want to comment on that fact?"<sup>416</sup>

The Finnish government took the anti-Finnish pronouncements in the British press very seriously.<sup>417</sup> Vereker reported that Finland resented Britain's lack of understanding for its situation. He reminded the Foreign Office that in the Finnish view, Soviet Russia was the ultimate evil, beside which even Nazism seemed relatively wholesome. The Finns could not understand how a country such as Britain, which fought a war against aggression, could be allied with the Bolsheviks. Vereker summarized the Finnish attitude toward Britain as follows: "Great Britain has adopted the fundamental principle that she is primarily engaged on a crusade against Nazi Germany, and that all other considerations must be subordinated to this end. This is quite reasonable since Nazi Germany is Great Britain's greatest menace. But in the circumstances, Great Britain must allow Finland freedom to define Russia as *her* greatest menace and subordinate all other considerations to the downfall of Soviet Russia."<sup>418</sup>

Much of the British public favoured a break of relations with Finland because of the widely held sentiment that the enemy of Britain's ally was an enemy of Britain; and certain political elements wanted Britain to make the first move in dissolving relations. As early as June 22, London informed its minister in Finland that he should take the responsibility to decide whether to stay or leave.<sup>419</sup> In the confusion that followed the German invasion, London did not establish any definite policy toward Finland and preferred to let the situation develop.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid, 145.

<sup>417</sup> Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 140 (N 4695/185/56), Helsingfors, August 13, 1941, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 245.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid, Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 107 (N 3874/202/56), Helsingfors, July 1, 1941, 229.

<sup>419</sup> Gripenberg, 187.

<sup>420</sup> WM (41) 62nd Conclusions, June 23, 1941, CAB 65/4, 97.

However, Halifax informed Gripenberg early on that he had resisted Cabinet pressure to break off relations. “But if you attack Russia,” Halifax warned, “we will have a new and very serious situation. I hope sincerely that that won’t happen, because then my own efforts will be strained to the utmost.”<sup>421</sup>

It was in London’s interests to maintain its relations with Finland. Gripenberg suggested in his memoirs that London was reluctant to break off relations because of the effect it might have on American opinion. America’s sympathies for Finland were well known, and the *Daily Telegraph’s* Washington correspondent had warned the British government that the American public would not understand or react well to news of Britain’s close cooperation with the Soviet Union.<sup>422</sup> More importantly, London kept its legation in Helsinki because Vereker and his staff were a valuable source of intelligence.<sup>423</sup> *The Times* openly admitted as much after relations had collapsed.<sup>424</sup> Although Finland also preferred to retain diplomatic relations, Germany wanted the British legation out of Helsinki for the same reason London wished it to stay: according to Berlin Helsinki had become a “hotbed of espionage and sabotage.”<sup>425</sup>

In response to German pressure, Helsinki sent an aide-memoire to London on July 28 to ask if the Foreign Office saw good reason for the two countries mutually “suspending” the activities of their legations. The note referred to the illegal actions of the Royal Navy against Finnish shipping as well as Britain’s alliance to the Soviet Union.<sup>426</sup> The purpose of the note was to suggest a mutual severance of relations as amicably as possible. Instead of replying, the

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<sup>421</sup> Gripenberg, 186.

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*, 189.

<sup>423</sup> The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (741.60D/14), Helsinki, July 17, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 51.

<sup>424</sup> “Finnish Break with Britain Deplored,” *The Times*, July 30, 1941, 4.

<sup>425</sup> Vehvilainen, 97.

<sup>426</sup> Gripenberg, 197.

Foreign Office published the note. London used the opportunity to inform the world that Finland had unilaterally severed relations with Britain, and not in mutual agreement, so that Finland would bear the blame in the public eye of both Britain and the United States.<sup>427</sup> Two days after Finland sent its aid-memoire, the British Fleet Air Arm bombed the Liinahamari and Petsamo regions of Finland in an attack that killed Finnish civilians and damaged property. The Finnish government considered the attack on Finnish territory to be the answer to their aide-memoire and immediately severed relations.<sup>428</sup>

The British Parliament felt that the break in relations had not come soon enough. Previous supporters of Finland were now silent. Since July, Parliament had attacked the Foreign Office for continuing relations with Finland on the basis that Finland was a “voluntary ally” of Germany in a war against a “voluntary ally” of Britain.<sup>429</sup> After the Finnish note was published in British newspapers, Labour politician Manny Shinwell insisted that Britain immediately break relations amid calls for more drastic action against Finland.<sup>430</sup> “Is it not clear,” Sydney Silverman asked on August 6, “either Finland is pursuing a war of conquest or is desirous of conquest in Russia, or that a section of the Finnish people, led by Marshal Mannerheim, are defying their own Government? In either case,” he demanded, “is there any reason why this country should not be strongly on the side of Russia in the Russo-Finnish war?”<sup>431</sup>

The British press grew increasingly hostile to Finland and echoed sentiments in tune to the anti-Finnish arguments coming from Parliament. On October 6, *The Times* declared that the

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<sup>427</sup> Mr. Vereker to Mr. Eden, No. 140 (N 4695/185/56), Helsingfors, August 13, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 244.

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid*, 248.

<sup>429</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Volume 373, House of Commons Official Report: Session 1940-1941, July 8 – August 7, 1941, 1923.

<sup>430</sup> *Ibid*, 1923.

<sup>431</sup> *Ibid*, 1926.

British people have “no desire to minimize the embarrassment of Finland’s position.”<sup>432</sup> The German invasion of Russia had rehabilitated Stalin’s image in Britain as a benevolent dictator; and the British had already forgotten that the incompetency of their war policy in northern Europe bore a share of the blame for Finland’s predicament in the first place. British attitudes toward Finland and the Soviet Union in 1939-1940 had undergone a complete reversal by the fall of 1941. In the ultimate irony of British opinion, the Soviet Union was now inconceivably the victim of blatant aggression from the relatively minute nation of Finland. *The Times* declared that when Finland “chose . . . to break off diplomatic relations with Great Britain and declare war upon Russia” it became “the tool of Nazi Germany.” According to *The Times*, Finland was now “an agent of naked aggression against her powerful Russian neighbour.”<sup>433</sup>

By September Stalin had applied pressure on Britain to assist the Soviet Union against Finland. He specifically wanted Britain to declare war on Finland but according to British reports, a declaration of war would likely isolate Finland further still and would perhaps motivate the Finns to commit themselves to German objectives. In a note to Stalin, Churchill promised that “we are willing to put any pressure upon Finland in our power, including immediate intimation that we will declare war upon them if they advance beyond the old frontiers.”<sup>434</sup> The Foreign Office complied with Soviet demands by publishing a threatening note in which it called Finland an Axis power. On September 18, London communicated to Finland through Norway that “So long as Finland, in alliance with Germany, is carrying on an aggressive war against and on the territory of the ally of Great Britain, His Majesty’s Government are bound to

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<sup>432</sup> “Finland’s War on Russia,” *The Times*, October 6, 1941, 5.

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>434</sup> The Question of Whether We Should Declare War on Finland, Hungary, and Roumania, WP (41) 219, September 13, 1941, CAB 66/18/42, 1.

consider Finland to be a member of the Axis, since it is impossible to separate the war which Finland is waging against Russia from the general European war.”<sup>435</sup> The note went on to state that “if, therefore, the Finnish Government persist in invading purely Russian territory, a situation will arise in which Great Britain will be forced to treat Finland as an open enemy, not only while the war lasts, but also when peace comes to be made.”<sup>436</sup> The note requested that Finland immediately terminate its war with the Soviet Union and evacuate all territories beyond its 1939 frontiers.

According to the British minister in Sweden, the Finns received the British note with “feelings of astonishment and indignation.”<sup>437</sup> The Finnish reply on October 6 categorically listed Finland’s justifications for war with the Soviet Union. It referred to the Soviet Union’s unprovoked attack in 1939 and the loss of Finnish territory; the fact that Finland was forced to fight alone while the Soviet Union suffered no consequences for its act of aggression; Soviet extortion, renewed demands and political interference during 1940-1941; Soviet intentions to annex Finland in the fall of 1940; and the renewed Soviet attack upon Finland in June 1941. Helsinki declared that it considered the current war with the Soviet Union to be a continuation of Finland’s war against Soviet aggression that began in 1939: a war strictly waged in self-defence. In regard to crossing the 1939 boundaries, Helsinki pointed out that Russia still held certain Finnish areas within the 1939 frontiers, and that Finland strategically required a shorter boundary in order to establish defensive lines.<sup>438</sup> “Finland wages her defensive war free from all political obligations,” the note continued, “but grateful that she need not this time fight alone.” Helsinki

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<sup>435</sup> Mr. Collier to Mr. Eden, No. 32 (N 5404/201/56), British Legation to the Norwegian Government, September 18, 1941, *BDFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 251.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid*, 251.

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid*, Mr. Eden to Mr. Mallet, No. 106 (N 5821/201/56), Foreign Office, October 7, 1941, 254.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid*, 253.

concluded by stating, “Finland cannot understand how Great Britain, with whom Finland has wished, and wishes, to retain peaceful relations, could regard herself, merely because Finland is not on this occasion alone in fighting the Soviet Union, as entitled, nay, forced, to treat Finland as an open enemy.”<sup>439</sup>

The Swedish daily newspaper *Dagens Nyheter* pointed out the obvious problems with London’s demand. “If the British demands were acceded to,” it wrote, “the Finnish armed forces, after having thrown their adversaries back to the east of it, would have to withdraw to a frontier which was in 1939 violated by the Soviet Army.” It supported the Finnish position, stating that “From a political point of view this could be conceived under certain conditions, but strategically and militarily it is absolutely impossible, and in a situation such as the one in which Finland finds herself strategic considerations doubtless take precedence over political ones, even if the two should not be in complete accord.”<sup>440</sup> The Finnish press maintained that no halt to the Finnish campaign would be called until the Finnish Army reached strategic frontiers safeguarding Finland’s future peace. In a speech on September 27, the Finnish Minister of Labour declared, “our war aim is safety, so that we can live in peace and devote ourselves to peaceful occupations. But the peace we all long for must be lasting and nobody in Finland believes in a peace-treaty signed with the present Moscow dictators. We hope the war will soon be over,” he continued, “Our army will not march to Moscow or the Urals; its job is to clear up

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<sup>439</sup> Ibid, 253.

<sup>440</sup> Mannerheim, 432.

the areas which constitute a threat to us.” Afterwards, “we can content ourselves with mounting guard and awaiting that peace which one day will dawn.”<sup>441</sup>

The Finns were especially indignant that London had demanded an immediate withdrawal without binding the Soviet Union to any corresponding concessions, or granting Finland a guarantee against the Soviet Union.<sup>442</sup> Great Britain had implied that it would go to war against Finland unless it made peace with the Soviet Union; yet it would not give assurances of assistance against further aggression by the Soviet Union, or Germany for that matter, which would certainly turn against Finland if the Finns made peace with Russia.<sup>443</sup> President Ryti told the American minister in Helsinki that the Finns were prepared to do whatever was necessary in the interests of Finland’s security against Russia; they were certainly not going to withdraw without guarantees and it was unreasonable for London to ask that of them. “Finns had always been friendly to Britain,” Ryti declared, “but did not propose to die for British interests though they were prepared unanimously to sacrifice their lives if necessary for what they conceive to be Finnish interests.”<sup>444</sup>

On October 17, and again on October 21, the Soviet ambassador repeated Stalin’s request that London declare war on Finland, Romania and Hungary. Churchill expressed his concern in a letter to the Dominions Office: “It is clear that the Soviet Government attach very great importance to our acceding to this request and we naturally are anxious not to rebuff or

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<sup>441</sup>Mr. Eden to Mr. Mallet, No. 106 (N 5821/201/56), Foreign Office, October 7, 1941, *B DFA*, Part III, Series A, Volume 2, Finland and the Baltic States, January 1940-December 1941, 254.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid*, 254.

<sup>443</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs (1939/17667), Washington, September 30, 1941, *FRUS* Volume 1, 73.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid*, The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (1939/16162), Helsinki, October 27, 1941, 84.

discourage them when at this critical juncture.”<sup>445</sup> London felt pressure from Moscow but was hesitant to take the final step of declaring war because Britain would lose a significant amount of Finnish shipping that it currently used; and also because, according to Churchill, “a declaration of war would be distasteful to that body of American opinion which is favourable to the Finns.”<sup>446</sup>

Furthermore, the opinion of the Dominions, with the exception of Australia, was firmly opposed to declaring war on Finland. South Africa reported that a declaration of war would be problematic because “Finland . . . has many sympathizers as Russians started the trouble by attacking Finland in collusion with Germany.” It pointed out that if Britain declared war, the Soviet Union would have justification to annex Finland and the Baltic countries at the conclusion of peace, which would be an unwanted embarrassment. New Zealand was likewise opposed to taking action against Finland. It declared that the attempt by the Finns to recover lost territory, after being stolen by Russia in a war in which the sympathies of the world were with Finland, should not lead to war although they were currently allied to Russia.<sup>447</sup> Canada felt that a declaration of war would disrupt the war effort on the domestic front.<sup>448</sup> A British report on Canada found that, “Canadians have shown very great interest in the part which Finland has been taking in the war. The general attitude has been to regard Finland as a helpless and reluctant pawn in the German game.”<sup>449</sup> Australia believed that under the circumstances a declaration of war could not be avoided but it “could not be justified publically.”<sup>450</sup>

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<sup>445</sup> Finland, Hungary, and Roumania, WP (41) 255, November 2, 1941, CAB 66/19/28, 1.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>448</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>449</sup> The Dominions, WP (R) (41) 75, December 24, 1941, 2.

<sup>450</sup> Finland, Hungary, and Roumania, WP (41) 255, November 2, 1941, CAB 66/19/28, 6.

On November 8, Stalin increased his pressure on London through a note in which he outlined several problems in Anglo-Soviet relations. He claimed that their current relations were defined by a lack of clarity. Britain and the Soviet Union must come to an understanding on war aims and on plans for the post-war organization of the peace. Thus far, Britain's lack of action greatly alarmed the Kremlin. According to Stalin, the current British position suggested that the United States and Britain would combine to edge the Soviet Union out of the settlement of important matters at the peace.<sup>451</sup> He advised London to reassure the Soviet Union through a gesture of mutual assistance. Stalin pointed to an "intolerable situation" that currently poisoned Anglo-Soviet relations: the question of the declaration of war on Finland, Romania, and Hungary.<sup>452</sup> Stalin had asked for a simple show of mutual support but instead, London had procrastinated and publically embarrassed the Soviet Union. First of all, the request had been sent over secret diplomatic channels; yet Britain had characteristically leaked the information. "The whole problem is now being discussed at random in the press," Stalin complained, "And after all that the British Government informs us of its negative attitude to our proposal."<sup>453</sup> "Why is all this being done?" he demanded, "To demonstrate the lack of unity between the U.S.S.R. and Great Britain?"<sup>454</sup>

British newspapers indeed discussed the question. However, rather than demonstrating divided loyalties, the press unanimously expressed its support for a declaration of war against Finland, Romania and Hungary. On November 3, *The Times* insisted that "to declare war would .

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<sup>451</sup> WM (41) 111th Conclusions, Minute 8, November 11, 1941, CAB 65/24/3, 1.

<sup>452</sup> Prime Minister Stalin to Prime Minister Churchill, *ibid*, 18.

<sup>453</sup> *ibid*, 19.

<sup>454</sup> *ibid*, 19.

. . . seem to be only a logical recognition of present facts.”<sup>455</sup> By November 4, the *Evening Standard* and *The Manchester Guardian* each urged London to declare war on Finland.<sup>456</sup> On November 5, *The Times* stated that a declaration of war was “imperative.” *The Manchester Guardian* the next day claimed that, “the Finnish Government . . . is the instrument of its own imperialists.” By fighting Russia, the Finns were “fighting us and all for which the Allied cause stands,” and “for Finland to refuse [to withdraw] is to fight for Hitler.”<sup>457</sup>

The British Parliament shared the general sentiments of the press and Members of Parliament lambasted the government for its hesitancy to respond to Russian demands. On November 19 Geoffrey Mander questioned, “In view of the fact that it is now more than four weeks since our Soviet Allies asked us to take action on these lines, and that this is a simple thing we might do to help our Allies right away, does not my right hon. friend [Anthony Eden] think he ought to come to a decision in the near future?”<sup>458</sup> Conservative MP Henry George Strauss concurred: “Does not the right hon. gentleman agree that, in principle at any rate, any country attacking Soviet Russia is attacking us and that any enemy of Soviet Russia is our enemy?”<sup>459</sup> Sydney Silverman, one of the most vocal critics of British policy toward Finland, wanted to know, “what advantage is derived from hesitating to regard Allies of Germany as enemies of this country?”<sup>460</sup>

Halifax strongly urged Cabinet to declare war on Finland, Romania and Hungary in order to take pressure off of Russia and dispel the Kremlin’s suspicion that Britain was prepared to

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<sup>455</sup> “Finns Large Share,” *The Times*, November 3, 1941, 4.

<sup>456</sup> “Britain and Axis Satellites,” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 4, 1941, 8; Gripenberg, 214.

<sup>457</sup> “Russia’s Request for a British Declaration of War,” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 6, 1941, 8.

<sup>458</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Volume 376, House of Commons Official Report: Session 1940-1941, November 12 – December 19, 1941, 281.

<sup>459</sup> *Ibid*, 281.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid*, 281.

fight only at Russia's expense.<sup>461</sup> In late November, Finland made London's decision more palatable when it reluctantly signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. In return, Germany delivered grain to Finland and promised not to pressure Finland to join the Axis.<sup>462</sup> On November 28, the Finnish government received an ultimatum from London: the Finns must cease operations by December 5, or Britain will be forced to declare war. On November 29, Churchill sent a private letter to Mannerheim in which he expressed his personal regret that Britain would be forced to declare war on Finland "out of loyalty to our ally Russia."<sup>463</sup> An agreement with Russia would have been necessary in order to cease hostilities, and an agreement that would have satisfied the Russians would have very likely resulted in counter-measures on the part of Germany. On December 6, Finland's Day of Independence, Britain declared war.<sup>464</sup>

In Britain, war policy was determined by the realities of big power politics, and public opinion was determined by how Finland fit into their conception of Britain's war. In the Winter War the public perceived Finland to be an ally against aggression; in 1941 Finland was an enemy against Britain's new ally. In contrast, American attitudes toward Finland in 1941 were far more complex. As R. Michael Berry has concluded, Finland had an extraordinary status in the United States in 1941 because the Finnish-American bond of 1939-1940 was based on shared values rather than a shared enemy. Even though the Soviet Union became such an important American ally, and hostility toward the Soviet Union waned, the public disliked the communist dictatorship because it was so opposite to American ideals.

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<sup>461</sup> WM (41) 111th Conclusions, Minute 8, November 11, 1941, CAB 65/24/3, 2.

<sup>462</sup> The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State, (1939/16957), Helsinki, November 29, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 110; Berry, 172.

<sup>463</sup> Mannerheim, 435.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid*, 437.

In the United States the public images of ‘brave little Finland’ as an ‘honest’ and freedom-loving democracy resonated with American ideals. Finland’s debt-paying and defense of democracy image was related to American principles of economic and political liberalism, as well as anti-totalitarian and anticommunist sentiments.<sup>465</sup> These images survived the duration of the war and the American public bought into Finland’s assertion that it was fighting a separate war, even though the Finnish war ran contrary to Allied war aims. Finland’s ‘separate war’ thesis correlated with American ideals of a nation’s right to self-determination and self-defense. Even though the United States became an ally of the Soviet Union, the American public displayed a surprising degree of tolerance toward Finland, which was reflected by Finland’s exceptional status in American foreign policy. In the end, the conflict of allegiances was countered by each country’s willingness to compromise to maintain friendly relations.

On June 26, 1941, Hjalmar Procope informed Washington that Finland had once again been forced into a defensive war. Despite being caught in the great power war, he asserted that Finnish policy would be to take a neutral position toward the democracies and pursue purely Finnish objectives.<sup>466</sup> Procope asserted that Finland was a co-belligerent solely against Russia and wished to maintain good relations with the United States.<sup>467</sup> On July 4, Prime Minister Ryti reassured Washington of Finland’s intentions of separateness from Germany. Finland would not depart from its national system of political and social organization and no political agreements currently existed; yet he warned the United States that Germany held significant leverage over

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<sup>465</sup> Berry, 35.

<sup>466</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State (1939/13724), Washington, June 26, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 43.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid*, Memorandum of Conversation, by the Acting Secretary of State, 1939/12920, Washington, June 28, 1941, 44.

the Finns, who were completely dependent on Germany for imports of food and material.<sup>468</sup> In the American reply, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles expressed the United States government's heartfelt condolences for Finland's unenviable situation. "This Government, as well as the people of the United States," he declared, "have the deepest interest in and sympathy for the people of Finland in their struggle to maintain their independence and liberty."<sup>469</sup>

American newspapers likewise expressed sympathetic regret for Finland's renewed struggle and proved more than willing to give Finland the benefit of the doubt. The *New York Times* gave extensive coverage to Russian attacks on Finland that preceded the decision to go to war and reported that, "In a spirit of resignation and with special Finnish calmness the people are preparing to meet their hereditary foe."<sup>470</sup> The *Christian Science Monitor* also highlighted the Russian air attacks and declared that, "the Finns under other circumstances would probably do nothing to aid either of the totalitarian giants."<sup>471</sup> In an article entitled "Finland Fights Red Raiders," the *Chicago Daily Tribune* condemned Russia's "incessant bomb attacks" and "terroristic tactics," and upheld Finland's right to defend itself against Stalin's intention to "destroy Finland as a nation."<sup>472</sup> The *Washington Post* also reported that Finland was fighting in "self defense."<sup>473</sup>

The *Hartford Courant* urged its readers not to judge Finland too harshly for its decision to fight alongside Germany. "The sight of Finland wobbling back in the direction of Germany may not be agreeable to anti-Hitler America," the *Courant* admitted, "But its position should be

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<sup>468</sup> Ibid, The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (1939/12817), Helsinki, July 4, 1941, 48.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid, 48.

<sup>470</sup> "Finns Now Resigned," *New York Times*, June 28, 1941, 2.

<sup>471</sup> "This Week in Focus," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 28, 1941, 8.

<sup>472</sup> "Finland Fights Red Raiders," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 26, 1941, 1.

<sup>473</sup> "Finland Will Fight in Self Defense," *Washington Post*, June 26, 1941, 3.

appreciated before final judgment is passed upon Finland. The Finns, geographically and economically, simply cannot afford to take a large view of the world problem. They are caught in a vise between Russia and Germany, as they used to be caught between Russia and Sweden.”<sup>474</sup> The *Courant* went on to explain that, naturally, Finland “is first, last, and all the time pro-Finnish,” and “she may have to side with one or the other or perish.”<sup>475</sup> On June 27, the *Courant* declared that, “of all the countries in Europe little Finland excites American sympathy most.”<sup>476</sup> “She is confronted with the cruel choice,” it continued, “of trying to preserve her independence by fighting with or against either of two great belligerents now bent on each other’s destruction.”<sup>477</sup> The *Courant*, like most American newspapers, presented the complexity of the Finnish situation with sympathy. “So here is poor Finland, one of the few remaining democracies left in the world, no more pro-Nazi than she is pro-Communist, valiantly trying to preserve her independence in an almost impossible situation.”<sup>478</sup>

The *Washington Post* expressed bitterness at the geopolitical turn that pitted American interests against Finnish. “Our slogan was ‘all aid to the democracies,’” it reminded its readers, “but is that to include the Soviets? Can we fight the Finns? The one heroic people in Europe recognizing its obligations to the United States, when all others conveniently forgot, is now making its fight against the unspeakable Stalin.”<sup>479</sup> “The wounds and miseries inflicted by the Soviets on Finland,” it dramatically pronounced, “still burn in the minds of Americans. . . . How

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<sup>474</sup> “The Plight of Finland,” *Hartford Courant*, June 26, 1941, 10.

<sup>475</sup> *Ibid*, 10.

<sup>476</sup> “Finland’s Tragic Choice,” *Hartford Courant*, June 27, 1941, 12.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>479</sup> “Finland’s Plight,” *Washington Post*, June 25, 1941, 6.

can we condemn the conduct of Finland?”<sup>480</sup> “The Finnish Government and the Finnish people have been in a most difficult position,” the *New York Times* concurred, “Nobody could have expected them to fight on the Russian side . . . a stubborn allegiance to democratic principles made them reluctant to participate in the present conflict. Like all small nations, all they wanted was to be left alone.”<sup>481</sup>

Both the internationalist and isolationist American press were sympathetic to the new Finnish war; yet Finnish objectives ran contrary to U.S. interests because virtually all Americans hoped for a Soviet victory against Germany. Thus, Finland assumed a rather paradoxical status in the United States, which was only sustainable because of the deeply rooted American-Finnish friendship. The *Christian Science Monitor* highlighted this phenomenon in an August 9 article, stating, “Finland is today’s outstanding example of the value of a good reputation whether in private life or in international affairs. Paradoxical as it may seem, Finland is now the fighting ally of the one nation above all others believed to menace the United States, yet there is no evidence that Finnish popularity in the United States has dropped one iota.”<sup>482</sup> It maintained that Finland could have never kept its neutrality, and that Americans continued to look on “brave little Finland” as an international model for honesty and consciousness. “Few persons in the United States find themselves able to blame the little country,” the article continued, “to date, the Finnish attack on the Soviet Union has not brought forth a single condemnation from any responsible Administration official and nobody at the State Department seems to feel that it will in the near future.”<sup>483</sup> Considering the backdrop of power politics and world war, it is remarkable

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<sup>480</sup> *Ibid*, 6.

<sup>481</sup> “The Plight of Finland,” *New York Times*, June 28, 1941, C14.

<sup>482</sup> “Finland Retains Popularity,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 9, 1941, 13.

<sup>483</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

that the defining characteristic of Finnish-American relations was the survival, rather than a breakdown, of friendly relations.<sup>484</sup>

The United States' low opinion of communism had not changed, although to Americans Nazi Germany constituted the immediate threat while the Soviet Union was now a bulwark to Nazism.<sup>485</sup> After the German invasion of Russia, Under Secretary Welles explained that "realistic Americans" would understand that, "Any rallying of the forces opposing Hitler, from whatever sources these forces may spring, will hasten the eventual downfall of the present German leaders and will therefore rebound to the benefit of our own defense."<sup>486</sup> The *Christian Science Monitor* stated that it was among the "foremost in pointing to Communism's basic conflict with free and Christian systems;" yet "whatever the antipathy of capitalism for Marxism, whatever the dislike of free men for Stalin's despotism, whatever our recognition that Communism is a dangerous philosophy, the immediate attack comes from Nazism."<sup>487</sup> Though Americans were willing to accept the Soviet Union as a vital ally in the war against aggression, they never warmed up to communism and maintained their ideological preference for Finland. The positive American views on Finland, rather than negative views on the Soviet Union, are primarily what fueled American sympathy for Finland; yet because of their suspicion of communism and opposition to its ideals, Americans understood Finland's struggle against the Soviet Union.

The complexity of the situation offered new ammunition for the internationalist-isolationist debate. Most Americans were not opposed to the idea of two totalitarian states

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<sup>484</sup> Berry, 119.

<sup>485</sup> Berry, 106.

<sup>486</sup> "A Realistic America," *Christian Science Monitor*, June 24, 1941, 22.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

destroying each other in the east, but internationalists were not willing to risk a British defeat.<sup>488</sup> Isolationists used the international shift to point out the injustices of the war and sabotage Roosevelt's intention to aid Russia: Finland fought a just war against a totalitarian aggressor but out of necessity the United States must support the totalitarian Soviet Union. Isolationists argued that to side with the British in the war, who were subject to Soviet pressure, was immoral, and to aid the Soviets would lead to the Soviet domination of Europe.<sup>489</sup> Isolationists also blamed Britain for the Anglo-Finnish break in relations. The isolationist press reminded Americans that Britain had been inexcusably tardy in the delivery of supplies to Finland in the Winter War, yet ironically now provided both planes and ships to help the Russians fight the Finns.<sup>490</sup> The isolationist *Chicago Tribune* presented Americans with the following argument on July 29: "Yesterday soviet Russia was considered a menace to civilization. Today soviet Russia is considered a cross between Galahad and Sir Lancelot . . . And yesterday Finland was the most meritorious and honorable of all European nations. Today she is fighting her old enemy, soviet Russia, associated with Stalin's recent pal, Adolf Hitler [sic]."<sup>491</sup>

Americans offered little criticism even after Finnish soldiers crossed the 1939 borders; but as the Finnish Army advanced further into the Soviet Union, Finland became a foreign policy problem for Washington. While President Roosevelt tried to get a Lend-Lease proposal for the Soviet Union through Congress, Washington looked for other ways to help the Soviets in the meantime. One of the most obvious ways to assist Russia was to use the influence of the American government to pressure Finland and Romania to exit the war. Finland in particular

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<sup>488</sup> Berry, 121.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*, 120-121.

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid*, 121.

<sup>491</sup> *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 1941, 1 (Reproduced in R. Michael Berry *American Foreign Policy and the Finnish Exception*, 120).

directly endangered American interests because most American aid to the Soviet Union would have to go through the northern Russian ports, and could easily be interfered with or blocked from Finnish territory.<sup>492</sup>

On September 8, Hull spoke with Finnish Minister Procope in a meeting that revealed Washington's complicated stance. Hull began the conversation by congratulating Finland on regaining the territory that Russia took in the war of 1939-1940, and then went on to express his concern about Finnish war aims. From the American viewpoint of self defense, he explained, Hitler constituted the greatest immediate threat to the security of the world and the United States. "Without contemplating the slightest injustice to Finland and her best interest," the United States had no choice but to take a global view of things, and was therefore concerned that Finland would fight alongside Germany to the end of the war.<sup>493</sup> Procope assured Hull that in his opinion, the Finns occupied Russian territory for security purposes only, and did not intend to fight the war to its conclusion.<sup>494</sup> Anxious not to encroach on American interests, Helsinki informed Washington the next day that Finland would only continue its offensive until security objectives were met and that Finland would not participate in the siege of Leningrad under any circumstances.<sup>495</sup>

Washington genuinely sympathized with the Finnish position. It was gratified to see Finland regain its lost territory and understood that Finland was compelled by both German pressure and its own security needs to continue its offensive. On September 17, Hull rejected the British suggestion that the United States ask the Soviet Union for terms of peace for Finland and

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<sup>492</sup> *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, Volume II (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1948), 977.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid*, 978.

<sup>494</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, by Secretary of State (1939/14951), Washington, September 8, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 62; *Ibid*, Secretary of State to the Minister in Finland (1939/15616a), Washington, October 4, 1941, 74.

<sup>495</sup> *Ibid*, The Minister in Finland to the Secretary of State (1939/14857), Helsinki, September 9, 1951, 64.

pass them on to Helsinki. He pointed out that previous Soviet policy would make this suggestion impossible for the Finns to accept without guarantees. He commented that “the Finns were in no mood to accept any assurances from the Soviet Government in view of the treatment they had received from the hands of that Government in the last two years.”<sup>496</sup> Sympathy aside, however, Washington became more concerned with the global situation and how far Finland intended to go in the prosecution of its war against the Soviets. No matter how vigorously Finland insisted on the righteousness and limited objectives of its war, the fact remained that the longer Finland continued its offensive, the more it assisted the global ambitions of Germany.

On October 3, Hull informed Procopé that if Finland continued to prosecute its war, the United States would be forced to support Britain’s views in the interests of global security.<sup>497</sup> “Any other course for us would be suicidal,” he maintained.<sup>498</sup> Hull sent the Finnish government formal notes of a much more threatening tone on October 25 and 28. He accused the Finns of giving “invaluable military aid to Nazi world aggression,” which constituted a direct threat to the future of the United States.<sup>499</sup> If Finland did not desist, it would forfeit American support in future difficulties and any attack made from Finnish-controlled territory on war material dispatched from the United States to northern Russia would “create an immediate crisis in Finnish-American relations.”<sup>500</sup>

On November 3, Hull held a press conference to discuss the Finnish issue with the American public. He acknowledged that he hardly needed to go into their attitude towards

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<sup>496</sup> Hull, 979.

<sup>497</sup> Secretary of State to the Minister in Finland (1939/15616a), Washington, October 4, 1941, *FRUS*, Volume 1, 74.

<sup>498</sup> Hull, 980.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid*, 980.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid*, 980.

Finland, but their warm regard should now be subjected to concern.<sup>501</sup> Continued Finnish cooperation with Germany would eventually lead to the complete subjugation of Finland to the whims of Adolf Hitler. In addition, it would force the United States to abandon its friendly attitude towards Finland. For these reasons, and because the Finnish war assisted German war aims, the United States government would persistently seek to extradite Finland from the war. The United States realizes the difficulties of a separate Finnish-Soviet peace, he continued, but if the present Finnish policy is continued it must be because the Finnish government is no longer free.<sup>502</sup>

The views of the internationalist press fell into line with the Administration, albeit with great misgiving and sympathy. The Hull press conference marks the point where the internationalist opinion in the United States came to terms with the fact that the Finnish war endangered American interests; yet internationalists maintained their ideological preference for Finland and the belief that Finland had been forced by geopolitical circumstances into fighting for its national interests. In a November press survey, 53% of the press coverage felt that Finland needed guarantees before it could make peace, while those who supported Hull's warning apologetically attributed their support to the necessity that the Allies win the war.<sup>503</sup> The *New York Times* acknowledged that by threatening the Murmansk railway and tying up Russian troops, Finland was "standing in the way" of the Allies and directly helping the Germans.<sup>504</sup>

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<sup>501</sup> "Hull is Emphatic," *New York Times*, November 4, 1941, 1.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid*, 1.

<sup>503</sup> Berry, 175; 186.

<sup>504</sup> "Finland's Premier in Swedish Parley," *New York Times*, November 6, 1941, 9.

However, the *Times* also highlighted that from a Finnish perspective, a positive response to Hull's demands would sacrifice Finland's military security.<sup>505</sup>

The *New York Times* editorial on November 4 was even somewhat critical of Hull's lack of sensitivity toward Finnish policy. The *Times* declared that it was "natural" for Americans to side with Finland in the Soviet-Finnish war "because Finland herself had been the victim of unprovoked Russian aggression, and was regarded as merely taking advantage of an opportunity to recover territory which had been wrested from her by force."<sup>506</sup> The *Times* acknowledged that Finland was problematic to American foreign policy because "certainly Finland belongs to the democracies in this great struggle. Yet it would be blindness to reality not to recognize the dilemma in which the Finns find themselves. . . . Much as one may wish to see Finland withdraw from her Axis associations and return to the company of nations with ideals and aims more compatible to her own," continued the *Times*, "it must be admitted that the democracies are remote and that Germany is strong and near."<sup>507</sup> To internationalists, Finland was a case of conflicting American interests: the necessity of adapting to the reality of power politics to win the war and preference for Finland's right for self-determination. The *Times* summed up these sentiments: "Fundamentally . . . Finland is engaged in a struggle for security – a security which was pledged to small nations after the last war and then denied them. We cannot judge Finland too harshly until we ourselves are prepared to play our proper part in guaranteeing a peace that will mean safety for the small nations."<sup>508</sup>

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<sup>505</sup> "Finns Balk at 'Sacrifice,'" *New York Times*, November 6, 1941, 9.

<sup>506</sup> "Finland's Dilemma," *New York Times*, November 4, 1941, 22.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, 22.

*TIME* lamented the circumstances that pitted American interests against Finnish national security, and endangered a warm relationship of “friendship and mutual trust that has few parallels in the history of nations.”<sup>509</sup> *TIME* reported that it was with “sorrow and grave formality that [Hull] informed Finland that if she wants to continue to have good relations with the United States, she must discontinue war against Russia.”<sup>510</sup> *TIME* declared that this was one of those “cruel, heart-sickening choices that must be made in times of crisis,” and “when he concluded Cordell Hull looked like a man who had been forced to spank his son.”<sup>511</sup>

The *Christian Science Monitor* reminded its readers of America’s historical role as the champion of “national self-determination, often a life or death matter for small States.”<sup>512</sup> The *Monitor* reiterated its ideological preference for Finnish values, but because of the overarching circumstances it sided with Administration: “the battle between those antagonists is a battle in which Americans cannot be neutral,” because the Soviet Union “is resisting an enemy which is ‘the common enemy of all nations,’ the Nazi Third Reich.”<sup>513</sup> However, the *Monitor* also acknowledged that Hull’s demand was baseless unless America could offer Finland assurances against the Nazis.

Isolationists were outraged by Hull’s ultimatum and pointed to the obvious conflict between American ideals and American interests in the war. Herbert Hoover demanded to know if the United States had “lost all sense of human and moral proportions” and Senator Robert A. Taft predicted, “we will be deeply ashamed in all time to come.”<sup>514</sup> A headline in the *Chicago*

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<sup>509</sup> “Finland: Security for Friendship,” *TIME*, November 10, 1941, 30.

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>511</sup> “There Goes Finland,” *TIME*, November 17, 1941, 15.

<sup>512</sup> “Hard Words to a Friend,” *Christian Science Monitor*, November 5, 1941, 22.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>514</sup> “There Goes Finland,” *TIME*, November 17, 1941, 15.

*Daily Tribune* proclaimed, “Hull Hits a New Low.”<sup>515</sup> The *Tribune* staunchly defended Finnish policy stating, “It is Finland’s experience that Germany is a safer neighbor than Russia ever has been.” It reminded readers that the Allies had supported Finland in the Winter War but since then turned on Finland and supported Stalin.<sup>516</sup> It declared, “the Hull declaration is an impertinence which marks a new low in American international relations. The United States has done nothing to help Finland defend itself or preserve its independence.”<sup>517</sup> The *Tribune* continued its tirade by pointing out that Hull “ignores the fact that they have been the actual victims of Russian brutality and of aggression without conscience.”<sup>518</sup>

The Finns refused to connect the two wars and considered it an injustice that the west opposed its war with Russia. The Finnish press ignored the fact that the Finnish war directly affected the Allied cause and continued to assert that Finland was fighting a war of defence only on its own account. The Helsinki newspaper *Sanomat* wrote, “It is not difficult to understand what they want to achieve through this pressure. Everyone realizes that it is desired to make the Murmansk railway free for British-American transport. Apart from that it is desired to free the Russian troops that are engaged on our long front.”<sup>519</sup> The Finns claimed that since America was neutral, it was impossible for the Finnish war to cause adverse effects on American security.<sup>520</sup>

Finnish-American relations did not come to the crisis that Hull predicted. Both nations countered the tension caused by the conflict of allies through a mutual willingness to compromise in order to maintain friendly relations. Finland was unwilling to jeopardize its

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<sup>515</sup> “Hull Hits a New Low,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 5, 1941, 14.

<sup>516</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>519</sup> “Finland’s Premier in Swedish Parley,” *New York Times*, November 6, 1941, 9.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

relations with the United States and did not interrupt supplies to Russia from the north. The Finns thereby undermined German war aims for the sake of maintaining good relations with their own ideological preference. On December 6, the Finnish Army drew up defensive positions on a sustainable front between the natural barriers of Lake Ladoga and Lake Onega and refused to advance further east. In Hull's opinion, when Finland limited its military activities to holding a defensive line it saved its relations with the United States.<sup>521</sup>

For the next three years the United States adopted the policy of steadily pressuring Finland to withdraw from the war while maintaining diplomatic relations – even with the United States deeply involved in the war. In 1942-1944 United States press coverage of Finland subsided because of the United States' own involvement in the war and because there was little to report on the Finnish front. However, events and minor crises in Finnish-American relations still received attention, and American sympathy for Finland remained strong.<sup>522</sup> The leading isolationist newspapers remained supportive of Finland throughout the war. None of the internationalist papers considered the Soviet territorial demands of Finland to be legitimate, and an examination of the internationalist press suggests that the positive image of Finland in the United States had staying power.<sup>523</sup> A Gallup Poll in May 1942 showed that 84% of Americans wanted to see Finland offered generous peace terms by the Allies; and in December 1944 only 10% of Americans thought Finland could not be trusted to cooperate with the Allies after the war.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>521</sup> Hull, 980.

<sup>522</sup> Berry, 221.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid, 289-91.

<sup>524</sup> Gallup Poll, May 1942; Ibid, Dec, 1944.

The United States represented Finnish interests to the Soviet Union at the 1943 peace talks in Teheran. Roosevelt, together with Churchill, set definite conditions that Stalin respect Finnish independence, to which the Soviet Government complied with no objections.<sup>525</sup> Only in June of 1944, as a final step to assist the Soviet drive to Berlin, did the United States briefly sever relations with Finland, to the deep regret of the American public.<sup>526</sup> The staunchly internationalist *Washington Post* justified the diplomatic move, but had to clarify that “no matter what the State Department says,” Washington only acted to hasten the achievements of Allied military goals.<sup>527</sup> However, it spoke for Americans when it said that the Finnish situation was “like a Greek tragedy, inexorable in its consequences because of what has gone before, painful to watch,” and found it necessary to urge Americans to see the greater good in the regrettable final measure.<sup>528</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Hull, 1577.

<sup>526</sup> *Ibid* 1449.

<sup>527</sup> “Finland Inflex,” *Washington Post*, June 18, 1944, B4.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid*, B4.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

1939 to 1941 marked a drastic shift in relations between Finland and the democratic great powers. During the winter of 1939-1940 Finland enjoyed the overwhelming emotional support of virtually the entire world, yet by the end of 1941 it was at war with Britain while desperately trying to salvage relations with the United States. Remarkably, Finland fought the two wars for very similar objectives – Finnish independence and security against the Soviet Union – yet although the west had applauded Finland’s courageous stand against the Soviets in 1939, it condemned the renewed Finnish struggle in 1941.

The key to understanding this about-face in Finnish-western relations is the geopolitical reversal that began in the spring of 1940. In 1939, the Finnish-Soviet war was an inspiration to the western world, a David and Goliath struggle with an easily distinguishable victim and villain. The Nazi-Soviet pact, although not an alliance, drew clear lines between good and evil in the minds of British and American popular opinion. When the powerful Soviet Union invaded the small democratic nation of Finland, the heroic resistance of the Finns naturally encouraged America and the western Allies at a time when the Allies were yet too weak to take action in the European war.

The United States, with its basic hostility to ‘godless communism’ and totalitarianism, was predisposed to support Finland in the Winter War. Americans disliked the ideals of the Soviet system and shared common values with Finland. The idea of a small, debt-paying, democratic nation fighting for liberty against a communist aggressor resonated with American ideals of economic and political liberalism; the right of small states to self-determination; and opposition to totalitarianism. These shared values created a positive image of Finland in the

United States that was the key to good relations. The Winter War also took on a major role in domestic politics. For the first time, isolationists came to regard a European war as a just cause: something other than a mindless European affair. In 1940, for the first time since the First World War, the United States Congress approved limited intervention in a European war. Significantly, the Winter War won over isolationists in an allegiance that continued into 1941, when the renewed Finnish struggle ironically became a pillar of the isolationist argument to stay out of the war.

The Winter War also inspired the British. Unlike the Americans, however, the British did not see the Winter War as an isolated struggle for self-determination between a totalitarian giant and a liberal democracy. Rather, the British saw the Winter War through the perspective of the European war. In the British viewpoint, Finland fought alongside the Allies in the world-wide struggle against aggression. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact caused much of the British public to see the Soviet Union as an enemy, or at least as a hostile state. Because of the British public's perception of the Soviet Union, they shared with Finland the bond of a common enemy: a bond that naturally disintegrated when the Soviets entered the war as a British ally. At first Finland was an annoyance to British war policy. British and world opinion, and the League of Nations resolution motivated the British War Cabinet to extend token gestures of support to the Finns, which London considered a waste of valuable resources. When Finland looked as if it would hold out against the Soviet Union, the War Cabinet saw the opportunity to exploit the Finnish war for Allied purposes. Consequently, the British developed an intervention plan aimed at securing valuable German resources in the north and completing the economic blockade. When Finland outlived its usefulness, Britain turned its attention to Norway and Sweden.

The geopolitical shift began in the spring of 1940, when the Allied defeat in Norway led to a power shift that limited Finnish options for external support to Germany alone. Allied war policy contributed mightily to the shift which pushed Finland into the arms of Germany; yet it did not stop Britain from protesting when Finland, faced with renewed Soviet aggression, grasped at the final straw available. Finland was able to use Germany as leverage to stave off another Soviet invasion but the temporary solution and Finland's geographic position tied Finland's fate to the relations between Germany and the Soviet Union. There was little or no room for Finland to manoeuvre in the event of war between them. The Soviet Union had plainly demonstrated its intention to annex Finland in the fall of 1940; Finland's geography made Leningrad and the western frontier of Russia vulnerable to attack; and German troops already entered Finland with the transit rights granted to Germany in September 1940. If there was to be another war, the Soviet Union would attack Finland to secure its western borders and prevent Germany from using Finland as a base of attack. If Finland did not participate in war against the Soviet Union, Germany was in a position to either starve Finland into obedience or occupy it.

The second Finnish-Soviet war that broke out in June 1941 was not strictly an isolated "Continuation War" of defence, as Finnish propaganda sought to portray it. The Finns stuck to this Fenno-centric simplification of their war in order to make it acceptable to both Germany and the western democracies, as they sought to navigate between the great powers. It was related to the greater European war because, however just the Finnish cause, it inherently helped German objectives while undermining the Allied cause. The interests of Finland and the democracies were unavoidably opposed. However, as a small state, Finland could not afford to see the greater picture. It would be pointless to blame Finland for its 'choice.' Finland's choice was to either fight the Soviet Union, which had clearly demonstrated ill intent, or to forfeit its right to self-

determination. Finland once again fought for the same objective of independence. This country had already proved that it was more than willing to stubbornly battle the Soviet Union to protect its national interests, alone if necessary; it would clearly fight again, and welcome external support from any patron, if its national integrity was once again at stake. Finland did its best to fight for independent interests, rather than Nazi goals. Even in the face of substantial German pressure, Finland was doggedly uncooperative, and refused to compromise by fighting for German objectives.

The sympathy of the British Dominions and the United States for the Finnish cause in the second Finnish war demonstrated that the reversal of the geopolitical situation, rather than the nature of the Finnish war, was to blame for the change in relations with the west. British policy in the Winter War had been determined by opportunism and the realities of power politics. Therefore it was logical that in the second Finnish war the same determining factors would apply. Since Britain was committed to the European war, it held a global view of the situation. Finland was little more than an annoyance to British war policy. Britain would much rather have seen the Soviet Union annex Finland than to see Finland contribute one iota to the German war effort.

The shift in the balance of power put Finnish objectives at odds with British war aims. Regardless of Finland's limited objectives, the 1941 war with the Soviet Union was inherently related to the wider conflict because Finland's success compromised the fighting capacity of Britain's most important ally. As the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Richard Law, acknowledged in December 1941, it did not matter that Finland always claimed a defensive war because "it was obviously to the advantage of the Soviet Government as well as of His Majesty's

Government that Finland should be induced if possible to withdraw from active hostility.”<sup>529</sup> Finnish claims, whether they were valid or not, were of secondary importance. Churchill personally regretted the reversal in relations between the two countries; but because of the realities of power politics, Britain found it necessary to declare war on Finland for the overall war aims.

Since the British public had seen the first Finnish war through the prism of their own experience in the war, it was predictable that they would do so again in the second Finnish war. Because of this tendency, the public was both unable and unwilling to see the complexity of the Finnish situation. The Anglo-Finnish bond in the Winter War was largely based on the perception of a common enemy. The geopolitical shift changed those British perceptions: the Soviet Union was an ally and Finland the enemy. The British public oversimplified the new Finnish-Soviet conflict and fit it into their own view of the world war, just as they did in 1939 when they saw Finland as an ally in the war against aggression. They failed to comprehend how Finland could fight alongside Germany against an ally of Britain. The public perceived the Finns to have betrayed the Allied cause, when in reality the Finns had fought for independent objectives in the Winter War and did so again in 1941. In contrast to Britain’s perception of the Winter War, in 1941 the Soviet Union was the victim and Finland was now the aggressor.

In the United States, political realism prompted American internationalists to accept the Soviet Union as a vital ally but they retained their positive image of Finland; and because of their deeply rooted suspicion and opposition to communism, Americans understood Finland’s struggle against the Soviet Union. To Americans, Finland was still a liberal democracy fighting for its

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<sup>529</sup> Parliamentary Debates, Fifth Series, Volume 376, House of Commons Official Report: Session 1940-1941, November 12 – December 19, 1941, 1502.

right to exist against a communist threat. The American ideal of self-determination justified Finland's struggle. Even Finland's new association with Germany did not tarnish its image in the United States because internationalists recognized the complexity of Finland's situation: Finland used Germany to support its national interests, just as America used the Soviet Union. In the interests of its own security, the United States took a global view of the situation but understood why Finland could not. Internationalists therefore adopted a conflicting view: sympathetic to Finland's situation but supportive of the Soviet Union. The Roosevelt administration adopted an exceptional policy toward Finland that reflected those views.

For isolationists, the nation that had proved that not all European wars were meaningless now became a prime example of the injustice of the greater war. Until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, isolationists were outraged that Roosevelt would indirectly support the Soviet Union against Finland by aiding it in the greater war. To isolationists, this scenario was immoral because of the conflict between American interests in the war and basic American ideals of democracy and self-determination.

This striking contrast between British and American attitudes and policy toward Finland was partially due to their level of involvement in the war. In the winter of 1939-1940 Britain and France believed that aid to Finland out of sympathy would have been a foolish waste of valuable resources. However, the Finnish war and world opinion presented Allied war strategy with a unique opportunity to take the initiative by cutting Germany off from its vital iron ore resources. By the summer of 1941 Britain could ill afford to tolerate a Finnish war with its most important ally under any circumstances. They were far more desperate than the United States and their bond of friendship with Finland was less strong. Britain was heavily dependent on the Soviet

Union, which used its leverage to determine British policy toward Finland. The United States, on the other hand, was technically neutral and could afford to offer moral judgement during both Finnish wars. However, American-Finnish bonds survived even after the United States became involved in the war.

The contrasting opinions between Britain and the United States were determined by essential differences in British and American worldviews. Both British and American policies toward Finland were shaped by their respective ideals for an international system that would best promote peace. Americans proved far more idealistic, while the British conformed to the realities of power politics. The British believed that the European system of fences and spheres of influence would promote good relations between neighbours. In contrast, the United States had spent its entire history dismantling the system of European imperialists and believed that spheres of influence promoted competition, rivalry and war.<sup>530</sup> The British were willing to recognize Soviet interests in Europe but only to the extent of American toleration. In December 1941, the Foreign Office seriously considered offering the Soviet Union a deal for a postwar system that would recognize both a British and Soviet sphere of influence in Europe: between Finland and Sweden in northern Europe. The idea never materialized, but at its root were traditional British assumptions that small states were expendable to further the interests of great powers: yet another case in which Britain proved willing to sacrifice Finland for the sake of good relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>531</sup>

The American concern in 1941 was that Britain's determination to establish a sphere of influence in Europe would guarantee a reciprocal Soviet determination to do the same in Eastern

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<sup>530</sup> Berry, 102.

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

Europe. America believed that a liberal international economy was essential for American prosperity, whereas spheres of influence could potentially limit American commerce. While Britain was willing to sacrifice Finland in its own interests, Americans had a vision of a liberal world in which the self-determination of small states would play a vital role. As a small democracy at war with America's ideological nemesis, Finland came to represent American ideals of promotion and defence of democracy and liberal capitalism.<sup>532</sup>

In summary, British policy toward Finland was the outcome of a practical response to its military situation; worldview that accepted spheres of influence and the notion of expendable small states; and willingness to compromise to further its relations with the Soviet Union. Britain would have been willing to accept Finland's policy of co-belligerency with Germany had it not caused problems in Anglo-Soviet relations.<sup>533</sup> In contrast, the United States was unwilling to sacrifice small states, particularly Finland, because it contradicted the American worldview. Furthermore, Americans were willing to accept Finland's co-belligerency because it was consistent with American ideals, despite their active support of the Soviet Union against Germany. The second Finnish war fit the American belief that even small states have the right to self-determination. Because of America's idealism and the deep roots of American-Finnish friendship founded in common values, it maintained its positive image of Finland even through the turmoil of the Second World War.

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<sup>532</sup> *Ibid*, 120.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

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