

RUSSIA'S DRIVE TO THE BALTIC

VON RIBBENTROP'S treaty with Russia resulted in the virtual withdrawal of Nazi Germany from north-eastern Europe and gave the Soviet Union an opportunity for an unexpected imperialist drive at the expense of the Baltic provinces and Finland. The partition of Poland so disturbed the balance of power in north-eastern Europe that the Baltic provinces were unable to maintain their independence. The Finns, however, are made of stern stuff and have a long national history. They have, moreover, greater national achievements to their credit than Poland — including a remarkable school of modern architecture.

For good or evil the Treaty of Versailles sought to remodel the map of Europe upon a basis of racial self-determination, and Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were among the smaller creations. None of them proved to have real economic justification or a real capacity for self-defence. At the moment it remains to be seen whether Finland will be more fortunate. In general, Finland regards herself as a Scandinavian State and definitely outside the Slav sphere.

Aaland Islands

Taken from Sweden by Russia in 1809 and now part of Finland, Russia demands islands shall not be fortified, though fortification may become essential if Finnish-Swedish trade in Gulf of Bothnia is to be protected.

Baltiski

Estonian port, which Russia is fortifying. Dominates entrance to Gulf of Finland. It is also a Soviet commercial port with free transit through Estonia.

Dagoe Island

At the head of the Gulf of Finland. It belongs to Estonia, but is being fortified by Soviet Union, which regards island as marking beginning of Russian territorial waters.

Hanko

Ice-free Finnish port at head of Gulf of Finland, which Russia is demanding as naval base. Cession would make Gulf of Finland a Russian lake, as the Union already occupies Baltiski and Reval.

Helsingfors (Helsinki)

Capital of Finland, it has a deep harbour protected by islands. In time of Tsarist Empire was most heavily fortified naval station after Kronstadt, defence being based upon Sveaborg (q.v.). Ice breakers keep port open in winter.

Hogland

Island in Gulf of Finland, which Soviet Russia demands shall be ceded by Finland.

Kronstadt

Fortified seaport 20 miles west of Leningrad. Dominates Gulf of Finland and is the base of the Russian Baltic Fleet—it is connected with Leningrad by deep ship canal. Because of recently concluded agreements with Baltic States, the Soviet navy will now be able to leave Kronstadt during three months of ice-bound period and use Estonian and Latvian bases.



Karelia

District east of Finland, where Russia proposes frontier rectification in order to compensate Finland for loss of naval control in Gulf of Finland. Karelia is rich in natural resources, such as iron, nickel, and zinc. The Baltic-White Sea canal, opened 1933, facilitates export of timber and other products.

Leningrad (St. Petersburg)

Industrial centre of Russia on River Neva, where river enters Gulf of Finland.

Libau (Liepaja)

Fortified Latvian port in the Baltic, granted to Russia as a naval base, October, 1939. Free from ice, except for about a fortnight annually.

Lapland

Country of birch, pine and fir: herds of reindeer feed on its lichen. There are only a few hundred Finnish Laplanders and they breed reindeer or fish.

Murmansk

Russian port on Kola Peninsula linked with Leningrad by railway. It is ice free.

Osel

Estonian island which Russia occupied and fortified during October, 1939, in order to command entrance of Gulf of Riga.

Petrage

Russian artillery base, for defence of Gulf of Riga, which Latvia granted to Soviet Union, October, 1939.

Petsamo

Finland's only Arctic port, which Russia seeks to dominate by securing whole of Rybachi Peninsula.

The little settlement of Lunhamari, on a fjord at the mouth of the Petsamo River, is centre of lively trade in timber and dried cod. The port has deep water and is ice free and permits of free access to the Atlantic all the year round. Hence its value to Finland.

Reval (Tallinn)

Fortified capital of Estonia, which Russian troops occupied after conquest of Poland, October 1939.

Riga

Fortified seaport on Gulf of Riga, 312 miles southwest of Leningrad, and after St. Petersburg and Odessa the most important seaport of Tsarist Russia. Passed to Lithuania when Baltic Provinces established, but Soviet Russia forced Lithuania to grant control of Riga, October, 1939.

Sveaborg

Fortress three miles from Helsingfors, often called "the Gibraltar of the North."

Tallinn

See Reval.

Viipuri (Viborg)

Defensive post amid lakes on Finnish frontier. Russia is demanding removal of frontier westwards, in order to command the entrance to Viipuri Bay.

Windau

Latvian port, which Russia occupied as naval base in October, 1939.

(Prepared by Ernest Short and drawn by Bip Pares for "London Calling.")