

FINLAND WAS READY

EVERYTHING that Wallenius, the Finnish general, told me in 1937 has come true, and I am not surprised by the Finnish resistance to Russian aggression. The Finns were prepared. On a summer evening I walked with the General on the sward beside the sea in the Bay of Nurmensätti to the west of the Sound of Petsamo. Wallenius is a pleasant-looking man of middle age and medium height, clean-shaven, with iron-grey hair, keen, grey-blue eyes that often twinkle, and a friendly smile. In the Great War he was wounded several times when fighting for Germany against Russia on the eastern front. He was then one of the 2,000 Finns who joined the 27th Prussian Jäger Battalion in order to free their country from the yoke of Russian oppression.

"And what of the future?" I asked.

"War within two or three years. Up here the Russian frontier is closely guarded, but south of Petsamo is a long frontier across wild country. The Lapps on this side are quite friendly with their neighbours in Russia. They are of the same race, and we know that there is a certain amount of friendly intercourse between them. Anyone who wants to know what is happening on the Russian side can find out quite a lot from our Lapps. The Russians have a series of flying grounds along the Finnish border, and their flying strength is now very impressive. The extent of their activities leaves nothing to be desired.

Communism at Work

"Throughout Scandinavia there is a Communist movement at work. Here the important thing is that Finland, Norway, and Sweden should work together for a common front against a common enemy. It should be Scandinavia, and not each land for itself. If the Reds win in Spain there will be revolution in France. At this moment conditions in France are very uncertain. As I say, within two or three years there will be war in Europe, and possibly throughout the world, between two systems of government — and one of these is Bolshevism. The nations who wish to remain neutral will go under."

Russia's Objectives

"And what do you think are Russia's objectives?"

"The harbour at Liiinahamari, the only ice free harbour on the Arctic Ocean; the nickel lode at Salmijarvi; the iron ore in the north of Sweden; and the port of Trondjhem on the Atlantic."

"The western Powers would have to intervene?"



Spencer Digby, photograph

*A Review of the War Situation
Written Specially for
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HALLIDAY SUTHERLAND*

"I hope they will intervene, and for that reason I am glad that British and American capital is invested in our nickel mine."

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IN the constitution of Finland it is enacted that "for the defence of the country and of the lawful organisation of society every Finnish man is liable to conscription," and



GENERAL K. M. WALLENIUS

there is a standing conscript army. In addition there is a skeleton Territorial organisation, consisting of nine Provincial Army staffs and thirty District Army staffs. On the outbreak of war this territorial organisation is supplied with the necessary cadres for its war-time units by the Civic Guards, the most mobile military force in Europe. The Civic Guard consists of 100,000 men who voluntarily sacrifice some of their spare time for military exercises. Every Sunday from 2 to 8 p.m. I could hear rifle fire echoing through the forests, a sign of the will of the Finnish nation to defend itself. Membership to the Civic Guard is open to "every Finnish man of good repute, whose loyalty to his country, and its lawful organisation of society, can be relied on."

THE barracks of the Civic Guard are their homes, where each man keeps his rifle, ammunition, uniform, iron rapier, and skis. The Finns believed that their country would be invaded without either an ultimatum or a declaration of war. As it happened, the call to arms came by telegraph and by radio. Within a few hours 100,000 armed men were skiing to the points of attack, where they were formed into territorial units. No force could be more rapidly or easily mobilised, and the Civic Guard was in the field before the regular army. To understand their rapidity of movement it is only necessary to point out that a young adult Finn is able to ski 70 miles a day when carrying a weight of 80lbs. in his haversack. That is their custom when on holidays in time of peace during the winter.

Complementary to the Civic Guard is the "Lotta-Svard," an association of 100,000 women to "awaken and strengthen the idea of the Civic Guard and assist the Civic Guard organisation to defend the faith, the home, and the country." This they do by moral suasion, and by voluntary assistance to the medical, victualling, equipment, and clerical staff of the Civic Guard.

Such is the constitution of an army whose exploits have won the admiration of all right-thinking men and women. A small nation of 3½ million people, with no territorial ambitions, has up to now defended itself against an invader, numerically stronger. The Finns have more than held their own in three theatres of war—in the isthmus between Lake Ladoga, the largest lake in Europe, and the Gulf of Finland; on the long Karelian frontier; and in the Petsamo corridor which gives them access to the Arctic Ocean.

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SO far the war has gone better for the Finns than General Wallenius expected. As a practical soldier he did not under-estimate the numerical strength of Russia. "I do not say that we will be able to hold them, but I do say that we will be able to harass them and to delay them on their march towards Sweden and Norway. We will make full use of our greater mobility and can enfilade them from our mountains because the Russians cannot ski. The attack will come in winter when artillery can be moved over our frozen lakes, rivers, and marshes."

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PROPHECY is dangerous for any writer, especially about war, but having quoted the opinion of a great Finnish General I have less hesitation in saying that I think the Finns will win. They are a truly democratic people, and theirs is the most democratic country in which I have lived. They have a strong sense of the dignity of man. They have moral and physical courage, but in addition to these spiritual things they have—their climate. If the Finns can hold out until the snow melts, usually at the end of April, their war is won. The hard frozen land will then be a land of lakes, rivers, and swamps, difficult for infantry to traverse, impossible for artillery. I pray that the thaw may be early this year.