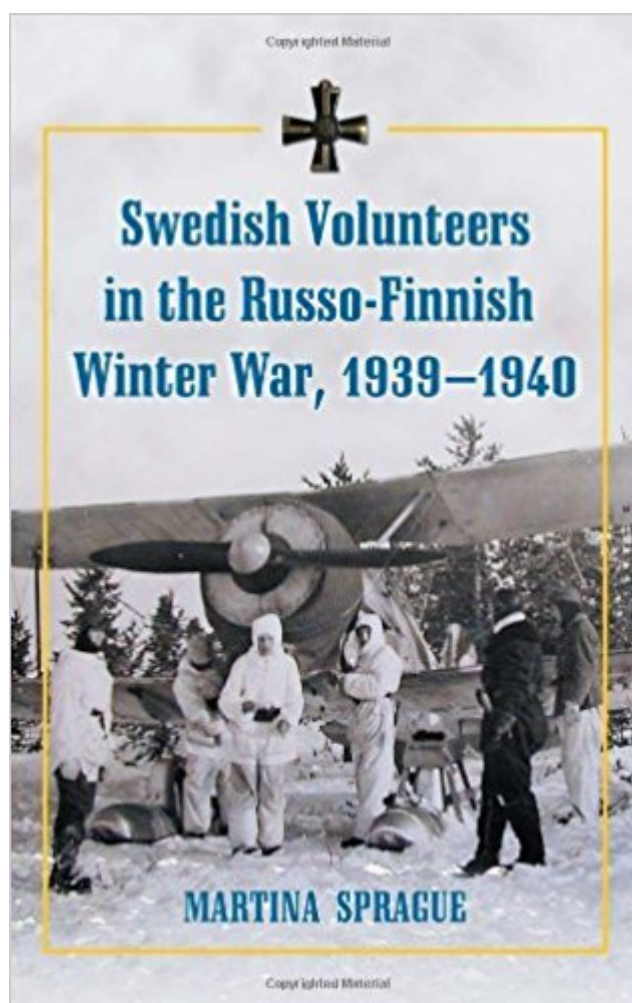




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Swedish Volunteers In The Russo-Finnish Winter War, 1939â€“1940



Synopsis

Sandwiched between Nazi Germany and the "Russian Bear," Sweden walked a diplomatic tightrope on if and how it should support Finland during the Russo-Finnish Winter War. Social and political forces motivated the Swedish leadership to promote neutrality and avoid official military engagement, while at the same time the Swedish Volunteer Corps comprised the largest volunteer combat force (more than 8,200 strong) in any modern war. This book discusses the political background of the 1939-1940 Winter War; setbacks the volunteers suffered due to weather and terrain; and the ever-present fear that war would come to the Scandinavian Peninsula.

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Customer Reviews

I purchased this book believing that it would be a "war diary" or at least a collection of interviews with Swedish volunteers from the Winter War. The title implies that the book will focus on the "Swedish Volunteers in the Russo-Finnish Winter War". If you too make this assumption you will be sadly dissatisfied. What counts for stories about the actual volunteers and their experiences covers only a couple of dozen pages and only adds marginally to what is already known about those 8,260 volunteers....and really could have been written as an essay rather than a book. I have read most books written in English on the Winter War and having finished this book I would

recommmend it as one of the most readable, politically informed and balanced books on the Winter War that I have read in a long time. It is way up there with Max Jakobsons classic "Finland Survived". Most books on the Winter War suffer from micro analysis of battles and battle tactics, statistics and minutiae that numb a reader largely ignorant of this war and the other Finnish wars of the period 1939-1945. This book and Max Jakobson's book put the war firmly in its historical and political context. This book doesn't start with the Soviet invasion of 1939 (as most do). It shows how Finland, Sweden and Russia fitted into the geopolitical landscape of the Baltic since the time of Peter the Great, what had occurred (and not occurred) to bring matters to a head and how once the war started what exactly was everybody's aim, Stalin, Hitler, Churchill, Mannerheim and the Finns and Per Albin Hansson and the Swedes. She also looks beyond this war to the longer term effects of the war. The author, unlike many, doesn't write from the point of view of somebody who wants to show how plucky and brave the Finns were and how stupid the Soviets were. If she can be accused of anything it could be her justification of Swedish neutrality instigated by the political powers largely against the express wishes of their people. However she carries this off with academic aplomb and doesn't take sides in the argument but rather puts forward the case for all sides and as a result you come to the only logical conclusion, Sweden had to stay neutral, but with a twist...hence the volunteers. She manages to get across some quite complex political machinations without losing the reader and all in a highly readable style. The Author does herself no favours though by giving the book the title it has. It sounds far too academic and much like an account of a very minor part in a minor war that at best would only appeal to a history Professor who has already read everything on the subject and is just looking for anything on the subject having exhausted every other source. However you will be rewarded instead with a readable balanced account of the War. If you are somebody who has only vaguely heard about a war between the Finns and the Soviets and would like to find out more this is an excellent starting point. There is the added benefit that there is a lot of information on the political fallout within Sweden, a subject never addressed in English texts. This in my opinion is the best introduction, currently in print, to the Winter War...Max Jakobson's book being out of print for the last 30 years. Definitely a must read.

Excellent analysis of the unique position Sweden and Finland found themselves in the days leading to the Winter War, Continuation War, and WW II. somewhat less research into the unique, day by day life of the volunteers. I found the typeface difficult to read.

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