

80 years since the Winter War 30.11.1939 - 13.3.1940

The Soviet Union and Germany divides the eastern part of Europe

The year is 1939. Two strong military powers dominate Europe and the world. Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union and Adolf Hitler in Germany decides to divide the eastern parts of Europe into two spheres of interest. This meant for instance, that Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania would become part of the Soviet Union sphere, which meant that the Soviet Union could attack Finland without interference from Germany.



The agreement was signed on August 23rd 1939 in Moscow by the Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, after a short and intense diplomacy.

The Molotov-Ribbentrop pact meant in practice that the **second World War** was imminent. It didn't take long before the Soviet Union demanded of Finland:

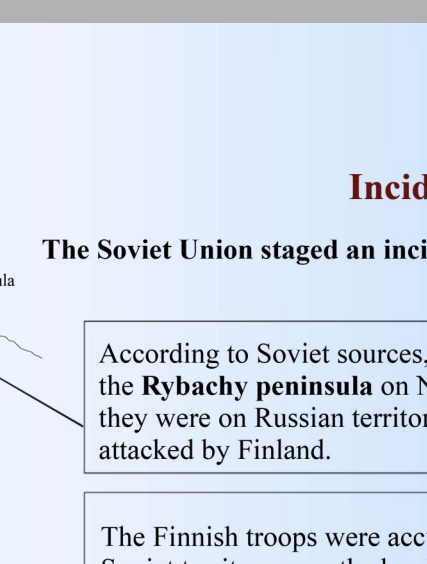
- **Hanko** will become a military base with berths in Lappvik
- **The border on the Karelian Isthmus** will be moved farther west
- **The islands in the eastern Gulf of Finland** will become Russian territory
- **The western part of the Rybachy peninsula** in the north will become Russian territory
- **The fortifications on the Karelian Isthmus** are to be destroyed

Finland gave a negative answer to the Russian demands, which caused Joseph Stalin to look for a valid reason to attack Finland.

To the Karelian Isthmus for a "reserve exercise"

On October 13th 1939 men were drafted for reserve exercises. The reservist from Larsmo gathered in Holm school for travels to Vaasa , where they were equipped and travelled by train to an unknown destination. No one knew where the journey would end. The train stopped at a station named Kämärä. They had reached the Karelian Isthmus. The journey continued on foot to Huumola village. The next day they reached the final destination at the Lähde road near Summa.

There the squadron leader with the Artillery section, George Lucander decided to pitch camp, probably for a longer period of time. Fortification work commenced immediately. First and foremost they built bunkers, dug trenches, strung telephone wires, constructed protection for horses and got the Artillery weapons ready.



The bunkers became a home to the crew for a long time. The loose sand was dug out, logs were cut down for the roof, which were covered with cloth, sand, rocks, branches and moss.



Incident at the border

The Soviet Union staged an incident at the border to get a reason to attack Finland

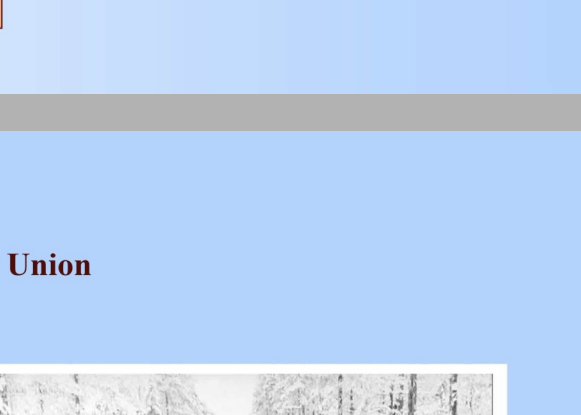


According to Soviet sources, three Finnish border guards were captured on the **Rybachy peninsula** on November 28th, because according to Soviets they were on Russian territory. The allegation was that the Soviet Union was attacked by Finland.

The Finnish troops were accused of firing 7 shots towards **Mainila**, located in Soviet territory near the border. The event allegedly took place on November 26th at 3 pm, in which four Russian soldiers died and nine were wounded. Already at 7.30 pm a memorandum was given to a Finnish emissary in Moscow, which stated that the Soviet troops had been fired upon. A demand was made that Finnish troops withdraw from the border.

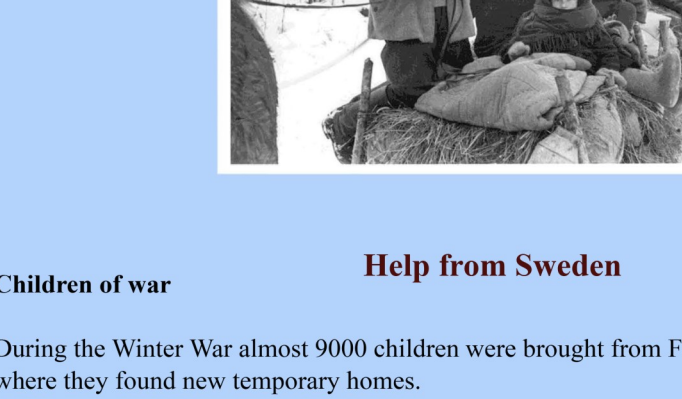
Later it has been confirmed from both Finnish and Russian sides, that a Russian command group had fired grenades from east of the border.

Soviet union attacks along the whole border on November 30th 1939

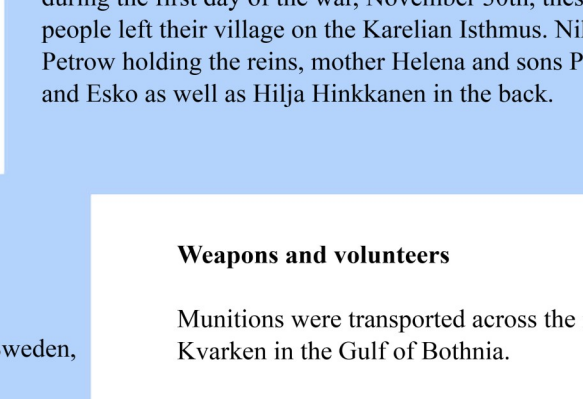


Finland at war with the Soviet Union

Helsinki bombed



Bombs fall over Helsinki. Also other cities and towns such as Hango, Vyborg, Lappeenranta, Lahti, Turku, Vaasa and Riihimäki were hit.



Massive Russian troops attacked along Raate road towards Suomussalmi, but were stopped by the Finnish defense forces.



People flee from the eastern parts of the country. Already during the first day of the war, November 30th, these people left their village on the Karelian Isthmus. Nikolaj Petrov holding the reins, mother Helena and sons Pentti and Esko as well as Hilja Hinkkanen in the back.

Children of war

During the Winter War almost 9000 children were brought from Finland to Sweden, where they found new temporary homes.

Help from Sweden

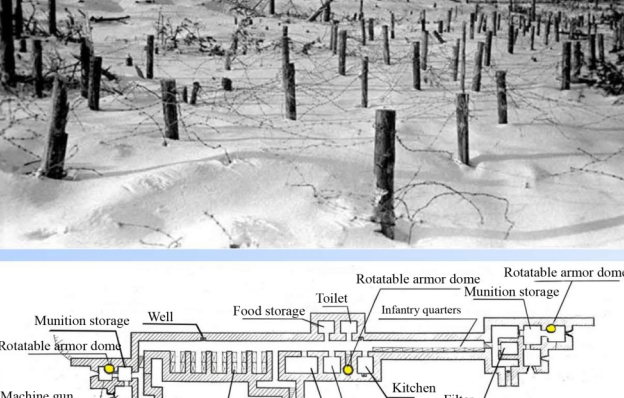
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Weapons and volunteers

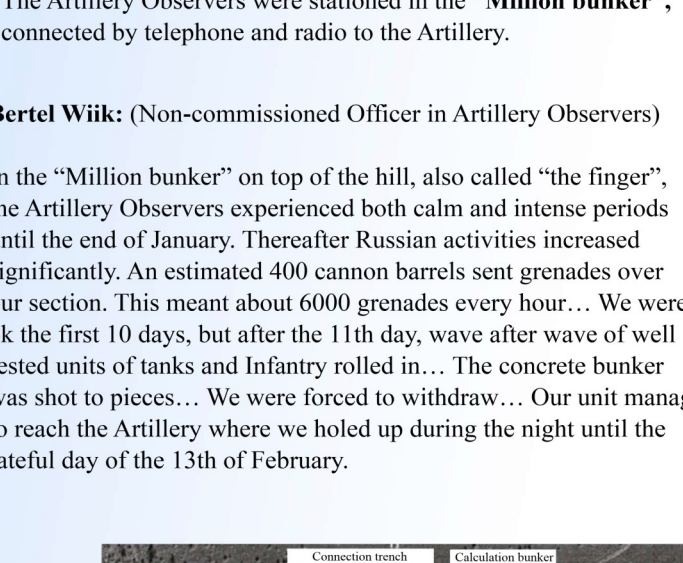
Munitions were transported across the ice of Kvarken in the Gulf of Bothnia.



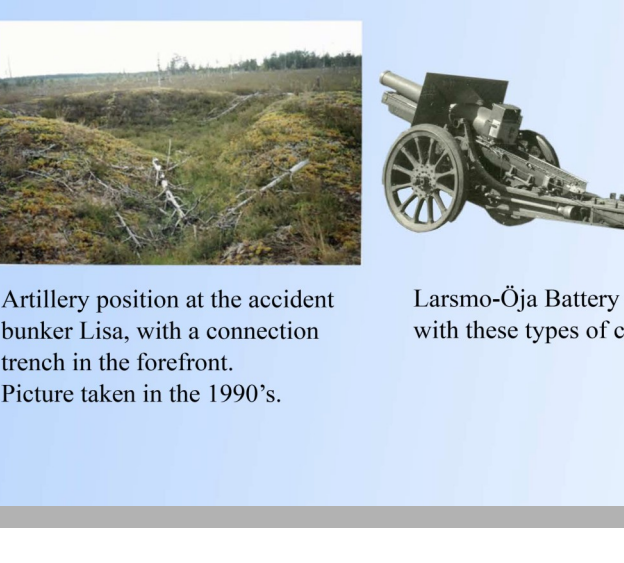
The Lähde section when the war began



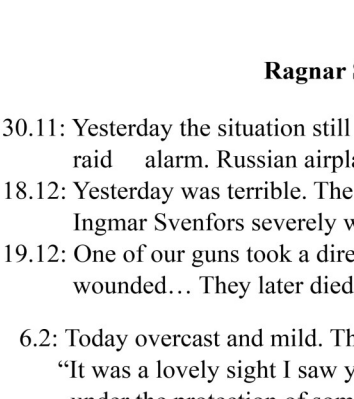
At the main line of defence the Infantry and Artillery Observers worked close together. A picture from the attack in Summa 1939



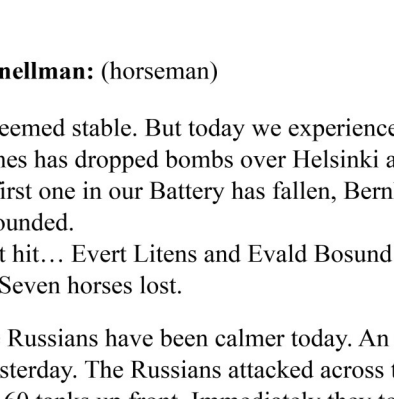
Larsmo-Öja Artillery, in red on the map, was approximately 3 km behind the main defence lines. The Artillery Observers were stationed in the "Million bunker", connected by telephone and radio to the Artillery.



The "Million bunker" on top of the hill. The drawing shows the various rooms in the bunker.



Artillery position at the accident bunker Lisa, with a connection trench in the forefront. Picture taken in the 1990's.



Larsmo-Öja Artillery was equipped with these types of cannons.



Second Artillery Batteries positions at the Lähde section. The accident bunker Lisa is to the right and the Maja bunker to the left in the picture.

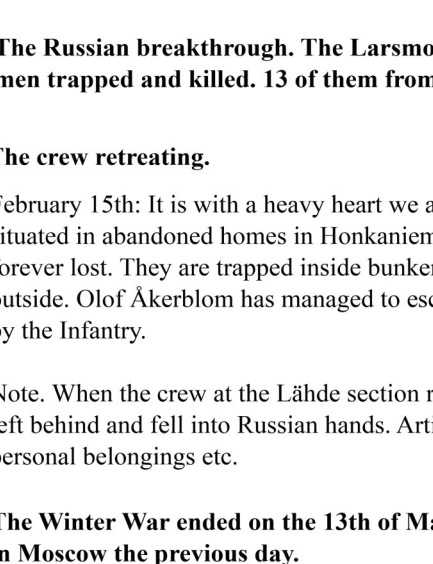
Diary notes November 1939 - February 1940

Ragnar Snellman: (horseman)

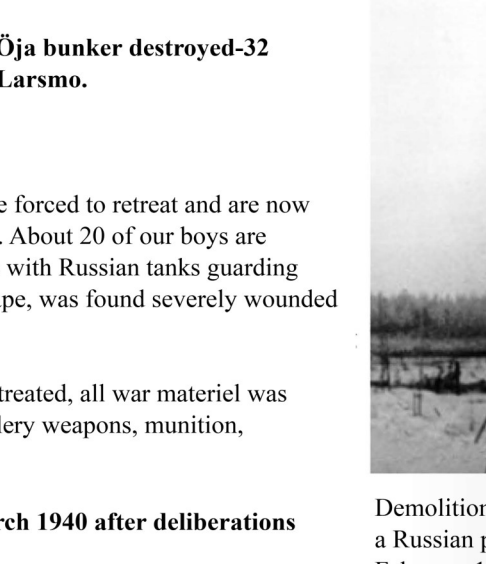
- 30.11: Yesterday the situation still seemed stable. But today we experienced the first air raid alarm. Russian airplanes has dropped bombs over Helsinki and Vyborg.
- 18.12: Yesterday was terrible. The first one in our Battery has fallen, Bernhard Kronqvist. Ingemar Svenfors severely wounded.
- 19.12: One of our guns took a direct hit... Evert Litens and Evald Bosund severely wounded... They later died. Seven horses lost.
- 6.2: Today overcast and mild. The Russians have been calmer today. An eyewitness tells: "It was a lovely sight I saw yesterday. The Russians attacked across the lake Summa under the protection of some 60 tanks up front. Immediately they took direct hits by our Artillery's firestorm. 3 tanks sunk to the bottom, 5 others were derailed and the rest turned around."
- 11.2: The worst day of the war. The first Battery was forced to abandon their Artillery Observers position and lost one man.
- 12.2: Our Artillery Observers were forced to abandon their Observation position at the Million bunker. All day fiery fire at the front line. The Russians... (notes interrupted)
- 13-14.2: No notes due to fiery fire



A ten russian grenade-a dud inspected by the crew at the Lisa bunker. From left Ragnar Amine, Duvald Granqvist, Olof Finne, Atte Larsson, Bruno Finholm and Ragnar Öberg. Amine, Larsson and Finholm died in the Lisa bunker.



The task of the horses was very demanding. They pulled the heavy Artillery in place, transported the wounded and fallen, they brought soup, firewood and munition, but adjusted in a marvelous way to the horrors of war and scarce conditions. During the Winter War about 7.000 horses served in the Finnish army.



The Russian breakthrough. The Larsmo-Öja bunker destroyed-32 men trapped and killed. 13 of them from Larsmo.



The crew retreating. February 15th: It is with a heavy heart we are forced to retreat and are now situated in abandoned homes in Honkaniemi. About 20 of our boys are forever lost. They are trapped inside bunkers with Russian tanks guarding outside. Olof Åkerblom has managed to escape, was found severely wounded by the Infantry.



Note: When the crew at the Lähde section retreated, all war materiel was left behind and fell into Russian hands. Artillery weapons, munition, personal belongings etc.

The Winter War ended on the 13th of March 1940 after deliberations in Moscow the previous day.

Peace and conditions of peace

Finland and the Soviet Union signed the Peace treaty in Moscow on March 12th 1940. The battles ended the following day. But the Russian demands affected our land very hard.

Areas which Finland lost:

- Karelia and Ladoga
- Parts of Salmu and Kusamo
- The Finnish part of the Rybachy peninsula
- The islands in eastern Gulf of Finland

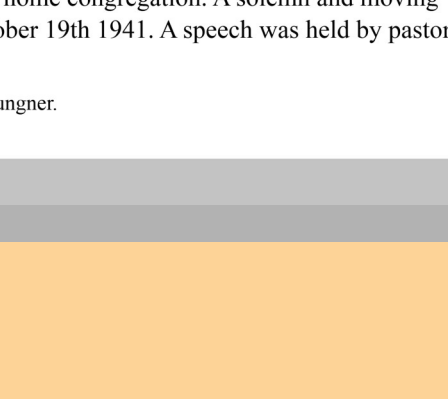
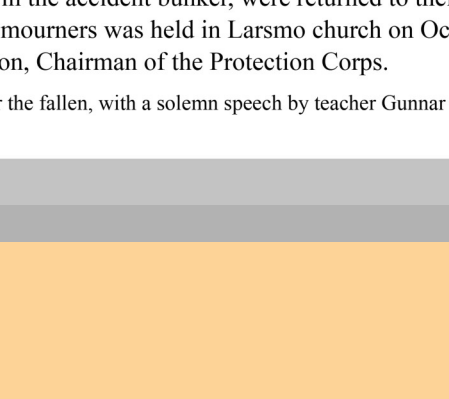
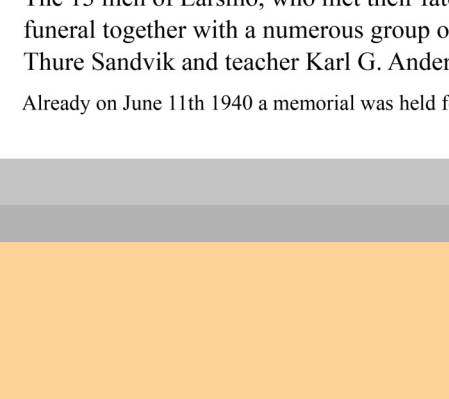
In addition Hanko was leased as a Soviet naval base for 30 years. Finland was forced to compensate for the evacuated industries from Karelia, and to ally themselves with Russia.



The people of Hanko were given 10 days to leave their homes as well as their belongings which could not be brought along. Picture taken from the square with evacuation buses and government building in the background.

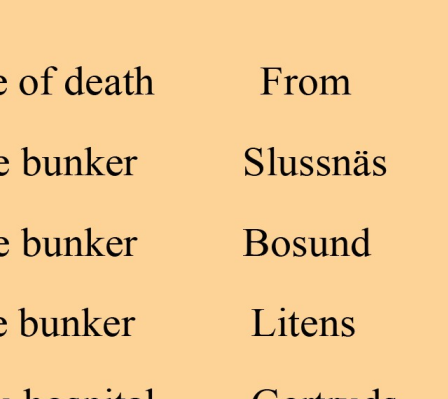
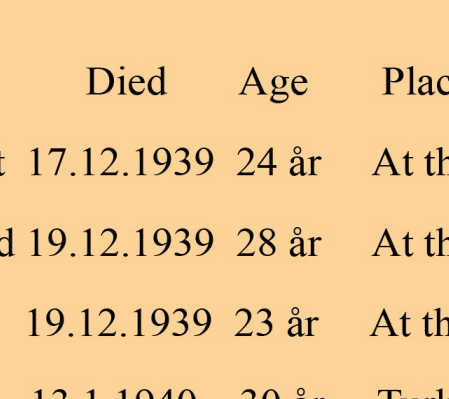
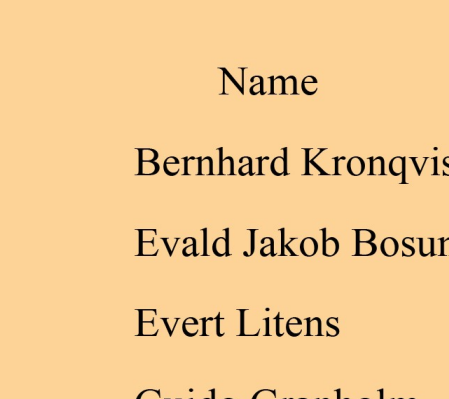
The accident bunker was dug out in September 1941

During the Continuation War (1941-44) Finland reclaimed Karelian Isthmus. On September 14th 1941 a group arrived from the Tunga section 17 and Grova section 4 which were stationed in the Kajjala area at Sestrotësk. The place was found and they decided to try to open the cave-in bunker. The next week 20 men returned to the place. All 32 victims were found and identified. The fallen soldiers were brought home in white caskets.



The accident bunker has revealed its secret

The funeral 1941

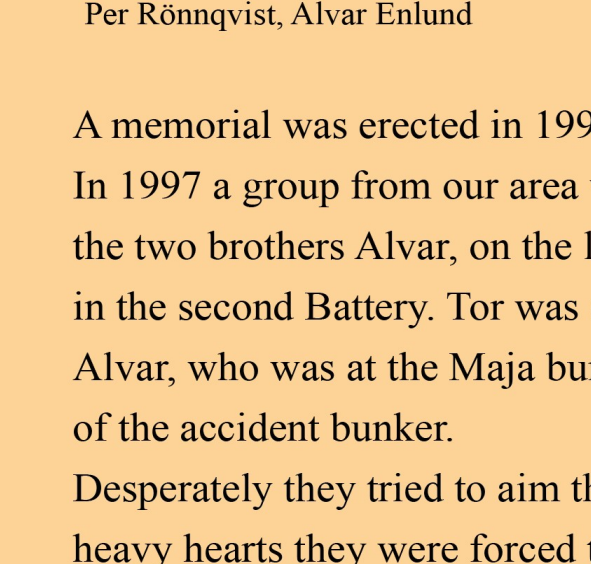


The 13 men of Larsmo, who met their fate in the accident bunker, were returned to their home congregation. A solemn and moving funeral together with a numerous group of mourners was held in Larsmo church on October 19th 1941. A speech was held by pastor Thure Sandvik and teacher Karl G. Anderson, chairmen of the Larsmo Church.

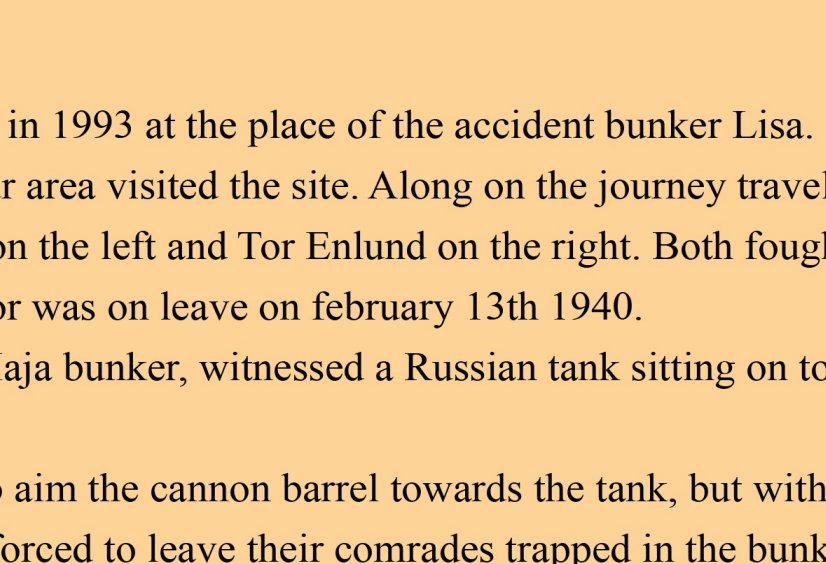
Already on June 11th 1940 a memorial was held for the fallen, with a solemn speech by teacher Gunnar Jungner.

Men from Larsmo who gave their lives during the Winter War 1939 - 1940

Name	Died	Age	Place of death	From
Bernhard Kronqvist	17.12.1939	24 år	At the bunker	Slussnäs
Evald Jakob Bosund	19.12.1939	28 år	At the bunker	Bosund
Evert Litens	19.12.1939	23 år	At the bunker	Litens
Guido Granholm	13.1.1940	30 år	Turku hospital	Gertruds
Magnus Asplund	13.2.1940	24 år	In the bunker	Slussnäs
Bruno Finholm	13.2.1940	29 år	In the bunker	Finholm
Alvar Hannula	13.2.1940	27 år	In the bunker	Hannula
Lennart Holmborg	13.2.1940	28 år	In the bunker	Kapténs
Erik Häggman	13.2.1940	28 år	In the bunker	Gertruds
Helge Jakobsson	13.2.1940	24 år	In the bunker	Risöhall
Atte Larsson	13.2.1940	25 år	In the bunker	Grev
Herman Lindholm	13.2.1940	25 år	In the bunker	Bosund
Evald Nordqvist	13.2.1940	24 år	In the bunker	Bosund
Uno Sjöström	13.2.1940	25 år	In the bunker	Finholm
Joel Snellman	13.2.1940	32 år	In the bunker	Gertruds
Thure Snellman	13.2.1940	25 år	In the bunker	Gädda
Emil Strömsholm	13.2.1940	29 år	In the bunker	Strömsholm
Tor Åkerlund	18.2.1940	24 år	At Tienhaara	Brask
Herman Nyfors	6.3.1940	40 år	At Säckjärvi	Litens



Summa, Sept. 14th 1941
From left unknown, Tor Enlund
Per Rönnqvist, Alvar Enlund



A memorial was erected in 1993 at the place of the accident bunker Lisa. In 1997 a group from our area visited the site. Along on the journey travelled the two brothers Alvar, on the left and Tor Enlund on the right. Both fought in the second Battery. Tor was on leave on february 13th 1940.

Alvar, who was at the Maja bunker, witnessed a Russian tank sitting on top of the accident bunker.

Desperately they tried to aim the cannon barrel towards the tank, but with heavy hearts they were forced to leave their comrades trapped in the bunker.