

Tolvajärvi,
December 8-12, 1939

Battle of the



Frozen Lakes

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Part 3 – December 8th

When we left off:

The Soviet steamroller is approaching the village of Tolvajärvi. Pajari's small task force has bought just enough time for the first Finnish Army units (JR16 Regiment) to arrive at the front.

December 8, 1939

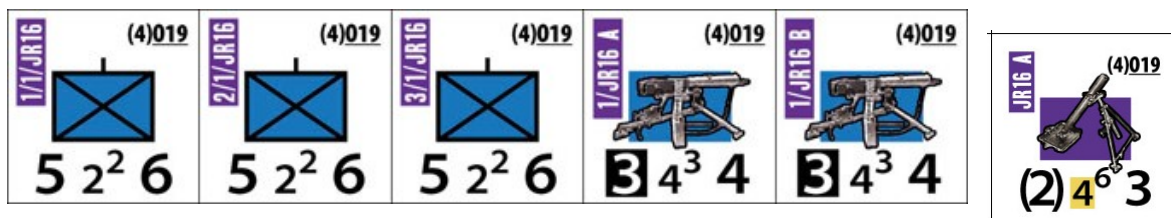
Newly arrived at the front, the units of Finnish battalion JR16 must weather the Soviet onslaught throughout the critical first day of the battle for Tolvajärvi. JR16 falls back in disarray when faced with an organized Soviet attack, but it has bought enough time for the formations across the lake to dig in and recover.

JR16's failure to hold for longer is a bit of a mystery, but it may stem from multiple causes. Our research uncovered several possible causes. (special thanks to Vesa for his translations of the Finnish texts!)

1. In the confusion, it appears that the Finns of JR16 were shelled by their own mortars when they arrived near Kivisalmi Bridge (according to Finnish accounts).

2. This debacle, in combination with recon reports that a Russian regiment was in the process of outflanking Tolvajärvi from the north, may have led the Finns of JR16 to believe that the mortar shells from behind them were in fact from a Soviet force that had arrived to surround them. This is only a theory.

3. The leaders of two of the companies of 1/JR16 Battalion were not good leaders. This probably didn't help the Finns' resolve (this again from Finnish sources).

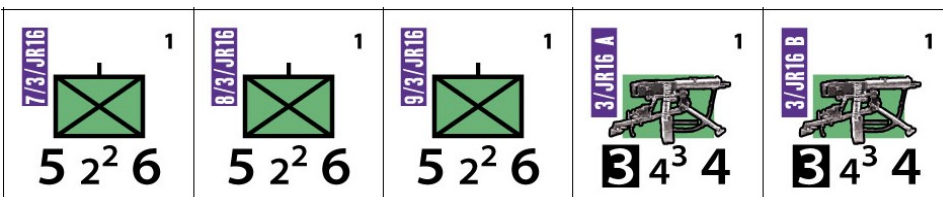


The following screenshot shows one possible setup for the Finnish player on turn 1 of Red Winter. It is fairly close to the historical setup of units.



At about the same time the Soviets launch their attack near Kivisalmi Bridge, the third battalion of JR16 arrives in the vicinity of Tolvajärvi.

They are still too far away to participate in the defense near the bridge. Instead, they head to the village itself and begin digging in.

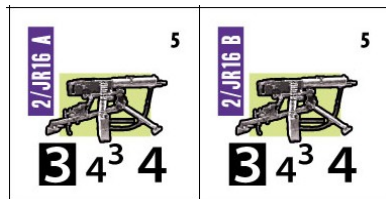
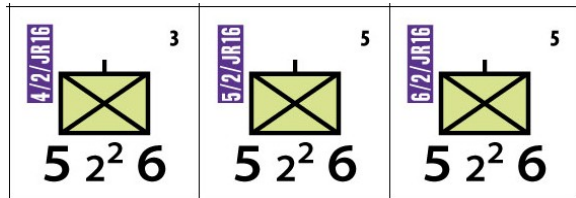


As night falls, the Soviets manage to capture the tourist hotel near Tolvajärvi, setting up their HQ on the second story. They are unable to dislodge Finnish defenders from the nearby gravel pits.

The Soviets immediately begin fortifying the chalet-style hotel. The only real defensible man-made structure in the greater area, the hotel is of vital importance to both sides in this battle. It sits atop a small hill along the main highway. Soon it is bristling with Soviet MGs and light machine guns. Recapturing it now will not be an easy task for the Finns.



As darkness falls, the second battalion of JR16 arrives at the front, thus completing JR16 (except for some engineers and mortars which will arrive the following day).



They set up position west of Hevossalmi Bridge-west of the gravel pits and hotel- and prevent the Soviets from continuing their drive in that direction.

Unknown to the men at this time, two of the three companies of 2/JR16 infantry will soon accompany Pajari in his bold night raid against the Soviet camps.

December 8 p.m.

On the evening of December 8, the Soviets also manage to capture Kotisaari Island. Knowing that they stand no chance, the Finns pull off the island voluntarily and without heavy losses.

Like the tourist hotel, Kotisaari Island is vital to the success of both sides in this battle. It can be used as a launching point for flank attacks against the enemy. Situated in the center of Lake Tolvajärvi, and just east of the town Tolvajärvi, Kotisaari is heavily forested and rugged, with one small settlement at the north end of the island.



If Kotisaari Island is controlled by the Soviets, the village of Tolvajärvi becomes vulnerable to attacks from the south and east (instead of just from the main axis of advance along the highway). If controlled by the Finns, the Soviet supply line and artillery park can be threatened.

The Soviets immediately begin digging in on Kotisaari Island. They plan to launch an attack across the ice, against the village of Tolvajärvi, on the following day.

Red Winter Notes:

December 8, 1939, is where the game Red Winter begins.

In Red Winter, the Soviets start with a strong numerical superiority, but initially lack much of their artillery support.

The Soviet player will need to carefully weigh the risks associated with making relatively low odds attacks (and when I say "relatively low odds" I'm talking about 2:1 and 3:1 attacks- once the Soviet artillery and mortars have a chance to enter, this typically becomes 5:1 or better).

The Finnish player will have a tough balancing act of his own; he must decide when to sacrifice units to hold ground, and when to retreat and preserve his forces.

Players can assign losses as either retreats or step reductions, within three parameters: The attacker always takes his first loss as a step reduction, a defender taking 3 or more losses must take the first as a step reduction, and no unit may retreat more hexes than one half its movement allowance.

Both sides start the game with relatively few units on the map, but reinforcements for both sides arrive in a steady trickle (though mostly Soviets reinforcements at first).

Pictured below: The Combat Results Table (CRT) for Red Winter. Numbers to the left of the slash are attacker losses; numbers to the right are defender losses.

Numbers in red remind players of the rules for mandatory losses- namely, attackers always take the first loss as a step reduction, and defenders taking 3 or more losses must take the first as a step reduction.

Roll	1:4	1:3	1:2	1:1	2:1	3:1	4:1	5:1	6:1
2	5/0	4/0	4/0	3/0	3/0	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0
3	4/0	4/0	3/0	3/0	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1
4	4/0	3/0	3/0	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1
5	3/0	3/0	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	0/2
6	3/0	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	0/2	0/2
7	2/0	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	0/2	0/2	0/3
8	2/0	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	0/2	0/2	0/3	0/3
9	2/1	1/0	1/1	0/1	1/2	0/2	0/3	0/3	0/4
10	1/0	1/1	0/1	1/2	0/2	0/3	0/3	0/4	0/5
11	1/1	0/1	1/2	0/2	0/3	0/3	0/4	0/5	0/6
12+	0/1	1/2	0/2	0/3	0/3	0/4	0/5	0/6	0/7

Condition	Modifier
1. Defender in Frozen Lake	3R (4R if Finns attacking Soviets)
2. Attacker in Frozen Lake or across Bridge hex side	Attacker halved (total rounded up)
3. Successful Support from ranged fire	1L/1R per defensive/offensive "Successful Support" result (maximum 3 shifts in either direction)
4. Finnish SMG bonus (Assaults only)	1L/1R (in Finns' favor) if Finns assaulting into or defending against assault in forest, suo or town.
5. Morale bonus	1L/1R (in favor of side with higher morale) (doubled to 2L/2R in assaults) <i>Favors Soviets on Dec 8, favors Finns Dec 11-12.</i>
6. Pajari leader bonus	1L/1R (in Finns' favor) when stacked with Pajari
7. Concentric Attack bonus	1R
8. Defender in "Dug-In" Hex	1L

December 9 a.m.

In the wee morning hours of Dec 9, Pajari , along with two companies of men from the newly arrived battalion JR16 (2/JR16), crosses the south end of Lake Tolvajärvi under the darkness of the new moon. His plan is to discover the Soviet encampment, and attack with the advantage of surprise.

The bike battalion, PPP7, is now rested and recovered. Talvela knows that they may not have the heart for another defense, but they may fare better on the offense. He orders them to assault Kotisaari Island at the same time Pajari's raiding force is seeking out their targets. Thus PPP7 will serve as a diversion from the "real" attack.

Pajari and his men set out on their mission, silently crossing the frozen lake in search of the Soviet camps...

Note: The results of Pajari's daring night raid, as well as bike battalion PPP7's diversionary assault on Kotisaari Island, will be revealed in detail in the next installment.

To Be Continued...

