

## The Source of the Term *Molotov Cocktail*

David Landau

On 30 November 1939, three months after the outbreak of World War II, Soviet troops invaded Finland, starting the Finnish Winter War. One of the soldiers of the Finnish army was Simo Taavetti Hämäläinen (1913–1977). Already during the war he started to collect army slang and continued his work in the years after and in 1963 had the material published, *Suomalainen Sotilasslangi* ('Finnish Soldiers' Slang'). In the years 1957-1963 and 1966-1972, the man was a Finnish language lecturer at the University of Helsinki. Between 1951 and 1961 he took part in creating the *Nykysuomen sanakirjan* ('Dictionary of Contemporary Finnish').

Hämäläinen defined a soldiers' slang as words and expressions used by soldiers, which do not belong to the official military language and, at the same time, are not part of the general language nor its dialects. Their tone is usually playful. As a rule, there is always a parallel conventional term, so those slang expressions are different from the normal language. It is sometimes hard to determine whether a certain word is slang or actually belongs to one of the dialects.

After the war Hämäläinen collected entries from various units and eventually ended up with 13000-14000 cards with more than 20000 words, most of them from between 1926 and 1946. There were also entries, for example, from 1590, 1808, and 1846.

In his dictionary Hämäläinen devoted three pages to terms associated with V. M. Molotov, the prime minister of the Soviet Union at the time of the Winter War. The earliest term Hämäläinen mentioned was *Molotovin suljettu* (sulkeisharjoitus) 'Molotov's drill,' from a publication that appeared in December 9, 1939, less than two weeks after the outbreak of the war:

Kun Hennalan sotilaat metsään juoksivat ilmahälytyksen tultua, sanoivat sen olevan '*Molotovin suljettua.*'

When the Soldiers of Hennala ran in the forest after hearing the air raid sirens, they said it was a ‘Molotov drill.’

The term *Molotovin savotta* ‘Molotov’s logging site’ meaning a war or the Winter War appeared in December 20, 1939:

*Molotovin savottaan*, kerrotaan pohjalan jätkän vastannen, kun häneltä tiedusteltiin Rovaniemellä matkan määrää.

‘To Molotov war’ one guy from Ostrobothnia answered when asked the purpose of his traveling to Rovaniemi.

On February 3, 1940, a verb based on the name *Molotov* appeared in print: *moloto(vo)ida* ‘tuhota polttopulloilla ja kasapanoksilla’ ‘to destroy with incendiary bottles and grenades.’

Sai Patojärvi ensimmäisen korsun molotovoitua.

Got the first trench of Patojärvi destroyed.

Hämäläinen listed around 20 such terms. Here are several more examples: *moloto(h)vi*: a Russian, a Russian bomb, a Russian airplane, a Russian car; *Molotovin kanat* ‘Molotov’s eggs’ Russian airplanes; *Molotovin leipä* ‘molotov’s bread’ a Russian air bomb; *Molotovin lintu* ‘Molotov’s bird’ a Russian airplane; *Molotovin muna* ‘Molotov’s egg’ an air bomb; *Molotovin varikset* ‘Molotov’s crows’ Russian airplanes.

Hämäläinen defined the term *Molotov cocktail*, in Finnish *Molotovin koktaili*, as incendiary bottle, or its content, used to destroy armory. It was first used in the battle of Kollaa in 1940. In the beginning these were wine or lemonade bottles filled with gasoline which had a piece of cloth on the neck used for igniting the charge. Later the bottles were filled with easily ignited and burned mixture and it was ignited by a ‘caramel or candy-stick’ attached to the side.



(The photo: Ase-lehti Nro 4/96)

The first examples in Finnish he cited were from 1941: *Helsingin Sanomat* (208/41) [Aug. 4, 1941] and *Tappara* [a newspaper with news and information to the soldiers; until 1939 the newspaper of the Tampere regiment] (47/41). In the example from *Helsingin Sanomat* the term is used in the sense of the fluid inside and not the bottle itself:

Sitä varten on hänellä leipälaukku ja siinä tarpeelliset polttopullot kaulaa myöten täynnä "Molotovin koktailia."

For this he has a bread basket with needed burning bottles filled up to the neck with "Molotov cocktail."

Hämäläinen suggested that the name *Molotov cocktail* may have been first used by English speaking foreign correspondents and as such it was not a translation from Finnish.

The Oxford English Dictionary on-line cites an example for the use of the term from W. Citrine's *My Finnish Diary*, 1940, 41, which I decided to check closely.

The brutal attack by Soviet Russia of her little neighbor of Finland dismayed the civilized world:

Socialists and democrats were stupefied at this outburst of savagery. Was not Russia the great advocate of collective security? Had not its spokesmen repeatedly affirmed their single desire to live at peace with the world? Russia had no need of further "living room." Controlling over one-sixth of the earth's surface, it boasted of immeasurable natural resources. Time and time again Litvinov, Molotov and Stalin had proclaimed that Russia did not covet a single yard of the territory of any other state. Territorial expansion was the discredited device of capitalist countries. Russia had no such imperialist designs. (Citrine 1940: 5)

So, the British Labour Movement decided, upon invitation from Finland, to send a delegation of three representatives to Finland to examine the situation on the spot. One member was Sir Walter Citrine. For the journey he took with him a supply of note-books, one of which was always in his pocket. In this he recorded incidents as they occurred.

Later in the day, usually in the evening, I devoted a considerable time to writing down in a second note-book in shorthand, as extensive a description as possible of the proceedings on that day, based upon the notes taken from the first note-book. Now and again the process, like the keeping of all diaries, became very tiresome, particularly when I was fatigued and the hour was late. I forced myself to keep up to date, however, as long experience has taught me that once a diary falls behind it is nearly impossible to record faithfully and fully all one would wish. (p.18)

On Sunday, 21<sup>st</sup> of January, 1940, they flew to Copenhagen. From there they continued by train to Stockholm. While in Stockholm they met Swedish politicians and also bought warm cloths. On Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, they flew to Turku.

Immediately on landing we were greeted by several officials, including the Provincial Governor, Mr. Kytta, as well as a party of journalists, all ladies, who had been sent down to interview us, and who added the natural curiosity of their sex to their professional thirst for news as to what Great Britain thought about Finland. In the party was Mr. Vuori, the secretary of the Finnish Trades Union Congress, and Mr. Zilliacus, who formerly had a school here.

We swallowed some light refreshments (non-alcoholic) and, whilst we were nibbling sandwiches, we were regaled with stories about the damage which had been done by "Molotov's bombs." Everyone apparently speaks of them in this fashion, and when the aeroplanes are heard to be dropping their deadly cargoes, the people say "Molotov is barking again." Similarly when the soldiers attack the Russian tanks, they call their rudely-made hand grenades "**Molotov's cocktails.**" Stalin is not mentioned, principally, it is said, because the people ascribe the change in Russian foreign policy to the advent of Molotov as Foreign Minister. I wonder what Litvinov thinks of it all?

After we had finished our food we started off in white-painted motor cars, our driver being a stout, elderly man whom I congratulated on his speaking English, remarking that "we were lucky to have a driver who could speak our language." I found to my surprise that he was a University professor named von Wendt, who is also the President of the Finnish Automobile Association. (p.41, emphasis added)

The usage of the genitive mode, 'Molotov's', indicates that the term was a translation from either Finnish or Swedish (see below).

It did not take long time and already on 28<sup>th</sup> January Sir Walter adopted local habits.

The hotel was only a tiny place, but we found our rooms very comfortable, fitted with running water and, like all the hotels we had visited in Finland, scrupulously clean.

I rang the bell, and after a time an elderly chambermaid came in. When I asked her about a bath, she just put up her hands in a helpless way and rushed out again, crying "Molotov, Molotov." I wondered what all this was about, so I went into the corridor and eventually found the manager of the hotel who, in his shirt sleeves, was bustling about helping to prepare the breakfast.

He then told me in broken English that the hotel had been subjected to bombing and that the bath, which was situated in an annexe, had been destroyed. I went back to the room, stoically prepared to put up with anything, and started to run the water into the basin for the purpose of washing and shaving. The hot water ran out nearly at boiling point, but when I came to turn on the cold water there was nothing doing.

Again I rang the bell, and once again the chambermaid put her head in the doorway. I pointed to the cold-water tap, made motions as though I wished to wash myself, but the only effect it had was to produce once again the chant of, "Molotov, Molotov," and away she went.

Finally I was left to take the water from the bottle on the table and pour this into the bowl with a tiny quantity of hot, washing myself as best I could, and in the process heartily cursing Mr. Molotov and his aeroplanes.

It appeared from inquiries I made later that the plumbing system of the hotel had badly suffered as a consequence of the bombing, which had destroyed buildings on each side of the hotel, but in some miraculous fashion had done very little structural damage to the establishment. (p.102)

One of the tasks of the delegation was to check whether the state of the Finnish working class was as bad as the Soviet propaganda machine described. So, the three people visited houses, factories, and stores, talked to people, compared salaries and prices of items to those in Britain, and endeavored to see if there was any truth in the claim that Finns should be saved.

We talked with a group of trade union members and officials who had come to welcome us, and a good lot of fellows they were. When I told them of the story which is being put across in Great Britain, that the workers of Finland are kept in subjection by the iron dictatorship of "butcher Mannerheim" and the "despot Tanner," they burst out in derisive laughter. Those who think that the Finnish workers can be taken in by Russian propaganda, are making the mistake of their lives. What impressed itself upon me particularly was their supreme confidence in being able to defeat the Russians, and their determination to maintain the great social and economic advantages which they have won in the last twenty years. (p.76)

On Friday, 2<sup>nd</sup> February, after spending 10 days in Finland, the delegation left Turku to Stockholm. A week later, after encountering all kind of obstacles on the way, they arrived back to Great Britain. On their return Sir Walter said publicly on behalf of the delegation that the next six weeks or so might be critical for Finland, and there was a need for aid to be given on "an adequate scale *quickly*." The diary was published already on March 1940. The last entry was written on 9<sup>th</sup> March and it ends with these words:

No doubt these are some of the considerations which will determine the action of Finnish statesmen in the negotiations which are understood to be on foot. I sincerely hope that an honourable and just peace will be attained, but if Finland is compelled to fight on, it is the duty of her neighbours and of all freedom loving peoples, to give her the help to which, in accordance with international law, she is so clearly entitled. Whatever may be the outcome, I shall always treasure a vivid memory of my visit to a gallant people, striving valiantly to preserve their freedom and independence against tremendous odds. (p.191)

In 1995, endeavoring to examine Hämäläinen’s suggestion that the name *Molotov cocktail* may have been first used by English speaking foreign correspondents and as such it was not a translation from Finnish, I searched for the term in the microfilms of *The Times*, which happened to be in the library of the local university (University of Tampere). Here is an entry from January 27, 1940 (p.5), ‘From Our Special Correspondent,’ ‘on the arctic front:’

**“MOLOTOFF COCKTAIL”**  
 One of the Russian tanks had been destroyed by, only one direct hit from a 3in. gun. The tanks often get stuck on the road, as the petrol mixture used—the so-called Molotoff cocktail—seems to be unsuitable for these temperatures. It is absolutely impossible to drive the tanks anywhere off the roadway, as the snow-drifts are in places more than 30ft. deep.

In this text the term ‘Molotoff cocktail’ is used as a derogatory description for the petrol mixture used by the Russian tanks – it is unsuitable for ‘these temperatures.’ The term can be interpreted as an adjective phrase: petrol mixture which is Molotov cocktail, or just as a compound adjective: defective Molotov cocktail Russian petrol mixture. In any case, the term here has nothing to do with an incendiary bottle. In fact, one of the Russian tanks was destroyed by a 3in. gun.

Unlike the entry from Citrine’s diary, the term here is not in a genitive mode, which may suggest that it is not a translation from either Finnish or Swedish.

The special correspondent of *The Times* was aware of the use of the name *Molotoff* by the Finns. Here is an example from January 29, 1940, page 5:



### A TIRED MAN

It was daylight when we reached a small town in the rear of present operations. Before we could leave it two air-raid alarms sent us to the underground shelters, where I had a long talk with a typical lieutenant who had come from his post at the front a few hours earlier.

Hot or cold means nothing to me (he said). I do not feel the temperature to-day. The only thing I know is that I have three days' rest. On my way to it Molotoff nearly got me. He dived down and machine-gunned me. I could not hear him coming above the noise of my motor. When it was over I found he had hit my motor-cycle eight times, but I was untouched.

' "Molotoff" means a Russian bomber in popular Finnish. '

Another example is from February 8, 1940, page 8:

## THE ASSAULT ON SUMMA

### “MOLOTOFF’S COFFINS”

This officer described the armoured sledges used by the Russians here and called “Molotoff’s coffins” by the Finns. The sledges have a round turret in the middle with an armour strong enough to resist rifle and machine-gun fire. They are, however, vulnerable to anti-tank gun fire. In the turret is a quick-firing gun. Contrary to earlier Finnish belief the sledges have no propeller, but are simply shoved in front of the advancing tanks or tugged behind them. About 100 of these sledges have taken part in the Summa operations. The Finns believe this has been only a Russian experiment and remain unconvinced of its efficiency.

In the last example ‘Molotoff’s coffin’ appears in a genitive mode, clearly a sign that it was translated from Finnish. I could not find a Finnish equivalent to the term ‘Molotoff’s coffins’ in Hämäläinen’s book.

Finland is a bilingual country, Finnish and Swedish, and even if the term had been adopted from a Swedish speaking Finn, apparently there would have been a need to use a genitive

mode. In an article from January 4, 1940, (p.3), the correspondent of the Swedish newspaper *Stockholms-Tidningen* wrote about the Molotov[’s] weather:

Vid 1-tiden  
finsk tid hade de båda ryska eskad-  
rarna tydligen begivit sig på väg hem  
igen. Vädret var i dag här uppe på  
nordfronten s. k. Molotovs väder, som  
finnarna kallar det. Det var med andra  
ord solsken, och klar luft och under  
sådana förutsättningar är man här  
uppe mer än vanligt på sin vakt.

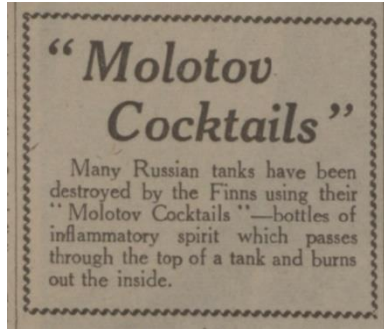
----- About one o’clock Finnish time the two Russian [flying] squadrons seemed to have returned homeward again. The weather up here at the northern front today was what the Finns call Molotov’s weather. In other words it was sunshine and clear air, and under such conditions they are more than usual on their guard up here.  
(Translated by Lars Munkhammar)

Another example is from January 25, 1940 (p.14) from the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet*. The correspondent used the term Molotov[’s] Olympic Games, in a genitive mode, although obviously it was not Molotov himself who organized the event nor did the running.

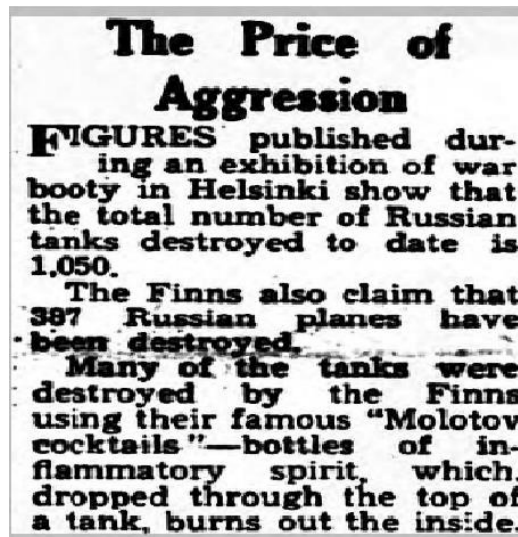
När man springer i full fart till  
skyddsrummen, då larmsignalen ljuder,  
och det bär i väg över grushögar, spill-  
ror av sönderskjutna hus och djupa gra-  
var — då talar man om "Molotovs  
olympiska spel".

When the alarm signal is heard, and you run at full speed to the shelter, over gravel piles, rubble of shattered houses, and deep graves – then you talk about “Molotov’s Olympics”. (Translated by Lars Munkhammar)

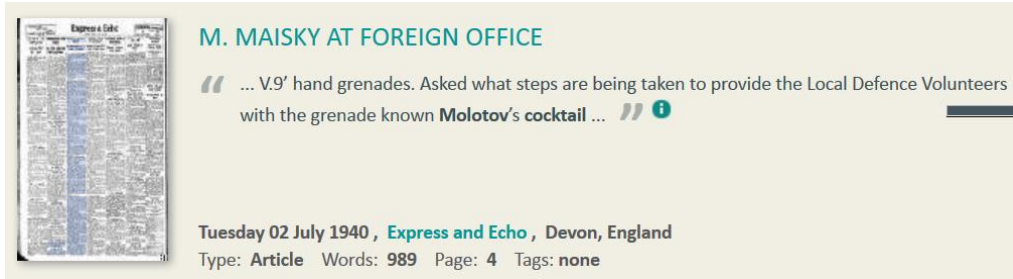
In 2014, searching with the help of the engine of the British Newspaper Archive,<sup>1</sup> the earliest entry of ‘Molotov cocktail’ as a weapon I have retrieved is from Saturday, February 17, 1940, three weeks after the entry of *The Times*. It appeared in page 5 of *Dundee Courier*, published in Angus, Scotland:



Doing the same search in February 2019 produced four more entries for the same date: *Northern Whig*, published in Antrim, Northern Ireland, *Birmingham Daily Post*, Warwickshire, England, *Belfast News-Letter*, Antrim, Northern Ireland, *Nottingham Journal*, Nottinghamshire, England. None of these five newspapers appears in Julkunen's list, which means that they did not send correspondents to Finland and apparently used news agencies dispatches for their reporting. Indeed, Julkunen mentions the name of correspondents for several such agencies. The appearance of the term in that date is may be explained by news item that appeared in *Nottingham Journal*:



It seems that the term 'Molotov's cocktail' was extensively used in Britain for a period of time. Here is an entry from July 2, 1940, I retrieved with the search engine of the British Newspaper Archive:



At that time Britain feared a German invasion and the authorities were trying to figure out ways to encounter this possibility. Among all the terms connected to Molotov the Finn invented during the Winter War, Molotov's cocktail, or in its English version Molotov cocktail, has survived, apparently because its extensive use in Britain during Second World War.

On December 29, 1939, the same special correspondent of *The Times* mentioned the existence of incendiary bottles as weapon among the Finnish soldiers, however, he did call those bottles by name (p.5):

## YOUNG MEN'S DARING

### IN SINGLE COMBAT WITH TANKS

From Our Special Correspondent

IN THE MANNERHEIM LINE, DEC. 28

Thirty-six young Finns were resting inside a deep dug-out we visited last night, while enemy artillery continued intermittent firing. These 36, with three officers, were part of the forces which had repelled the most recent attack on the Line and their resting might be a mere interval, the prelude to a new clash. They were all fully dressed, therefore, with their weapons handy.

Among these were some curiously stringed bottles with a firestick attached longitudinally; they are primitive home-made tank-bombs, which proved again effective in the fighting on Boxing Day, when the enemy attempted once more to force a gap with the help of tanks, but failed after a loss of eight.

Within a hundred yards of the dug-out we could make out five derelict tanks scattered on the battlefield between the opposing positions, which the failure of the Russian attempt had left unaltered. On Christmas Day officers had informed me that the Russians had abandoned the use of tanks for some days, in an endeavour to press their infantry forward after vigorous artillery preparation here and there; but on Boxing Day they resumed their earlier tactics.

### WAITING IN MANHOLES

The cool audacity of these young Finns defies description. Singly they occupy small manholes, 6ft. deep, preferably under cover of darkness—though brilliant moonlight has lately hampered these operations. There they wait hour after hour with the top of the hole lightly camouflaged. If an advancing tank survives Finnish artillery, mines, and tank-traps nearer the enemy lines and crosses one of these holes, a hand emerges behind the tail and hurls one or two bottles, which are smashed and catch fire, causing sufficient confusion to enable the Finns to capture or demolish the tank.

In January 30, 1940 (p.1) the Swedish newspaper Dagens Nyheter published a photo of two Swedish volunteers, one of them carrying an incendiary bottle under his arm.



In Finnish the verb *molottaa* means ‘to gibber,’ and *molotus* is ‘gibberish.’ The resemblance of these words to the name *Molotov* apparently played a role in the abundance of terms associated with the invading army. It expresses anger and contempt. Here is a headline from the newspaper *Turun Sanomat*, January 15, 1940:

## **Molotovin murhapolttajat eilenkin Turkuu tuhoamassa**

‘Molotov’s arsonists spread destruction in Turku also yesterday’

In several of the entries Hämäläinen cited, the term is spelled as “Molotoff,” for example: *Molotoffin leipäkori* ‘molotov’s bread basket,’ *Molotoff kelka* ‘Molotov sledge,’ *Molotoff pommi* ‘Molotov bomb’ a hand grenade, etc.

Foreign correspondents had noticed the Finns’ usage the name Molotov in a derogatory sense. In the War Archive in Helsinki I noticed a clip of an unmarked newspaper from January 2 [1940] (archive’s item number: PK 1580/1):



The correspondent of the Swedish newspaper *Nya Dagligt Allehanda* added another observation of the way the Finns used the term 'Molotov' (December 23, 1939, p. 3):



"A quarter to Molotov".  
 War humor in Turku.  
 From NDA's correspondent.  
 Turku Saturday. (UP)

The air raid siren in Turku last night lasted for only a short while and no enemy aircraft appeared.



Still at 10:45 local time everything was quiet in Turku and the closest surrounding communities. However, the sky is clear, and there are fears for new air attacks. These usually come around 11 o'clock, and one can hear the inhabitants of Turku jokingly say to each other: "Now it's Molotov-time". This expression is so widely spread, that you can even happen to hear that it is now "a quarter to Molotov" or something like that. (Translated by Lars Munkhammar)

In 1939 Erward Ward (1905-1993) was sent as a BBC war correspondent to Finland to cover what became known as the Winter War. In his memoir for that period, published in 1940, he mentioned the word Molotov in its local meanings three times.

On the entry of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940, p.22:

## 2

HELSINKI, *January 10th, 1940*

It was snowing slightly most of the time, so there were no Russian aeroplanes about, and the driver assured us that we would have nothing to fear from 'Molotoff's eggs', as they are called here. The Russian aeroplanes are rather fond of swooping down and machine-gunning cars on the roads, and several of my friends here have had to jump out in a hurry and take cover among the pine trees.

On February 1<sup>st</sup>, p. 70:

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OULU, *February 1st, 1940*

of troops as usual, including a lot of wounded. There was one cheerful looking soldier sitting opposite me still wearing his white cape. He pointed to a bandaged leg and said: 'Molotov!' Then he took a purse out of his pocket and displayed three of the red enamel hammer and sickel badges which the Russian officers wore as cap badges—just to show he hadn't been hit for nothing. I'd have given anything to be able to speak Finnish.

70

On March 17<sup>th</sup>, 155:

30

HELSINKI, *March 17th, 1940*

ON Friday, in what would previously have been called perfect Molotov weather, I drove down with the American Military Attaché to see the evacuation of Hanko. This little town, which used to have eight thousand inhabitants before the war, was the chief bone of contention in the negotiations last November. It was the one point upon which the Finns would not give in, because of its strategic position. And its cession now is one of the bitterest points in the present peace terms.

My impression, based also on surfing the Internet, is that Finns use the term *Molotovin koktaili* mainly in association with the Winter War. Otherwise they use the native term *paltopullo*, *polto* ‘incendiary’ *pullo* ‘bottle.’ The term uses alliteration which quite often appears in Finnish. However, there are exceptions to the rule. Here is an example, taken from the first page of *Aamulehti*, February 19, 2014:



Demonstrators threw Molotov’s cocktails in Kiev

The spelling here is *cocktaili*. Another version could have been *koktaili*. In the article itself, page 5, the term used is *palopommi*, *palo* ‘fire’ *pommi* ‘bomb,’ again with alliteration. In the same day the *Washington Post*’s correspondent Will Englund reported:

After weeks of relative calm, trucks and tents burned, **molotov cocktails** smashed against police shields and banners illuminated by the flames whipped in the strong breeze. At least 25 people were reported killed and 240 injured in the latest flare-up of protests that began last fall after President Viktor Yanukovich rejected a trade deal with Europe and turned to Russia for financial help. (Emphasis added)

In English *Molotov cocktail* is the standard name for this weapon, however in Finnish it is not.

Although Hämäläinen conducted a systematic and meticulous study of Finnish military slang during and long after the war ended, and his suggestion that the term *Molotov cocktail* may have originated from English-speaking correspondents need to be examined. During the Winter War foreign correspondents visited Finland and reported to the world the developments in the front line. Based on official Finnish records and other sources,

Julkunen (1975) compiled a list of those correspondents; there were around 300 of them: American, Australian, Belgian, Estonian, English, Dutch, Italian, Japanese, Yugoslavian, Canadian, Greek, Latvian, Norwegian, Portuguese, Polish, French, Romanian, Swedish, German, Swiss, Danish, Hungarian, and Russian.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming that more information concerning the source of the term *Molotov cocktail* can be found in their writings, I have embarked on examining as many microfilms as possible. The first problem in this kind of endeavor is reaching those microfilms. The second one is being able to read them; after all, there is a limit to how many languages one person can master. The third one is the quality of the reading machine and the microfilms themselves. Eventually, the search is no more than looking for the word *Molotov* and if this word is found, then examining its context. Up to now, in addition to *The Times*, I have examined *Aftenposten* (Oslo) and *Neue Züricher Zeitung* (Zürich), which I found at the library of University of Tampere. At the library of the University of Helsinki I examined the *New York Times*, *Dagens Nyheter* (Stockholm), *Social-Demokraten* (Stockholm), *Svenska Dagbladet* (Stockholm), *Le Temps* (Paris). In the library of Uppsala University I scanned with my eyes the microfilms of the Swedish newspapers *Nya Dagligt Allehanda*, *Stockholms-Tidningen*, *Aftonbladet*, and *Svenska Morgonbladet*. In addition, using the digital services at Uppsala University library, I logged in and checked for additional entries in the digital archive of *Manchester Guardian*, which kept a correspondent in Finland during most of the Winter War, and also the digital archive of *The Times*.

Nowadays newspapers keep online sites with search engines. Presently, in most cases the search engines examine editions of that paper for the last few years. There are also several major newspapers that have scanned all their editions. The earliest entry of the *Chicago Daily Tribune* that included text with *Molotov cocktail* in it is from August 13, 1940, written by Murchie, Guy: School teachers Britons to wage a guerilla war. The same author wrote on August 18, 1940 an article with the title: Adopt Molotov cocktails as British weapon. The *Hartford Courant* had an entry from September 13, 1942, the *Christian Science Monitor* from February 7, 1942, the *Washington Post* from July 8, 1941, *Daily Boston Globe* from February 13, 1941, the *Atlanta Constitution* from July 8, 1941, the

*Los Angeles Times* from July 18, 1941. The search engine for those last six newspapers is powered by ProQuest Archiver.

There is a similar project in Sweden, Digitaliserade svenska dagstidningar, conducted by the National Library of Sweden, and other such projects around the globe. Evidently, we just have to wait and see whether earlier examples of the term will be found.

As mentioned before, it seems that the term had gained general usage during the summer of 1940, when there was a fear of a German invasion of the island. Here are several more examples:

*Aberdeen Journal* - Wednesday 03 July 1940, p.6:



*Lancashire Evening Post* - Saturday 17 August 1940, p.1:

**"MOLOTOV COCKTAILS"**

**Millions Being Issued to the Home Guard**

The Home Guards are now being armed with "Molotov Cocktails" by the million.

This product of the Finnish war, which played such an important part in holding up the Russian tanks, has been officially adopted by the War Office.

The composition of the Molotov Cocktails cannot be revealed. A demonstration was given recently to war correspondents during a visit to the Eastern Command of the use against tanks of these improvised explosives. A specially constructed tank was quickly reduced to flaming ruins under a shower of "Molotovs" thrown by a detachment of Home Guards.

The Molotov Cocktail is considered as even more effective than the hand grenade in defence against armoured divisions.

*Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer* - Monday 19 August 1940, p.2:

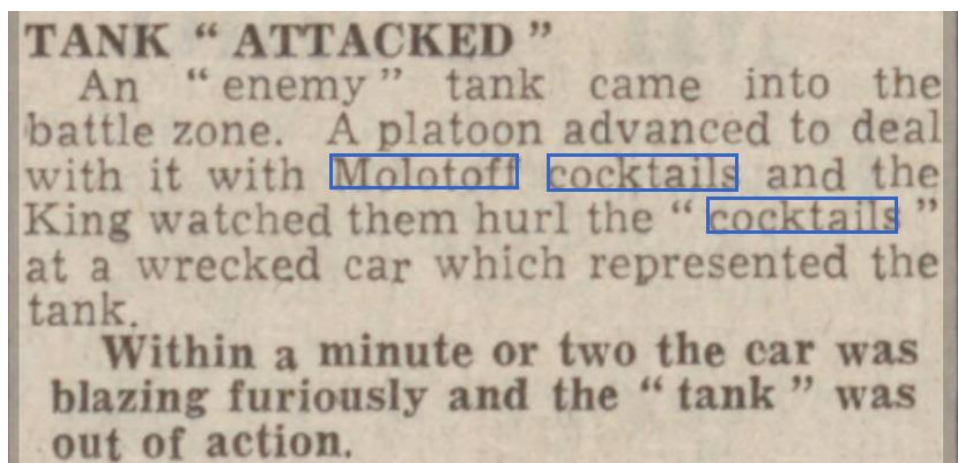
**Cause and Effect?**

**C**AN there be any connection between the following two news items appearing in the week-end's papers? --

The pilot of a Messerschmitt forced down in a field in South-East England jumped out of his machine uninjured and, running into some agricultural workers, threw up his arms and exclaimed in English: "All right, all right, what about a pint of beer?"

The Home Guards are now being armed with "Molotov Cocktails" by the million.

*Aberdeen Journal* - Tuesday 20 August 1940, p.2:



It seems that by summer 1940 the term had assumed a life of its own. The ultimate degrading seems to occur several years later when the term was referred to tovarisch Molotov himself:

**Source Citation:**

OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT. "Effect Of The Soviet Changes." *Times* [London, England] 5 Feb. 1944: 3. *The Times Digital Archive*.

## EFFECT OF THE SOVIET CHANGES

### AMERICAN THEORIES

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

WASHINGTON, FEB. 4

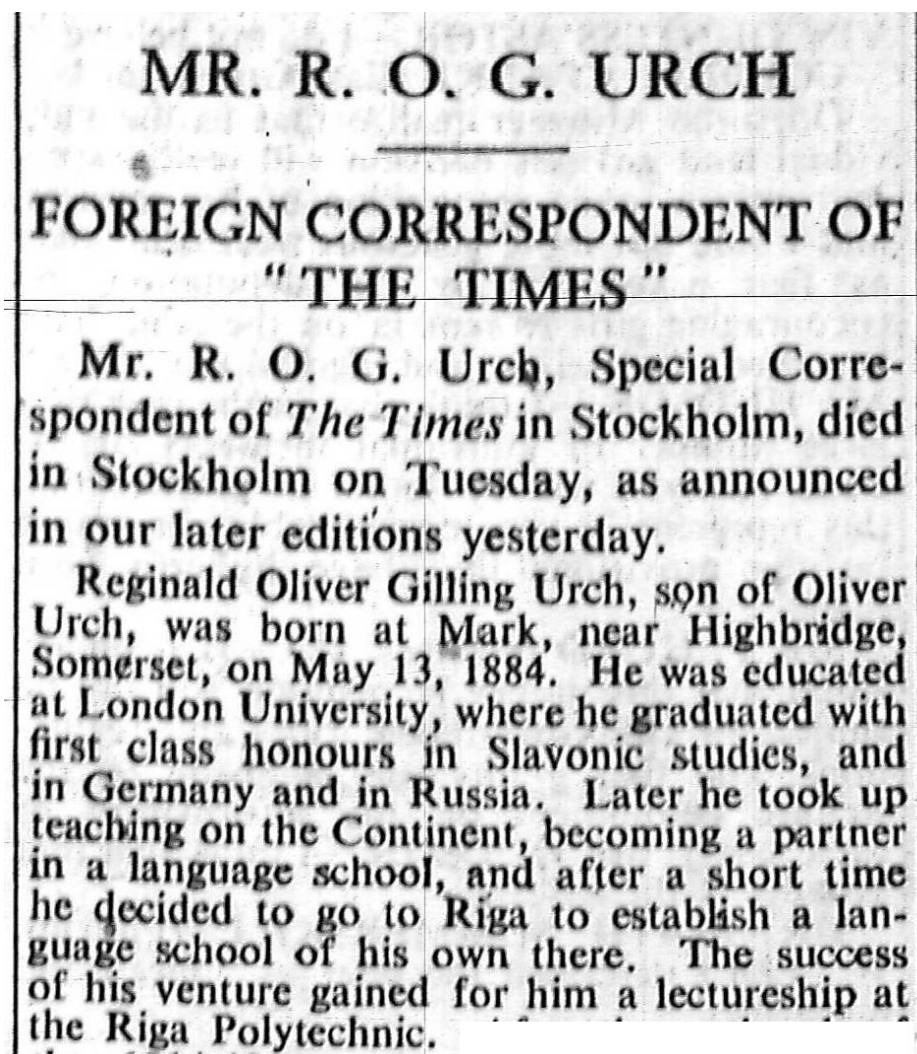
An unnamed diplomat is quoted as saying that the Molotov plan making the 16 component republics of the U.S.S.R. independent in military and foreign affairs is another "Molotov Cocktail."

In this sentence the term is again used as an adjective phrase and not as a noun phrase: Molotov's plan is Molotov cocktail.

### Reginald Oliver Gilling Urch

According to Julkunen (1975: 360), the correspondent of *The Times* in Finland, starting from December 13, 1939, was Reginald Oliver Gilling Urch, born in 1884.

R. O. G. Urch died on Tuesday, May 15, 1945. In the obituary published two days later in *The Times* we read (p.7):



In 1915 fleeing the advancing German army, Urch and his family arrived at Moscow and stayed there until 1920 (see below). In 1922 the family returned to the newly formed Republic of Latvia, and Urch took up work in Riga for *The Times* as correspondent for Russian affairs. The obituary continued:

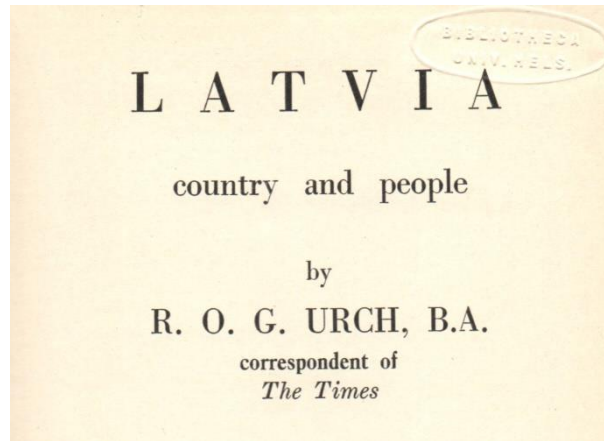


He was transferred to Warsaw in November, 1938, and was there when the Germans attacked Poland in September, 1939. At that time one of his last contacts with the office in London was as the enemy pressed on to the capital. "You may not see me again," he said. "Things are as bad as that." Having helped many others to get away, he made his own escape, and reached Stockholm, where he was appointed Special Correspondent of *The Times*, and he followed the winter war between Russia and Finland. In June, 1941, came the German attack on Russia and Urch never did better work than then. He knew Russia and he knew Germany, and from the first contested the view of those who thought that the Red Army would be overthrown within three months. His dispatches were read with interest not only by the general reader but also by professional soldiers. Events more than justified him. As defeat approached, his analysis of the situation in Germany was strikingly accurate.

The obituary ended with this note:

Urch lived for *The Times*, which was his first interest always. He died, as he would have wished, in harness; and his colleagues, remembering his fine work over many years, mourn his passing.  
 In 1909 he married Edith Gertrude, daughter of Mr. Charles Adams, and had a son and a daughter.

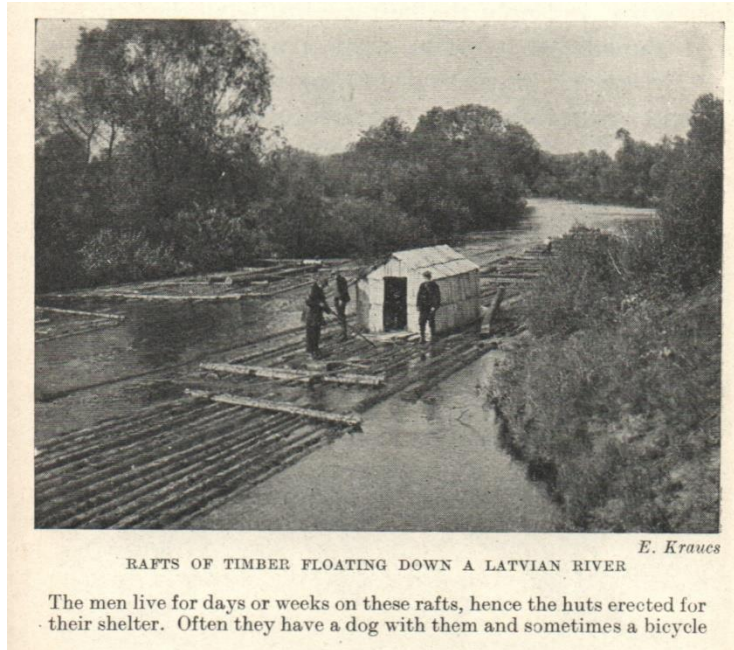
The man wrote several books: *English...* published in 1926, *Latvia. Country and people*, was first published in 1935 in Riga and later in 1938 in London *We Generally Shoot Englishmen, An English Schoolmaster's five years of mild adventure in Moscow 1915-20* appeared in 1936, and *The Rabbit King of Russia* in 1939.



In this book Urch told the story of Latvia, its history, struggle for independence, economy, education, art, music, and so on. The book is not a travel guide in the Baedeker sense, that is, a book of comprehensive information about places designed for the use of visitors or tourists, but rather a presentation of sites of interest to the occasional visitor through their historical context. There are also practical tips, for example (1938: 238):

One of the best ways to see and enjoy its beauty spots is to take train to Plavinas, seventy miles up stream. Hire a boat and a man and float down to Koknese. It is dangerous to go alone, for you may be swept away by a treacherous current or come to grief in a whirlpool. There is, indeed, a veritable maelstrom near Plavinas, the Lāčbedre (Bear's Den). Once a man gets there, with or without a boat, he is lost for good and all. Entire raft of timber have been known to disappear into the maw of this hungry whirlpool.

We also learn something about entrepreneurial life in the country, for example (1938: 143):



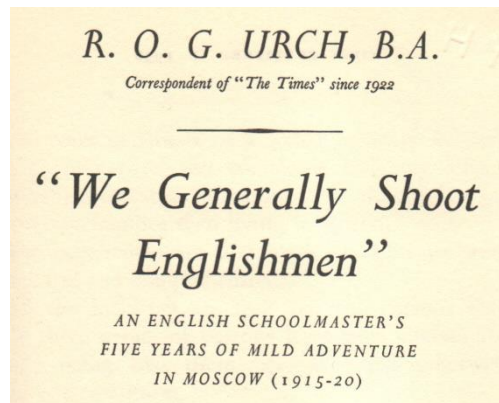
Of special interest I found what Urch, a student of linguistics, had to say about the Latvian language (1935: 167, 1938: 179):

A first glimpse of the 840-paged Grammar of the Latvian tongue by Dr. Endzelins cannot fail to fascinate the student of philology—though the average Englishman may turn from it in despair. The fact is that Latvian and its sister-language Lithuanian are together a gem of rare value which has only in recent years become really accessible to the serious explorer of comparative grammar.

These two languages—survivors of the “Baltic Group” in which the now extinct Prussian had a place—have living examples of ancient forms which belonged to the original parent stock but are not shown in what has come down to us of Indo-Iranian, Greek, Latin, Slavic, Celtic, and other branches of the Indo-European family. Moreover, the differences of quantity and intonation have been preserved here more perfectly than in any other living language. The Latvian-Lithuanian-Prussian group is a distinct branch of the Indo-European family, its nearest relation being the Slavic group of languages.

Urch had also something to say about the language skill of the Latvians (1938: 180):

There is no need, however, for the visitor to embark on a study of the language before coming to Latvia, as the people of this country, with few exceptions, have a working knowledge of at least one language besides their own. Indeed, the majority of townspeople – even the domestic servants – speak, read, and write three languages excellently.



In this book Urch told the story of a rather ordinary English family not connected with any official missions, consulates, or services, in the years before, during and after the Russian revolution. The family, a husband, a wife, a son born in 1911, and a daughter born in 1914, fled Latvia before the arrival of the advancing German troops and eventually made it to Moscow, with little besides their hand-luggage and a trusty maid to help with the tiny children. There they made living by teaching English. While living in Moscow they witnessed the changes from Tsarist-autocratic to Bolshevik-autocratic rule. Here are several comments Urch made about the infant Soviet education system (p. 138):

#### Soup Galore in Hungry Moscow

(1918)

OUR family had one week of adequate food during the spring of 1918, adequate in quantity, adequate in quality. As for variety, the sameness of a dish does not pall in a week with dearth all around.

An attempt was being made to manifest the Bolshevik system of education in its full glory at the Medvédnikoff Gimnázija, where we both taught...

"Lessons" became lively with a bound. They were rather trying for us, however, as teachers at that stage were soon regarded as superfluous by the boys and girls, who had been made master of the situation and realized this fully.

When the teacher entered a classroom at the appointed time he might or might not find some of his pupils there. If he began his lessons, others would usually drift in, apparently as the spirit moved them. But of one thing he could be certain: no lesson would be given without disturbance. At least once in every lesson the door was suddenly thrown open by a boy or girl from another class, who shouted out an order or a message. Usually this was:

"Comrades, a meeting!"

And the class rushed pell-mell from the room without taking any notice of the teacher.

These disturbances were not mere episodes. They were a necessary feature of school life, for meetings were more important than lessons, and the initiative of pupils bent on holding a meeting was not to be checked.

For a few weeks the boys and girls at this school had a good time indeed. Food was already very scarce in Moscow, but the feeding of the young was particularly a charge of the new State. All schools received food in theory; the scholars of a chosen few enjoyed this privilege also in practice for a time. They were day-scholars, entitled under the new regime to receive at least one copious meal a day.

The rules for supplying these meals were interpreted – by whom we did not know – to include teachers. At first there was a good deal of soup left over each day, as many parents, in their effort to retain authority over sons and daughters, kept them at home rather than send them to the disorderly establishment into which the Medvédnikoff school quickly developed.

The food of scholars was given free of charge, but teachers had to pay a small price. They were allowed, however, to take their purchase home if they preferred, instead of consuming it on the spot. Teachers were also allowed to buy additional portions

for members of their families, and they made full use of this opportunity, you may be sure.

What a sight it would have been in normal times! Every day I, like other teachers, went to school carrying my books with one hand and a large bucket with the other. The return was a mile of triumph, for a man carrying a full bucket through the streets in those days was a man with a bucketful of food, and everybody knew this, however well the bucket might be covered.

But alas! the supply did not last for more than a week, after which my bucket remained idle at home. Not only did the supply of soup fail, but the school did not receive any money to pay its teachers. The post for both of us was thus quite unsatisfactory, as disorder precluded the possibility of useful work among the scholars. At the end of about three months my wife said:

"No soup, no discipline, no salary! Why go there at all?"

So we simply ceased being teachers at the reformed Medvédnikoff school, and have often wondered whether our absence was ever noticed; for no official could be found to receive our resignations – he was probably at some meeting – and we never heard anything about the salary three months overdue.

Or this conversation (p.143):

The change over to the new system required many technical changes. Some establishments were closed, others amalgamated, all were reorganized, at least on paper. The changes and experiments were very pronounced in the University and other institutions of higher education. One day I met Professor Andreyeff, of the Moscow University, in the street, and he accosted me thus:

"Here, Reginald, Son of Oliver, I've wanted to see you for a long time. Why don't you fetch your salary?"

"Salary? That's a nice word, Michael, Son of Matthew. But tell me, please, where is it?"

"At the office of the University, of course."

A few more exchanges of this nature, and I was assured there was indeed an unclaimed salary waiting for me as Lecturer in a new Faculty of the Moscow University. I had never to my knowledge held a post in this Faculty, but month by month the cashier had expected to see me. Three pay-days had been missed already, and the cashier was now about to send the money back, said my Professor.

"Oh, he mustn't do that, Michael, Son of Matthew," I said quickly, and thereupon took leave.

In a few minutes I was at the University. The cashier explained that when the new Faculty was founded, all the lecturers and professors of the Poltorátsky University Courses were written on its staff. I had not been informed of this and had also not been given any duties. So, in contrast with my experience at the Medvédnikoff Gimnáziya, I received a salary here for which I had not worked. The inflated Soviet rouble had, alas, so much depreciated while this money was waiting for me in the cashier's desk, that the sum had become negligible in value.

In 1918 Urch was arrested by the Cheká, the Soviet state security organization. While walking to the prison, a new fellow-prisoner marched and smoked with him. Here is what Urch had to say about his new companion (p.171):

Now he may have discerned something naïve about my exterior, but after all I had lived for thirty-four years and had steered a family through more than a year of revolution in Moscow. So I knew that a man of sound mind in mortal danger on or off the premises of the Cheká did not easily confide his capital offences to the ears of a chance stranger, even if he were a fellow-prisoner. And I jumped to the conclusion that my self-styled ex-policeman was a clumsy *agent provocateur* attached to my party to exchange confidences about our crimes. The authorities were, as later became manifest, in need of a crime for me. I had been denounced in a general way, as we afterwards found out, but the dotted line reserved for my

offence had not been filled in. I did not find out for certain what the oaf's status was and did not "let on" that I was suspicious. My reply was that a man should live as long as he could, or something of the sort, and for the rest of my proximity to this man I became tired and absent minded. But I don't mind confessing that the fact of his being set on me made me really very much alert and afraid.

After two months in prison Urch was released but not allowed to leave Russia. Only later it became clear to him why he was arrested (p.24):

### My Trial

(1919)

A MAN with a portfolio turned up one day to see me, explaining that he was a *slédovatyel*, a sort of investigator or examining magistrate.

What could it mean?

No explanation of my arrest and imprisonment had been given, but we had found out it was due to a denunciation. A mild-looking man of about forty years, with a pretty curly beard and long auburn locks, had denounced me to the Cheká and signed some sort of paper against me. Why he did it we could not even guess, for we knew him only as a fellow-member of the House Committee and thought we were good friends. He died a few months later in a lunatic asylum, and I suppose his mind was out of balance when he set the Cheká on us.

My release must have displeased him, for here he was after my blood again.

From our visitor we learnt that Goldy Locks had now lodged a more or less definite charge against me. This time, instead of ordering a house-search and arrest, the magistrate had come along himself to see what it was about.

"Have you swindled the House Committee? Have you pocketed the money subscribed for the purchase of products? Have you stolen the Committee's milk?" asked our visitor.



These questions were, I admit, disconcerting. I could answer with a stout "No" in each case, but the offensiveness of the questions remained. To be suspected even by a madman was unpleasant, and we did not know then that Goldy Locks was really pathologically mad. Innocence is not complete protection, even when it can be proved. There are always people to say, "Where there's smoke there's fire," but we knew that in Red Russia there might be and often was smoke without fire, especially where crimes and trials were concerned.

The magistrate was a reasonable man and we soon convinced him that the charges were being made for personal motives. He told me, however, that the case could not be withdrawn. It would come before a "Red" tribunal and I should have to defend myself in court.

However, this time the matter ended differently (p.243):

I had written out my defence at home and questions to be put to my accusers. The chairman took my paper and read it aloud. When he came upon the references to wrong addition and subtraction, he examined the indictment. Would you believe it? The sums were now right! My accusers had got hold of the dossier in the courtroom and corrected their original mistakes. But the alterations were apparent, and I must have scored points over this.

I charged my accusers in court with having had me sent to jail and kept there for two months. They denied it, saying my imprisonment had nothing to do with this case or with them. They had heard, but couldn't remember from whom, I was a political suspect, and that was probably why the Cheká had been interested in me and probably was interested in me still.

Now Goldy Locks was a lunatic, but Alexandroff must have been a scoundrel. The things they were saying were quite likely to get me sent to Lubyánka. They knew there was no truth in their insinuations, and I had never had even unfriendly words with either of the accusers.

A witness was called for the prosecution. A simple, illiterate woman whose affidavit said I had robbed her and her children. How she had put her cross to the

concoction I do not know, but her evidence was one of the funniest things in the case.

"Robbed me?" she said. "God forbid. Why, they are nice people! I wouldn't harm them for the world. They have such dear little children. . . ."

She looked at me and beamed. The kind-hearted creature was doing her "good deed" and knew it. She seemed quite unconscious of ever having signed or crossed an affidavit.

At last, after about two hours, the court retired to consider its findings. The decision was bound to be in my favour on the merits of the case. But that was an uncertain thing to count on. . . .

In came the judges and we all had to rise. The chairman read the verdict.

"Not guilty! No appeal! But the accused is reprimanded for khalátnoye otnoshéniye (remissness)."

Alexandroff and Goldy Locks jumped up:

"We protest," they cried together. "We shall appeal to a higher tribunal."

"No appeal!" said the judge sternly. "Sit down!"

Then I courted disaster.

"What's that about being reprimanded?" I began. "I who have always ..."

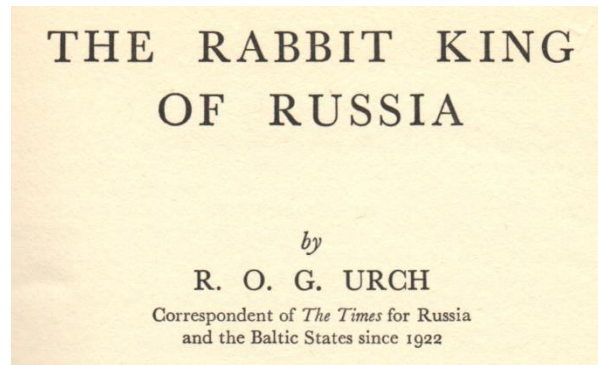
I was shouted at, while my pupil and the beaming witness hustled me out of court.

"It's best to get away," she said.

Vannovsky concurred, and they were certainly right.

In 1919 Edith and children were allowed to leave the country. In 1920 the man himself was sent by train across the border to Finland, together with other English citizens. They

were exchanged for Bolsheviks held by Britain; for each English citizen Britain released 42½ Bolsheviks.



In this book Urch told the stories of several mind-boggling absurd Soviet projects. The narrative is accompanied with footnotes and the reader must believe it all was true. One such project, that seems to have been quite successful, involved arresting foreign nationals and freeing them for ransom paid by relatives living abroad. This scheme was run by the Cheká and the foreign currency gained helped maintaining the regime. Other projects involved attempts to supersede the cow by producing milk supplies from soya bean, the creation of a Dog-wool industry by shearing the dogs of Russia, the scheme to produce motor-oil from the bodies of Russia's untold millions of locusts in order to lubricate her thousands of agricultural tractors, the rounding up the bugs and beetles of Russia in order to found a State Beetle-soap industry, using tadpoles as excellent swine-fodder, and the "immense rabbit-farms designed to feed and rescue Russia's millions from enforced vegetarianism due to the depletion of ordinary flocks of herds." Urch wrote that "if a plan was large, new and startling, it was always practically sure of adoption though some were so inherently bizarre that even with the highest patronage they could not have a long innings" (page v). One major figure behind several of those projects was Gregóriy (Grisha) Antónovich Philíppoff, aka 'the Rabbit King of Russia.' By exposing these projects, which persistently remained concealed, Urch aimed at warning the Western countries from making fair deals with Soviet Russia.

Before his arrival to Finland, *The Times* reported the conflict through correspondents in other places. Here is a text from December 15, 1939, p. 8, sent from Stockholm, written

possibly by Urch himself, who, according to the obituary, escaped from Warsaw to this city a short time earlier:

### HOUSES SET ON FIRE

From Our Correspondent

STOCKHOLM, DEC. 14

A special correspondent of the Swedish News Agency visiting the isthmus saw a Russian prisoner, who explained that the wound in his leg was caused by a machine-gun fired from the rear in order to drive on the attack. The correspondent confirms that the prisoners are in a miserable state, starving, ill-shod and "so dirty that the Finns at first believed they were wearing black gloves." After being fed one sighed contentedly, and remarked: "If only I could have brought my wife."

On December 16 (p.8), the report was "from our special correspondent" and sent from Helsinki:

## **REDS ROUTED NORTH OF LADOGA**

### **LOSS OF TWO REGIMENTS**

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

HELSINKI, DEC. 15

Further news of the fighting on Wednesday and Thursday in the area north of Lake Ladoga confirms the importance of this Finnish success. The Russians had pushed an offensive last week as far as Tolvajarvi, penetrating Finnish territory for about 30 miles. It was an ambitious effort, apparently designed to outflank the main Mannerheim lines of defence and strike at their rear, south-west across important railways.

Several days later (December 21, 1939, p.8), the report was sent from the front:


## BATTLEFIELD IN THE ARCTIC

### WOUNDED FROZEN

From Our Special Correspondent  
ON THE ARCTIC FRONT, DEC. 20

The battlefield at Salla, well within the Arctic Circle, offers a ghastly spectacle to-night. The bodies of more than 2,000 Russians and between 200 and 300 Finns killed last night, when a much smaller force of Finns routed one of the Red Army's invading columns, are strewn about the scraggy and stunted pine forest. No wounded men have survived the battle. The temperature is 22deg. below zero, and the wounded were frozen into rigid blocks a few minutes after they fell.

This spell of cold is what the Finns were hoping for and expecting. Many lie locked in an embrace of hate and death, and the soldiers' torches give the scene the



semblance of a frozen inferno. One cook lies beside a pot of frozen soup, the spoon frozen in his hand, for he was shot when the Finns swooped down on their skis for a surprise attack on the Russian position, just as the invaders were trying to warm themselves against the sudden cold.

Urch was spending time with the troops and getting a firsthand experience of the fighting. Already in his article on December 29, 1939, he noticed soldiers “with curiously stringed bottles with firesticks attached,” (see above). Here is another example of his close contact with the troops, from January 6, 1940, p. 6:

**AFFRAY WITH RUSSIANS**  
 Yesterday a Finnish patrol reconnoitred and attacked a Russian supply base. My guide, a lieutenant, who is a priest in civilian life, was driving his car along a road when he met a Russian tank 150 yards away. He sent his car into a ditch as the tank roared towards him, but he managed to escape the hail of machine-gun bullets. He took me to a hill-top near Höyhenjärvi, and from there we could see the only “front line” in the north. It was a steel barricade across the road. On mounds on either side heavy machine-guns, captured from the Russians, pointed towards the Russian line. From this position the Finns had destroyed one tank and what remained of a Red infantry column. The remainder had turned tail.

From this text we can learn that he had had a Finnish attaché, so he should not have had any language problems communicating with the soldiers.

Another example is from January 8, 1940, page 6:

## PENETRATION TO WHITE SEA

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ON THE NORTHERN FRONT, FEB. 7

One of the Finnish "ghost patrols" recently managed to penetrate into enemy territory as far as the White Sea. The members of the patrol are the very best skiers in Finland, and include some who have won an international reputation at the Olympic Games. Every man is well equipped and pulls along with him a Finnish reindeer sledge, known as the *pulkka*, also loaded with equipment.

Still, here is another report from January 20, 1940, page 6:

## FINNS' HIGH SPIRITS

But the Finnish troops have had a good rest, and they are in high spirits and well supplied with food. They have their own herds of cows, and there are plenty of reindeer. I have noticed that Finnish troops make some use of captured machine-guns; but an officer said to me: "We prefer our own; they are lighter and more accurate."



Another observation concerned the Russian "suicide squads" (February 27, 1940, page 8):

The Red patrols sent forward to reconnoitre have long been called "suicide squads" by the Finns, but those sent into action before this last offensive were on a larger scale. The men taken prisoner by the Finns disclosed that some of the new Soviet ski patrols were reinforcements sent straight up into the severest fighting from the city of Leningrad, which they had left only two days earlier. The orders issued to battalion commanders made it clear to them that they were taking on a hazardous task, and were being sent into action in large numbers to ensure that some of them would return with the required information. The snow was sticky after a few days' thaw, and the Red skiers found the ground exceedingly difficult and risky. They had to operate in the early morning or at dusk, and had to move so fast that they were usually exhausted by the time they encountered the Finns. They had rarely any energy left for fierce hand-to-hand encounters.

On March 1, 1940 (p.8), three month after the Winter War had started, Urch returned to the theme of Soviet absurdity:

**THREE MONTHS OF WAR  
IN FINLAND**

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**DEFENDERS' SPIRIT UNBROKEN**

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**REDS PREPARE FOR FINAL ATTACK  
ON VIIPURI**

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**FINNISH LINES HARD PRESSED**

The war in Finland has now lasted three months. Except on the Isthmus, where, with an enormous expense of life and ammunition, the Russians have reached the outskirts of Viipuri, the Finns have succeeded in holding the enemy at all points.

The Red Army claims to have captured points only four miles from Viipuri and to be preparing for a final assault on the town. The Finnish Command denies the Russian claim to have made further advances, but admits that pressure has been heavy, and hints at further withdrawals.

**MOLOTOFF'S EXCUSE**

The reason that M. Molotoff gave for refusing to have any further dealings with the Government of Finland was that it had already left Helsinki, and was no longer able to control the affairs of the country. To-day, after three months of fighting, the armies of the Soviet Union are still held at bay, the Russian air armadas have failed to break the spirit of the Finnish nation, and Finland is still governed from Helsinki.

The Russian belief that Finland would not be able to put up any real resistance is probably the reason why the first troops sent into battle by their High Command were decidedly inferior in quality and equipment to their opponents. They did not know the first thing about skiing, and many had had only the most sketchy military training or none at all. They were dependent on mechanized transport for their supplies, and were easy to find because they had to stick to the immediate neighbourhood of the scanty roads leading inland from the frontier. The Finns, born and bred to skiing in the woods, made up for their lack of men and artillery by conducting a highly mobile warfare and harassing the Russians with ski patrols, which could generally escape by making wide détours after their guerrilla attacks.

In the same article, under the subtitle 'A ruined masterpiece,' Urch described the city of Viipuri:

The saddest sights in this deserted city are, however, the smaller of the shops, in which the stock-in-trade is still on the shelves or scattered about the floor, together with glass and other débris. Outside a barber's shop my guide picked up two razors, half-buried in the snow. He put them back into the room among the other ruins. The owners of these shops had, I was told, locked them up before obeying the evacuation order, and evidently hoped this might be sufficient protection for their possessions. The severest bombing and shelling occurred just after the last civilians had left the town.

The peace agreement to end the Finnish Winter War became public on March 13, 1940. Following the microfilms, for the next several days Urch wrote about the harsh concessions imposed upon the Finns and apparently left the country.

Attached to the obituary *The Times* published (May 17, 1945, p.7) there was a telegram sent by a colleague in Stockholm:

**A correspondent telegraphs from Stockholm:—**

The news of Urch's sudden death has been received with the deepest regret both by Swedish foreign Press circles in Stockholm and the great number of friends he made outside his profession. His sound judgment, his skill when availing himself of the opportunities Stockholm gave as an observation post during the war years, and his personal qualities made him the natural leader of Stockholm correspondents.

From his writings Urch emerges as a smart, cool, and experienced person. In addition, he seemed to have a great sense of humor.

Several weeks after Urch's death, *The Times* published this obituary:

**Source Citation:**

"Obituary." *Times* [London, England] 12 June 1945: 7. *The Times Digital Archive*.

**MR. R. O. G. URCH**

Mr. Peter Tennant writes:—

It was with a feeling of profound distress that I read of the death of your Special Correspondent in Stockholm, R. O. G. Urch. I knew him well during my years in Stockholm as Press Attaché and greatly valued his friendship, wisdom, and whimsical sense of humour. In spite of having spent the greater part of his life in Russia and the Baltic States and Eastern Europe, he remained solidly British to the core, and in the dark days of 1940 and 1941 when our country stood alone and later when Russia was invaded and retreating before the German onslaught, **Oliver Urch** remained calm and unperturbed, always ready to persuade those who doubted in the allies of the certainty of allied victory. In an atmosphere in which it was difficult even for the best of journalists to distinguish truth from fiction he maintained the highest standards of journalism. He was universally beloved and respected by his colleagues of the allied Press in Stockholm, and his kindness, modesty, and wise judgment will be remembered gratefully by his numerous Scandinavian friends.

In my opinion, Urch's 'whimsical sense of humour' is the key for his usage of the term. He might have heard the words *Molotoff cocktail* from a vague source, however not a Finn as the term is not in a genitive mode. It is also plausible that the term was already generally known when he wrote the report, hence the usage of the prenominal 'so-called'. Obviously, the Finns who welcomed the British delegation in Turku were familiar with it. Urch might not have known what it meant and, like Sir Walter, immersing himself in the local current milieu invented a practical joke: The Russian mobilized their tanks with Molotoff cocktail that was unsuitable for the Arctic weather. It seems that nobody else used the term in this sense.

## **Conclusion**

In this article I have endeavored to examine Hämäläinen's suggestion that the name *Molotov cocktail* may have been first used by English speaking foreign correspondents, and as such it was not a translation from Finnish. We do have two examples of the terms appearing in British publications in the latter part of January 1940. However, one of them, in Citrine's book, is in a genitive mode which suggests a Finnish or Swedish origin, and the other one is in an English form. Hämäläinen did not include Citrine's book in his extensive bibliography. For Hämäläinen to be correct, we should find an earlier evidence of *Molotoff cocktail* in English press and demonstrate how it spread among the Finns before the arrival of the British delegation on Wednesday, 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1940.

Appendix: Comments on the 'Molotov, n.' definition in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*)

In the 'Molotov, n.' definition of the *OED* we read:

There is evidence for a large number of Finnish slang terms formed on Molotov's name during this period, many of which identify it with the Soviet Union in general; while the evidence so far found in English-language sources for the two senses below is earlier than that for the corresponding Finnish terms, the influence of Finnish on their format is likely.

In my opinion, the question whether the terms appeared in print first in English or Finnish is irrelevant. From studying the examples I cite in my article, it is quite obvious that the source of the terms, both in English and Swedish, is Finnish. The earliest example I present is from January 2, 1940 (see above p. 15), which is earlier than the examples presented by the *OED*, and it clearly indicates the Finnish origin of the trend:



During the Winter War, an expatriate living in the United States collected clips of newspapers with news connected to the war and glued them to sheets of paper. Eventually these papers with the clips were sent to Finland and ended up in the War Archive in Helsinki, where I came across them. In the upper right corner of the page there is a reference to the *Daily News*. Apparently the clip concerning 'Molotoff' appeared in this newspaper.

# Finns Wipe Out Entire 15,000 in Soviet Division

Helsinki, Dec. 31 (AP).—Red Russia's 163d Division, numbering 15,000 men, has been "annihilated" in a bitter, two-day battle north of Suomussalmi, Finland's High Command announced tonight.

Panicky remnants of the Red division scattered through the forests near Lake Kianta and were pursued by Finnish cleanup squads, the Finnish command reported.

Russian air raiders elsewhere spread death and terror. Hundreds of planes were believed to have taken part in attacks during the day. Red machine gunners attacked a hospital train, the Finns announced officially, and fired on "a clearly marked Red Cross ambulance" from the air.

### Driven to Shelters.

In southern and western Finnish cities many people spent the last day of the year in air raid shelters as bombs rained down.

The United Press reported the Russian division destroyed was under command of one of Russia's most famous military leaders, Gen. Grigori M. Stern, and numbered 15,000 men. The defeat was said to have shattered the Red Army's attempt to cut Finland in half at her 135-mile-wide "waistline."

A Finnish communique told of enormous captures of war supplies including "27 different kinds of guns, four anti-aircraft machine-guns, 150 trucks, 250 horses, between 400 and 500 vehicles for troop transport, and 12 field kitchens" in the Lake Kianta battle.

The defeat of the Russian 163d Division was announced in an Army headquarters communique tonight amplifying a previous communique.

The second communique read: "On land: Fighting in the Lake Kianta country in the Suomussalmi communo on the eastern frontier resulted in a great victory of our troops on Dec. 29 and 30.

"The enemy's 163d Division was definitely cut up and for the most part destroyed. Remnants of the division were partly scattered in the forests and partly fleeing, pursued by our troops, toward Junturanta. The enemy's losses can be counted in the thousands.

In the Salla sector the enemy launched an attack against our positions but was hurled back by counter-attack. Two tanks were destroyed.

"A battle northeast of Lake La-



North of Suomussalmi, Finns wipe out Russian division in bitter battle at Lake Kianta (A). Soviet planes drop more than 100 bombs at Vaasa (B). Other towns over which Red air raiders swept are underlined. First Russian attempt to attack over ice on Lake Ladoga (C), repulsed by Finns.

doga which began Dec. 29 continued all day yesterday. All the enemy's attacks were repulsed. "Elsewhere on the isthmus there was chiefly artillery fire which in some places rose to great intensity. On the site of fighting at Volosina and Kelja we have so far collected



Gen. Grigori Stern His division reported wiped out.

450 rifles, 81 machine guns, 57 quick-firing rifles, 50 automatic rifles, 16 rifles with telescopic sights, nine anti-tank guns, ammunition for these, and wireless sets and telephones.

### Bomb Six Cities.

Red planes bombed at least six Finnish cities, including Vaasa, western coastal city on the Gulf of Bothnia, where more than 100 bombs were dropped in four raids within an hour.

Many buildings were set fire in the Vaasa raid, which civilians said was identification for Russian defeats on the battlefield. Tampere, Ekens, Lovisa, Turku, Borgas and Hyvinkae were among the towns which suffered raids.

## Molotoff Has Own Meaning

Helsinki, Jan. 2 (AP).—The word "Molotoff" is acquiring a place in the Finnish language.

As many Finns the name of the Russian Premier-Foreign commissar means weather suited for air raids.

If the sky is dark and the clouds low they say, "Molotoff can't come today." But if the sky is clear it is "Molotoff

# Finns Wipe Out Red Division of 15,000

(Continued from page 3)

Finns moved there for safety from southern towns in belief that Vaasa, situated on the coast where it bulges into the Bothnian Gulf nearest Sweden, would provide a haven from enemy raids.

The streets of Vaasa were jammed hours after the attack by frantic residents trying to learn the fate of kinsmen and friends who had lived in destroyed houses.

Since the start of Russia's invasion on the morning of Nov. 30, the Finns have shot down at least 129 Russian planes, the United Press reported from official sources. The actual number by bombers and other planes lost by the Red Army was thought by observers to be nearer 250.

Following "towerhouse" by sports feller Jimmy Powers the vigorous fearless handling of sportsmen.



Finns soldier tries out night machine gun captured from Reds.

## VALVOJA TIISTAINA, TAMMIKUUN 30 P. 19

### TERVEHDYS SUOMESTA

Sain Suomesta muuan päivä sitten Suomen Silta-julkaisun lokakuun marraskuun ja joulukuun yhdistetyn numeron. Käänsin siitä seuraavat jutut engl. kielisiin lehtiin.

20 vuotta Suomen eduskunnassa palvelut sosialistiedustaja Miina Sillanpäää m. m. kirjoittaa: "Työläisnaisetkin käsitteivät että vain itsenäisessä Suomessa voimme työskennellä parempien ehteiden puolesta. Näin yksimielistä ja tarmokasta kansaa ei helpolla nujereta."

Kirjailija — nyttemmin kapteeni — Arno Karimo kertoo erinäisiä havaintojaan osoitukseksi miten yksimielistä Suomen kansa on nyt hyökkääjää vastaan. Hän sanoo: "Niin! Suomen kansa on täysin yksimielinen kaipa ensimmäisen kerran koko historiansa aikana." Nykyiselle mielialalle ei löydy menneisyydessä mitään vertauskohtaa... Luokseni saapui paha paine, kymmenvuotias pojan nappula. Perintönään hänellä on isänvainajansa Suomen vapaussodassa käyttämä kivääri. Poika tuli tiedustamaan, pitäisikö hänen nyt luovuttaa se armeijalle. Sen hän kyllä tekisi, jos niin käskettäisiin, mutta hyvin mielellään hän pitäisi myös kiväärin itsekin. — "Asia on niin, jotta pian tästä täytyy jo jokaisen miehen lähtää rajalle, ja silloin minä tarvitsen sen itse", selitti miehenätku järkkymättömällä vakaumuksella. Ja perin alakuloiseksi hän kävi sanottuani, että hänen pitäisi tulla kasvamaan hieman pitemmäksi kuin kivääriä arvasta sitten tulla joutua vapaaehtoiseksi. Lopuksi sovittiin niin, että poika sai pitää rakkautensa perintönsä, ja pääsi lisäksi lähettiksi eräseen

esikuntaan. Hyvin hän hoitaa tehtävänsä, juoksee asioille kahdeksan tuntia päivässä ja valvoo vuoroltaan yöinkin.

"Miehiä aseisiin kutsuttaessa oli reserviläisten joukossa muuan viinoja mitenkään karkamaton satamajätkä, rommujen ja iso rumulus. Parhaan väkkoa palvelutuaan hän sai nostaa päivärahaansa, muutamat kymmenet markat. Hän kaivoi taskustaan ainoan ennen palvelukseensa tuloaan jostakin ansaitsemansa satamarkkasein, työnsi sen ja kuttaamansa päivärahat väpölehtiin eteen ja virkoi: "Valtio antaa muonan, vaatetuksen ja maakuupaikan, viinoja ei nyt tarvita — lähettäköön nämä markat minun puolestani valtion yhteiseen kassaan. Muuta minulla ei ole. Henki annetaan vasta aikanaan, ja sitä minä en myy vähästä."

"Muuan vanha helsinkiläinen mummo oli ostoksillaan ja pahoitteli ajan kovuutta. Hän pyöritteli kahvi-pakettiaan mieltä väsäisenä käsissään, ja virkkoi: "Sanovat tätä annoksesta saatavan kaksi kupillista päivässä. Minulle saa tästä lähtien riittää yksi kupillinen. Pannaan tämä kahvi kahteen pakettiin. Toisen otan minä, toisen lähetän rajoille. Minä en kykene enää mitään tekemään, mutta rajoilla olevien miesten on saatava kahvia. Suurihan tämä minun lahjani ei ole, mutta mitään muutaakaan en voi heille lähettää. Myyjä jakoi kahvin kahteen pakettiin, mutta katseli samalla pois päin. Hän ei tahtonut nähtävästi mummolle ja mulle, että kaupassa oleville että hänen silmäänsä olivat kosteat."

John Manni.

## Nothing Doing, Reds Say

Moscow, Jan. 1 (Monday) (AP).—The Leningrad military area headquarters issued this communique today: "Nothing of importance took place at the front. Soviet aviation successfully bombed a number of places."

scribed as one of the worst of the war.

Two persons were killed and a hospital hit at Hyvinkä.

The Finnish High Command announced that the first Russian attempt to cross the ice on Lake Ladoga, the large body of water separated from the Gulf of Finland by the Karelian Isthmus, had been repulsed.

According to the United Press, "thousands of enemy dead" were said to litter the battlefronts around Salla near the Arctic Circle, and northeast of Lake Ladoga.

Between 24 and 30 planes took part in the Vaasa raids, which inflicted an undetermined number of civilian casualties. One body was taken from the ruins and officials believed more would be found.

Though heavy damage was caused in the center of the city, most widespread destruction occurred in the residential districts.

Church Destroyed. A church was destroyed, also a hospital damaged slightly when a bomb exploded 30 yards away, showering it with splinters.

A short time before the raid on Vaasa 15 Red planes were sighted over Helsinki, which had three air raid alarms during the day.

No bombs were dropped on the capital proper, however, reported shot down on the outskirts.

One Soviet plane was reported shot down on the outskirts.

The city was crowded with

the war Archive Helsinki PK 1580/1

The earliest entry the OED cites for 'Molotov breadbasket' is from 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1940: [Illustr. London News](#) (446/2) "The 'Molotov Breadbasket'..appeared to consist of two types." Typing 'breadbasket' in the search space of the *New York Times* online edition and setting the dates between several weeks before the beginning of the Winter War and several weeks after it ended, the searching machine produced 3 examples dating earlier than the earliest entry in the OED. Moreover, they include clear indications of the Finnish origin:

**Date Range**

All Since 1851

Past 24 Hours

Past 7 Days

Past 30 Days

Past 12 Months

**Specific Dates**

From:

10 / 31 / 1939

To:

05 / 31 / 1940

Sort by: [Newest](#) | **[Oldest](#)** | [Relevance](#)

1-4 of 4 Results

[U.S. FINNS FIGHTING NORTH OF LADOGA; New Yorker Leads Volunteers Battling 'Like Devils' at Nation's 'Back Door' BOMBED SORTAVALA BURNS Raiders Almost Destroy City as Defenders' Land Patrols Tie Up Red Division](#)

watched the charred city burn itself out. Most of the bombs were dropped from what the Finns, in grim humor, call "Molotoff's **breadbasket**"—an eight-foot long, hollow cylinder, three feet in diameter, with a propeller on the end.

February 06, 1940 - By JAMES ALDRIDGE North American Newspaper Alliance, Inc - Print Headline: "U.S. FINNS FIGHTING NORTH OF LADOGA; New Yorker Leads Volunteers Battling 'Like Devils' at Nation's 'Back Door' BOMBED SORTAVALA BURNS Raiders Almost Destroy City as Defenders' Land Patrols Tie Up Red Division"

[View original in TimesMachine](#)

[SWEDES GET ORDER TO FIRE ON PLANES; Stern Policy Is Adopted as a Result of Border Town Bombing by Russians YOUTH BACKS AID TO FINNS Leaders Set Volunteer Quotas in Each Town--Elders Raise Funds for Soldiers' Kin](#)

incendiary bombs appear to have been released from the propeller-driven rotary device that the Finns have dubbed "Molotoff's **breadbasket**." Several unexploded bombs were ascertained to be of Russian origin. A typical example of the

February 23, 1940 - - Print Headline: "SWEDES GET ORDER TO FIRE ON PLANES; Stern Policy Is Adopted as a Result of Border Town Bombing by Russians YOUTH BACKS AID TO FINNS Leaders Set Volunteer Quotas in Each Town--Elders Raise Funds for Soldiers' Kin"



Soviet's Air Force Held Strong; Bombers and Fighters Effective; Observer in Finland Saw Modern Types of Planes, Handled by Well-Trained and Well-Equipped Personnel

types of bombs, parachutes, etc., came out of the Finnish war. The most famous of all was what the Finns called Molotoff's **breadbasket**, which was a cylindrical container carrying 100 or more incendiary bombs. These scattered as the

March 26, 1940 - By JAMES ALDRIDGE North American Newspaper Alliance, Inc -  
Print Headline: "Soviet's Air Force Held Strong; Bombers and Fighters Effective;  
Observer in Finland Saw Modern Types of Planes, Handled by Well-Trained and  
Well-Equipped Personnel"

The text heritage of the world is being digitized gradually. I myself have been involved in digitizing the 6<sup>th</sup> century Gothic manuscripts and their literation in Latin letters in order to enable searching. As this process advances, the role of the illustrious *OED* as a tool for philological studies is likely to diminish.

## Notes

1. The British Newspaper Archive is a partnership between the British Library and brightsolid online publishing to digitize up to 40 million newspaper pages from the British Library's vast collection over the next 10 years.

<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>

2. An English version of this list is at: <https://histdoc.net/history/reporters.html>

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