Putin’s Mistake

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A gruesome misjudgment led to the war

The attack on Ukraine was a catastrophic mistake. The whole world turned against Russia in 48 hours.

On paper everything may have looked good.

Russia would have superiority in terms of men and armaments. Western countries are fragmented, and their past reactions ultimately soft. The state war chest is full and critical voices have been defeated.

To protect his position, the Belarusian leader has sold out his country. A road to Kiev is offered so that the Ukrainian leadership can be replaced.

Already the first days of the Russian offensive war in Ukraine show that Russian President Vladimir Putin has misjudged the situation. (Image at right: Suomen Kuvalehti cover on 4.3.2022)

The Ukrainians know what they are fighting for. To the Russians, on the other hand, the objective cannot be told.

The outside world condemns the attack. The EU, often seen as a weak paper tiger, is suddenly united and determined. It supports Ukraine and hits the Russian economy. And the Russians cannot be prevented from receiving information that deviates from the official line.

Putin has misjudged the will of the Ukrainians to defend themselves, the public opinion in the outside world and the effectiveness of the sanctions. At the same time, he has

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revealed his true ambitions. For some reason, the ruler of the Kremlin has imagined that the return of the Soviet Union would make him a permanent hero.

However, discovering the estimates incorrect would not guarantee that fighting would end or peace would return. As bridges have already been burned, hostilities may become yet more brutal.

**Finns** are following the situation closely for many reasons. Also, the similarities to the beginning of the Winter War are confusingly great.

Finland is a neighbor to Russia, from the Russian point of view perhaps the best of its neighbors. Now the administration of the eastern neighbor has shown that it ignores international law and is ready for an offensive war against an independent state. The range of means includes even intimidation with nuclear weapons.

How can Finns act in this situation?

Delivering aid to Ukraine is one way, offering refuge to war fugitives is another.

It is also important to put pressure on Russia as part of the EU. The fastest way to end the spiral of destruction is in Moscow, as long as there are enough people there to realize where the current road is leading. Economic sanctions are the most peaceful way to make an impact.

Sanctions and countersanctions affect also Finns. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the damage is repaired together and that the burden is shared fairly.

The situation is unpredictable, so Finns must also take care of the functioning and unity of their own society.

**The time** in history when Finns had to fear epidemics, war and famine is not very far away.

Now with two years of pandemic, and a war near us, rising food prices are starting to push the poor of the world off the table. Additional threats are posed by the energy crisis and cyber-attacks.

Understandably, support for NATO membership has increased. The political leadership of Finland bears a great responsibility when assessing how it is possible and wise to act in the midst of a crisis. Cool judgment and unanimity between parties is needed. Co-operation between the other Nordic countries must also work particularly well.

*See the original Suomen Kuvalehti editorial on the following page.*
Karme virhearvio johti sotaan

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Commentary

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