

Epilogue

In fact, after January 10, active hostilities in the Suomussalmi region ceased. Part of the **44th Infantry Division** took up defensive positions on a section of the Suomussalmi road, 9 kilometers from the border. The fighters and commanders who escaped from the encirclement were concentrated in the Vazhenvara area.

In fact, it remained combat-ready: the **179th howitzer artillery regiment** (the guns were fully preserved), the battalion of the **305th rifle regiment**, the **78th medical-sanitary battalion**, the second-level regiments and divisional rear.

On January 8, 1940, **Colonel S.A. Tkachenko** was appointed commander of the **44th division**.

"Comrade Mehlis, copy Yakovlev

To the commander of the 44 rd, is appointed Colonel Tkachenko instead of Vinogradov, by the order of the People's Commissar for Defence No. 048 dated January 8, 40, leaving Kem at 24.00 8.1.40 "

(A cipher telegram from Moscow, Comrade Mehlis. 09.01.40. 2.10. RGVA. F. 34980. Op. 5. D. 323. L. 243)

On January 9, 1940 **brigade commander Vinogradov A.I.** was suspended from the command of the division and arrested. Together with him were arrested: the chief of staff of the division, **Colonel Volkov O.I.** and the head of the political department of the division **regimental commissar Pakhomenko I.T.** (the commissar of the division, the **regimental commissar D. N. Mizin** went missing).

Before the arrival of the new commander, the **brigade commissar Furt P.S.** began to perform the duties of the division commander. To the commissar of the division was appointed **regimental commissar Kupriyanov** (regimental commissar **Mizin D.N.** was missing). Since January 10, **Major I. Sokolov** began to fulfill the duties of the division headquarters officer, and from January 30th, **Lieutenant Colonel Babakhin** was appointed Chief of Staff.

To fulfill duties of the commander of the 122nd artillery regiment the former commissioner of the headquarters of artillery of the Red Army, **Colonel Chistyakov** (Major **Korzhenevsky** was wounded), the commander of the **146th regiment** - **Major Vishnevsky** (**Major Ivliev P.V.** was wounded), the commander of the **25th Regiment** - Major **Filimonov I.T.O.** (Major **Plukhin** received severe frostbites) were appointed.

The former leadership of the **44th division** was brought to justice. They were accused of failing to accomplish the mission assigned to the division, considerable losses in personnel and retreat without a materiel, which almost completely fell into the hands of the enemy.

The command of the division was tried by the military tribunal of the 9th army and sentenced to the capital punishment - execution. **The sentence** was carried out immediately on January 11 in front of the formation of personnel of the **44th rifle division** .

*TOP SECRET
CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF OF THE RED ARMY*

C.Shaposhnikov
(for GHQ)

"We report: the trial of the former commander of the 44th section of VINOGRADOV, the chief of staff VOLKOV and the political department PAKHOMENKO took place on January 11 in Vazhenvara under the open sky in the presence of the staff of the division. The accused pleaded guilty to the crimes committed. The speeches of the prosecutor and the public prosecutor were approved by the defendants. The court lasted fifty minutes. The sentence to the execution was carried out immediately publicly by a platoon of Red Army soldiers.

After the execution of the sentence, a meeting of the commanders was held, at which further explanatory work was scheduled. The identification of all traitors and cowards continues.

In the 44th rd there is a commission of the Military Council, which is responsible for a detailed investigation of all the causes and circumstances of the crushing of the 44th rd. "

January 11
Chuikov, Mekhlis

The Red Army soldier of the regimental battery of the **305th rifle regiment Khropatyi Fedor Pavlovich** remembers:

"... how they treated us not very much, fed us, so in about ten days later, and maybe more, they gathered everyone who came back from that 27th kilometer, and pushed us back into line. We stand, we wait. And suddenly they bring General Vinogradov, the commander of our division, and his four blood brothers with him. And they read the verdict to us: Vinogradov and those other officers (I don't remember their names) to be shot as traitors of the people. They were also shot before our eyes. I later learned that they wanted to shoot more commanders, but they shot themselves ...

So, like this. For what they? For the fact that they remained alive and did not let us die? ... This general under the bullets behaved fearlessly. Yes, we could not break through the circle, but was Vinogradov guilty of that?

And I also remember: after the shots subsided, those who ordered "Fire!" applauded ... " . [{12}](#)

This is what a simple soldier said about **brigade commander Vinogradov**.

But here is what the leadership of the Red Army said about the commander of the **44th infantry division** and its defeat.

"With the withdrawal of the 163rd Infantry Division, the 44th division alone remained in front of the enemy. It was necessary to make a decision to withdraw the 44th division or not. The enemy, bypassing from the south, began to crush and surround the 44th division in parts. If we here recall the environment of the 54th division, then the interesting picture turn out. On the one hand, the enemy who is trying to split the division into small parts and surround them. This way of action is correct - you must always crush the enemy into parts, and then eliminate the individual nests. On the other side be "Tolstoyans", who, instead of timely clearing a block of 10 trees, sit and wait for when it is piled up to 20. There is no intelligence, the flanks and the rear are not protected. Despite the fact that all of our instructions speak about protecting the flanks, paying no attention to what GHQ on December 12, with a special indication of the new tactical methods to be used in the Finnish war, indicated that you should look behind the flanks and the rear, nothing was done. The surrounded troops sat as "spelled" in the forest . ([From the presentation of B. M. Shaposhnikov at the meeting of the leadership of the Red Army on April 14-17, 1940. Meeting materials.](#))

A similar assessment of the actions of the command of the **44th rifle division** was given in the [report of the People's Commissar of Defense of the USSR K.E. Voroshilov at the meeting of the Supreme Military Council](#) in the spring of 1940, who said that the **44th Infantry Division** "*was blocked due to cowardice and betrayal by the command of the division .*"

But should the blame for the death of the division and staff put entirely on its commander, **brigade commander Vinogradov** ?

[Personal opinion here not translated]

After the end of hostilities on March 13, 1940, the **44th Rifle Division** continued to operate on the same sector of the front.

The Red Army soldier of the regimental battery of the **305th rifle regiment [Khropatyi Fedor Pavlovich](#)** remembers:

"We thought that we were still going to attack. They began to replenish the division with people and weapons. But on March 12 a truce was announced , and after 5 days we went on foot (200 kilometers) to Kem station. And from there trains go to Ukraine . " [{12}](#)

The division was sent from Kem from April 12 to April 21, 1940 back home - to the Kiev Military District.

On October 3, 2009, in the forest near the old Vazhenvara [Vasovaara] frontier post on the Russian-Finnish border, 69 years after the end of the Soviet-Finnish war, about four hundred soldiers of the **44th rifle division** were opened at the burial site in March 1940 with military honors. This mass grave was discovered by the Sterkh customs search GROUP in 2004. At the same time it was intended to establish a memorial sign here. The old grave was cleared of fallen trees, and fenced. In 2007, a wooden Orthodox cross was erected on this mass grave, and in 2009 a memorial plaque was made using public funds, which is a marble slab with an inscription fixed on a large granite boulder. [{9}](#)

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