

Chapter B. Arctic winter 1939/40

General winter weather scenario

The severe winter period lasted from mid-December 1939 until March 1940. Even in Northern Spain, temperatures of minus 18 C were recorded, while in France people began to wonder whether they lived in Western Europe or in Siberia. However, the cold centre was situated in the Netherlands and in Northern Germany, and up to the Baltic countries. The low temperatures were generated by the arctic air coming from Siberia. Extreme weather conditions were felt in Finland, Sweden, Southern Norway, Denmark, South-western England, Northern France, Germany, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland, the Baltic countries, and Western Russia. In Southern Europe, south of the Alps, weather was extremely cold and unpredictable for some days, but average temperatures did not deviate significantly.

By mid-January 1940, newspapers reported extreme temperatures for Northern Europe: -48°C in Finland and the Baltic countries, -35°C in Southern Sweden, -26°C in Denmark, -40°C in Poland, -32°C in Budapest, -20°C in Paris. The weather remained extremely cold until April 1940.

By mid-February, a second cold wave took hold of Northern Europe with temperatures of -25°C in Sweden, Denmark and Holland, -33°C in Budapest, and -47°C in the Baltic countries. Sub-zero temperatures lasted in Potsdam/Berlin until the 15th of April, with only 20 days without freezing temperatures during the whole winter period.

Mid January 1940
minus temperatures in degree Celsius
according to newspaper reports

