

860D.00/1226: Telegram

*The Chargé in Finland (McClintock) to the Secretary of State*

HELSINKI, May 11, 1943—3 p. m.

[Received 10:18 p. m.]

664. Marshal Mannerheim asked me to see him at 11:30 this morning.

The Marshal quite belied in his appearance and vitality the fairly dubious report I had from the General cited in my 647, May 7.<sup>75</sup> As our conversation revealed General Kekoni was also one hundred percent wrong in suggesting that Baron Mannerheim had been kept in ignorance of the Finnish Government's intentions. The Marshal was more thin than when I last saw him but he seemed fully to have regained his health and his mind was clear as a bell. He wore two decorations: one the Finnish Liberty Cross and the other the decoration pinned on him by Hitler on June 4 last year.<sup>76</sup>

I told Baron Mannerheim that I had wanted to see him because as he knew our relations had recently deteriorated and I wished to have his impressions on Finland's position. I was very careful in the light of your 81, May 7 not to give any impression that I thought anything could be done to improve relations.

The Marshal said he was very glad to see me and several times during the course of an interview which lasted more than an hour said he hoped I would stay on in Finland. He said he was not a diplomat and was accustomed "not to hide his thoughts" and that he would talk with entire candor.

I found the Marshal engrossed with the stock Finnish theme that present war with Russia is but a continuation of the Winter War. He went back into the history of that conflict and the interim between the two wars. His discussion of British and French offers of military assistance in 1939 and 40; of the position of Sweden; and of circumstances surrounding the granting by Finland of the transit agreement to Germany in September 1940<sup>77</sup> will be related in a secret despatch<sup>78</sup> as completing the diplomatic history of that period.

As for recent events in which our present interest lies the Marshal made no effort to conceal fact that Finland had been subjected to the

<sup>75</sup> Not printed; General Kekoni, Marshal Mannerheim's representative in Helsinki, had described the Marshal's health in pessimistic terms (860D.00/1225).

<sup>76</sup> Hitler had visited Finland on June 4, 1942, on the occasion of Field Marshal Mannerheim's 75th birthday, at which time he bestowed on Mannerheim the Grand Cross Order of the German Eagle, in gold. See also memorandum by the Under Secretary of State, June 5, 1942, *Foreign Relations*, 1942, vol. II, p. 63.

<sup>77</sup> The German-Finnish agreement for German troop transit through Finland to Norway was signed on September 22, 1940; see telegram 1232, September 25, 1940, from the Ambassador in the Soviet Union, and telegram No. 416, September 26, 1940, from the Minister in Finland, *Foreign Relations*, 1940, vol. I, pp. 346 and 347, respectively. For text of the agreement, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945*, series D, vol. XI, p. 149.

<sup>78</sup> Not printed.

most strenuous German pressure. For that matter, he said, Finland had been subject to the most strenuous American pressure. He seemed to have in mind the possibility of a declaration of war. He professed not to know why we had exerted this pressure or had now reduced Legation to its present skeletal condition. I gave him my usual answer about our feeling that Finnish Government was no longer a free agent as instanced by Ramsay's flight to Berlin. Marshal Mannerheim replied to my comment that it was certainly not pleasing to us to have Finnish Foreign Minister make a clean breast to Ribbentrop of our most secret conversations that in any case the Germans "had other means of finding out what was going on". I said in any event Washington had ample proof that the Finnish Government was not a free agent.

Marshal Mannerheim said that our tender of good offices of March 20 as redefined by your note to Ramsay of April 10 had been nothing more than "an offer to resume the game of the cat playing with the mouse".

As for German pressure Marshal Mannerheim said categorically that the Germans had never threatened military occupation of Finland. He said rather grimly that he would resist occupation from whatever quarter it came. When I remarked that in my opinion the Finnish army was perhaps the best small army in the world the old gentleman beamed and said it "almost" was. For a moment he was carried away with pride and on the point of describing its military strength but checked himself and said that since I would be reporting this interview he could not tell me what he would like to.

When I again brought the conversation back to the question of German pressure the Marshal confirmed as I have reported that the Finnish Government had declined a German request for a treaty pledging no separate peace. He said "we will continue with Germany only so long as our interests are in common and no longer. After that—the Germans may try to force us but they might not find it altogether easy to do." I had the very positive impression that the Marshal thought himself able to deal with any German military threat.

Marshal Mannerheim was most bitter at British policy and said there was no difference at all between the detestable German view of the position of small states vis-à-vis the great powers and the present British view. I said that Mr. Churchill's last speech did not give me that impression. The Marshal asked if I could get him a copy which I shall try to do. He seemed as convinced as President Ryti that the British have "sold" Finland and the Baltic States to the USSR. Like Ryti and other leaders here he had a different feeling about us and thought we were the only idealistic great power. In consequence he did not see how the United States could stand idly

by and see the rights of small states which only sought to mind their own business and live at peace trampled on by cynical great states. At one time he referred ironically to our "noble" allies. I said that in attempting to assess the degree of "nobility" of one's allies or comrades in arms he might be walking on dangerous ground.

The Marshal brought up his much criticized order of the day of July 11, 1941,<sup>79</sup> and said he had been misquoted. He had not referred to "Suursuomi"—greater Finland—but to "Suurisuoimi"—big Finland—and there was a difference. He said he would be grateful if [I] would set this right for the record. He pointed out that he had been careful to keep the administration of Soviet Karelia in his own hands and gave me the impression he did not regard this conquest as more than a temporary necessity. He confided that he had been furious when the Finnish newspapers dubbed Petroskoi "Aanislinna" and called the River Svir "Syvari".<sup>80</sup> He said he had indeed pledged his soldiers 24 years ago to offer the brother Karelians in Soviet territory a chance to join their kinfolk; but the occupation of this territory had been for military reasons alone. He stressed he had not cut American communications via the Murmansk Railroad with the rest of Russia. I said he had at least effectively cut that line at Petroskoi and had thus given the people at Leningrad a bad time. The Marshal did not deny this but emphasized again that he had not cut our line of communications. He said, "I choose not to advance to the White Sea".

I said in any case I thought Finland would have to found its security on some sound political basis rather than on a strategical basis. The Marshal admitted that Finland's strategical situation was "somewhat exposed".

From his frequent references to "that terrible treaty of Moscow" I gained the certain conviction that the Marshal does not contemplate for a moment any peace with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which would reestablish the terms of that treaty. His policy may be summed up briefly in a determination to utilize the relationship of co-belligerency with Germany for the last ounce of support it will give Finland against Russia and then to rely on Finland's own fighting strength to see her through. We, as justice-loving Americans, ought in his opinion to leave Finland alone and understand the enormous difficulties of his country's position.

As I left Marshal Mannerheim said he hoped I could "influence" my Government. I said I was merely a young Chargé d'Affaires left

<sup>79</sup> See telegram No. 292, July 16, 1941, from the Minister in Finland, *Foreign Relations*, 1941, vol. I, p. 48.

<sup>80</sup> "Petroskoi" was the Finnish term for the Russian city of Petrozavodsk in Soviet Karelia; however, the use of the name "Aanislinna" (a Finnish term, "castle on Lake Aanis", or Lake Onega) became popular in Finland after the Finnish Army had occupied Petrozavodsk. The name "Syvari" was simply the traditional Finnish equivalent of the Russian name "Svir."

here as the last of the Legation, but that I was free to report the truth and the truth had its own influence.

McCLINTOCK

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860D.00/1248 : Telegram

*The Minister in Sweden (Johnson) to the Secretary of State*

STOCKHOLM, June 2, 1943—5 p. m.

[Received 5:37 p. m.]

1749. Counselor of Soviet Legation, Iartsev, who spent 5 years in Soviet Legation, Helsinki, prior to Winter War made following statements to officer of Legation:

There is no difference between present Finnish Government and last one. There is little possibility of parliamentary opposition to seize control of Government. Financial power of Ryti, party organization of Tanner, and industrial power of Walden<sup>81</sup> cannot be challenged by any leaders of parliamentary opposition. Suggestions that others might oust present Government if they had assurances from Soviets regarding peace terms are therefore out of question.

Finns have high regard for relations with United States but should be made to realize that America insists their disassociating themselves from Germany and this can be done only by complete removal of American Legation from Helsinki.

While Soviet Government has not admitted right of Baltic States to independence it has repeatedly stated that Finland and Poland would be independent after war.

While above remarks were made in informal conversation believe they are significant because Iartsev is reputedly considered principal expert on Finnish affairs in Stockholm Soviet Legation and probably important reporter to Moscow on this subject.

JOHNSON

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<sup>81</sup> Gen. Karl R. Walden, Finnish Minister of Defense.

740.0011 European War 1939/30990a

*The Secretary of State to Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff  
to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy*

WASHINGTON, September 1, 1943.

MY DEAR ADMIRAL LEAHY: In conversations which I am reliably informed were undertaken with the knowledge and authorization of the Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs,<sup>16</sup> a Finnish diplomatic official is reported to have made a proposal<sup>17</sup> to this Government of the following general character:

If Finland could have any satisfactory assurances that such a step would not mean its ultimate destruction as a nation, it would be willing by the beginning of September to cut off supplies to the German troops in the north of Finland, thus condemning the latter to eventual exhaustion and destruction. The Finnish Government would like a reaction to this proposal.

The Finnish official who put forth this proposal stated that the American Government was in error in thinking that the Finnish Government was unwilling to contribute whatever it could to the liberation of Europe. Finland's position, according to this official, was simply: The great part of Finland's food supply came from Germany and the Germans by deliberately preventing Finland from building up stocks kept it in a position of day by day dependence on German shipments. In these circumstances the Germans were in a position to create at any time and within the space of a few days almost insurmountable food difficulties for the Finnish people and they would not be slow to punish in this manner any demonstration of political independence on the Finnish side. This situation, however, would last only until the end of August or beginning of September at which time enough grain would be available from Finland's own harvest to tide the country over for some time and the day by day dependence on the Germans would be temporarily removed. It was for this reason, therefore, that the above proposal could be made.

In a further conversation subsequent to the presentation of the original proposal set forth above the Finnish representative explained that when he said his Government would be prepared to "cut off" the

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<sup>16</sup> Conversations had been going on for some time in Lisbon between the American Counselor of Legation in Portugal, George Kennan, and the Finnish Chargé there, Taavi Pohjanpalo. The Department was informed by Minister in Sweden Herschel Johnson, in his telegram No. 2676, August 24, that the Finnish Minister in Sweden, Gripenberg, had said that Foreign Minister Ramsay had authorized the Finnish Chargé in Portugal to undertake these conversations looking toward a possible Finnish exit from the war (760D.61/1671). Mr. Gripenberg had replaced Jarl A. Wasastjerna as Finnish Minister to Sweden on April 15, 1943.

<sup>17</sup> The form of this Finnish proposal was worked out at a meeting between Kennan and Pohjanpalo early in August, and was reported to the Secretary of State in a letter from Kennan dated August 10.

German troops in Finland, he did not mean that those troops would not be given an opportunity to return peacefully to Germany through Finland, if they wished to do so. It meant that the Finns would refuse, as of a certain date, to permit these troops to be supplied or reinforced from Germany. This would place them in the same position as that of the German troops in Northern Norway (in view of the recent Swedish declaration)<sup>18</sup> and the Germans would presumably be compelled to withdraw them. He also said that the Finnish Government would doubtless wish to make its offer contingent on Allied entry into Northern Norway, since in the absence of such an entry it would be impossible to get supplies to Finland from the outside world and the country would remain at the mercy of the Germans. It was pointed out to him that it was out of the question that our military authorities should consent to reveal in the course of such conversation anything whatsoever concerning our military plans. He agreed to this but expressed the hope that perhaps some arrangements could still be made with the United Nations which while not binding the latter to any specific military action, would become operative if and when Northern Norway were liberated from the Germans.

It seems to me that Allied interest in this proposal may depend for the greater part upon its military aspects. Accordingly, before going further into the political implications of the proposal, I should greatly appreciate receiving an indication from you as to whether the proposal has any substantial military interest in connection with the prosecution of the war.

I may add by way of background that in the present situation in which the Finnish Government finds itself, it may feel that the best solution for its present political difficulties would be a landing by American or even British troops in Finland. The Finns might calculate that such a landing would serve the dual purpose of ejecting or assisting in the ejection of German troops now in Finland and offer some insurance against the entry of Russian troops into Finland. If this is true, the Finnish proposal might well be found upon further exploration to contain the requirement that American or British troops land in Northern Finland and Northern Norway and that Soviet troops would not make such a landing an occasion for operations against Finnish territory. Aside from these considerations, the Finnish proposal might be found of interest and importance in connection with any military operations which might be undertaken by Allied forces anywhere in the Scandinavian area and upon the continued neutrality of Sweden.

Sincerely yours,

CORDELL HULL

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<sup>18</sup> For termination of the German-Swedish transit agreement, see footnote 9, p. 289.

740.0011 European War 1939/31337

*Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff to the Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy, to the Secretary of State*

WASHINGTON, 7 September 1943.

MY DEAR MR. SECRETARY: Replying to your letter of 1 September 1943, inquiring as to the military aspects of the proposal of a Finnish diplomatic official, the following are the views of the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

According to the latest estimates of Axis strength on the Finnish front the German forces total seven divisions and the Finnish, thirteen divisions and seven brigades. These are containing a Russian force estimated at approximately 450,000 men and two hundred planes.

Inasmuch as the Finnish proposal would permit the withdrawal from Finland of the seven German divisions, aggregating about 150,-

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<sup>19</sup> Nicola Naditch, Yugoslav Counselor of Legation and Chargé in Sweden.

<sup>20</sup> Vladimir Semenovich Semenov, Soviet Chargé in Sweden.

<sup>21</sup> In a peace settlement concluded with Sweden at Nystad (Uusikaupunki), Finland, on August 31, 1721, Tsar Peter the Great acquired for Russia the province of Vyborg (Viipuri) as a protective strip to the northern approaches of St. Petersburg, and other territory in Karelia.

<sup>22</sup> Not printed.

000 men, for use on other fronts, the number of Russian troops that would be available for use elsewhere would be correspondingly decreased to about 300,000. This number would be still further decreased if the Russians should divert forces for the military occupation of Finland.

The suggestions of the Finnish representative that his Government would doubtless wish to make the offer contingent on Allied entry into northern Norway, proposes a commitment that, as implied in your letter, should not be accepted by the United States. As to the further suggestion of the employment of Anglo-American troops for the dual purpose of assisting in the ejection of German troops from Finland and affording insurance against Russian entry into that country, it may be said that, aside from other weighty objections to such action, the task suggested would be impracticable from a military standpoint. Logistic factors alone would preclude its accomplishment.

The Finnish front at present is relatively quiet. Russia is in the best position to evaluate the military benefit to Allied strength that would result from the withdrawal of Finland from the war, and it is also the Power most directly concerned in the solution of the question. Such influence as the United States may be able to exert in the determination of a formula for that solution, must be derived from sources other than that of Anglo-American military intervention in Finland.<sup>23</sup>

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

WILLIAM D. LEAHY

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760D.61/1674: Telegram

*The Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Standley) to the Secretary of State*

Moscow, September 9, 1943—4 p. m.

[Received September 10—1:27 p. m.]

1316. The September issue of *War and the Working Class* publishes the first chapter of a forthcoming book by O. Kuusinen<sup>24</sup> the Finnish Communist which will be called *Finland Unmasked*. In the first chapter entitled "Sources of Finland's Anti-Soviet Policy" Kuusinen follows the orthodox Soviet line regarding Finland. Finnish foreign policy he writes has been consistently anti-Soviet and Finland has always cultivated those countries which were most hostile to the Soviet

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<sup>23</sup> In a letter to Admiral Leahy, September 25, the Secretary of State informed him that the Finnish Government was being informed through the Finnish Minister in Stockholm that the United States Government could not, from a military standpoint, meet the requirements of the Finnish proposal.

<sup>24</sup> Kuusinen was at the time a member of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee; he had been a member of the Presidium, Executive Committee of the Communist International, until the announcement of the Comintern's dissolution on May 22, 1943.

Union. Finland's enmity to the Soviet Union results from a special brand of chauvinism which was carefully inculcated after the Bolshevik revolution. The leading advocates of this chauvinism including reactionary bourgeois circles and the ruling plutocratic classes and their agents, the bourgeois press, the Schutz Corps, and Army officers professed to be opposed to everything Russian but in fact had been loyal subjects of the Tsar and continued to cooperate with White Guardists after the revolution.

Finnish chauvinism was based on the desire of the ruling plutocracy to oppress and exploit the working masses and its realization that this could only be accomplished with foreign aid. This assistance was first obtained from the Tsarist Government and the Kerensky Government. The Bolsheviks advocated the independence of Finland (Stalin's statement in November 1917 to this effect is quoted)<sup>25</sup> but the Finnish *bourgeoisie* fearing a people's movement sought German support and embarked on an adventurous policy toward the Soviet Union under the slogan "Finland's war of liberation against the Russian yoke". The second source of Finnish chauvinism was the greed of the Finnish plutocrats particularly the lumber, paper and pulp interests and the Helsinki banks who cast envious eyes on the natural timber reserves of Soviet Karelia and finances freebooting expeditions organized by Mannerheim to seize this territory. "These are the sources of the anti-Soviet chauvinism of the Finnish Government." The chapter concludes, "From the very beginning it was in reality chauvinism of the Fascist stamp".

Unlike most articles now appearing in the Soviet press Kuusinen employs the old anti-capitalistic jargon of the Comintern and draws liberally on the rich invective of the Russian language to describe ruling circles in Finland.

STANDLEY

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740.0011 European War 1939/31338

*The Finnish Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ramsay) to the Secretary of State*<sup>26</sup>

[HELSINKI, undated.]

Finland greatly appreciates her present friendly relations with the United States of America, and for her part she is firmly decided to do

<sup>25</sup> In a speech to a meeting of members of the Finnish Social Democratic Party held in Helsinki on November 14, 1917, Iosif V. Stalin, then People's Commissar of Nationalities in the Soviet Russian Government, called for "self-determination" and "freedom" for the Finnish people. See I. V. Stalin, *Sochineniya* [Works], vol. iv, pp. 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Handed to the Minister in Sweden (Johnson) on September 10 by the Finnish Minister in Sweden (Gripenberg) and forwarded to the Secretary with covering letter of same date received September 21. Mr. Gripenberg stated that this communication was related to the Kennan-Pohjanpalo conversations in Lisbon (see footnote 16, p. 293).

everything in her power to maintain and develop these friendly relations.

If a landing of American troops in Northern Norway would cause military operations affecting Finnish territory, Finland, in conformity with her attitude as pointed out above, would *not* consider such operations as directed against Finnish troops. The Finnish Army would consequently abstain from any military operations against the United States of America, just as Finland expects that possible American military operations in Finnish territory would not be directed against Finnish troops or Finnish civilians.

As soon as such a landing would actually have taken place, Finland would immediately inform Germany that she is not going to fight the United States of America and simultaneously she would start negotiations for the purpose of the German troops being withdrawn from Finnish territory.

The possible military operations above referred to would probably lead to parts of Northern Finland being threatened by a Soviet Russian invasion. Under no conditions could Finland be a passive spectator of a Russian advance across her frontiers undertaken in connexion with these military operations, nor could she tolerate a previously agreed upon advance of Soviet troops into Finnish territory. The withdrawal of the German troops presupposes that they should be replaced by other military forces for the protection of the frontier between Northern Finland and Russia. Such other military forces could be provided only by the United States of America or possibly by Sweden after an agreement with Soviet-Russia that Northern Finland should in this way be neutralized or pacified.

Under above mentioned conditions Finland is thus ready to contribute to a peaceful neutralization or pacification of Northern Finland, provided always that this area as well as every part of it would be protected against a Russian penetration.

During the coming autumn months Finland's own reserves of food stuffs will gradually diminish. It can be estimated that after the 1st of December Finland would each month need from abroad the following quantities: 30,000 tons of wheat, 2,000 tons of fats, 4,000 tons of sugar.

In addition, certain consumption goods are needed such as clothes, shoes, textiles, lubricating oils as well as motor fuel for agricultural purposes and forestry work.

[Unsigned]