

PUBLICATION OF THE MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF FINLAND

D O C U M E N T S

CONCERNING THE RELATIONS BETWEEN
FINLAND, GREAT BRITAIN AND THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DURING THE AUTUMN
OF 1941

HELSINKI 1942

7.

Telegram of the Secretary of State of the United States of America, sent on October 30th, 1941, to the American Minister in Helsinki. A copy of this telegram was handed by the American Minister to the President of the Republic of Finland on October 31st, 1941.

It is desired that you call on His Excellency President Ryti at once and inform him that, in view of the speed at which matters are now developing, I desire that a reply to the representations which you made to him on October 27 may be given at the very earliest possible time. You should add that in pressing His Excellency in this manner it is our sincere belief that we are acting in the vital interests of Finland itself because it is felt that the Finnish Government, by delaying its answer to your representation or by making an unresponsive answer, will weaken to an immeasurable extent the efforts which are still being made by us with great difficulty to protect the future interests of Finland in so far as this is possible under circumstances that now can be foreseen.

HULL.

8.

Memorandum, with Appendix, of the Government of Finland, handed on November 11th, 1941, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland to the American Minister in Helsinki.

MEMORANDUM.

With reference to the Memoranda of the Legation of the United States of America dated October 27th and 30th 1941, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has the honour to state the following.

I.

In its Memoranda the Government of the United States calls on Finland to terminate hostilities and withdraw her troops to a line corresponding to the border of 1939 between Finland and the Soviet

Union. They contain no mention of a cessation of hostilities on the part of the Soviet Union, nor do they say whether compliance with the request presented to Finland would entail the withdrawal also of Soviet troops from the areas within the 1939 frontiers of Finland which they still continue to occupy. These areas are the Finnish part of the Fisher Peninsula, which enables enemy artillery to threaten Petsamo, Finland's sole ocean harbour, further the outer islands in the Gulf of Finland, and Cape Hanko, which dominates maritime routes in the Gulf of Finland.

The character of the struggle between Finland and the Soviet Union is known to the Government of the United States. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs wishes to refer in this respect to the recent exchange of Aide Mémoires between the Governments of Great Britain and Finland, and to the publication of the Finnish Government »Finno-Soviet Relations II». These show point by point, retracing the development of events from November 30th 1939 onward, how the position of Finland as a neighbour of the Soviet Union has been one of incessant self-defence against imperialistic strivings on the part of the Soviet Union. The first attack by the Soviet Union ended in the dictated Peace of Moscow. A feature of this peace was the occupation of such areas from which the attack could be resumed in the most favourable circumstances. In addition, the Soviet Government compelled Finland, inter alia, to construct a continuation, linking up with the Finnish railways, of a railway laid from the Murmansk railway to the Finnish frontier to provide the Soviet Union with a convenient access to Northern Finland and onward to the Atlantic. The peace terms also included the occupation of Hanko, which was to serve the Soviet Union as a naval base, but where, immediately after the conclusion of peace, a strong garrison with tanks and other equipment was stationed. From Hanko air attacks are still being launched on the cities and civilian population of Southern Finland. Hardly had the Peace of Moscow been concluded, before the Soviet Union presented new unjustified demands, inter alia compelling Finland to permit transit traffic on her railways to Cape Hanko at the rate of two pairs of Russian trains per day. The Finnish authorities had not the right to inspect the trains. The Soviet Union also interfered in an unscrupulous fashion with Finnish domestic affairs and attempted to organize street demonstrations. The Soviet Union established a Legation in Helsinki with a staff of 150 persons, a large proportion of whom were active in purely espionage work. The Soviet Union forbade the fortification of the Aaland Islands, and compelled Finland to submit to the opening in a city in these islands of a Con-

sular Office with a staff of forty persons. A corresponding Consular Office was founded for purposes of espionage also in Petsamo.

The peace of Moscow thus denoted for the Soviet Union merely an armistice for preparations for a final conquest. This phase then terminated in a new military attack by the Soviet Union, which compelled Finland to resume her self-defence by the use of arms; the character and purpose of the attack is reflected in the proclamation by the leading Moscow newspaper Pravda, in its issue of June 23rd 1941, that »the Finns are to be exterminated off the surface of the earth.»

In these attacks the areas beyond the old Finnish frontier have been systematically utilized as advanced bases against Finland. The Soviet Union has equipped both these areas and those acquired by the Peace of Moscow in the completest manner possible for attacks westward. It has now been possible to establish this ipso loco. The branch lines from the Murmansk railway leading in the direction of the Finnish frontier, of which six have been discovered up to the present, as well as the new highways constructed solely for offensive purposes, and the numerous air fields, reveal beyond any doubt the aggressive plans of the Soviet Union and the untenable strategic position in which Finland had been placed by these preparations. An effective defence, Finland's right to which no one can deny, is possible to Finland only by transferring her defence into these very areas, and in this respect no distinction can be made between the areas ceded under the terms of the Peace of Moscow and the other areas now occupied by Finland.

No documents can give a lifelike picture of the wretched state these areas — both those beyond the 1939 frontier and those ceded under the peace — had been brought. It has been possible, however, for the members of the staff of the United States Legation in Helsinki and for several American journalists to acquaint themselves on the spot with conditions in the areas occupied during the present military phase by Finnish troops, which is indeed the only method by which an accurate idea can be gained of them. Neglected cultivations, buildings allowed to fall into ruins or destroyed, desecrated churches and graveyards, and a population living in bottomless misery, ravaged by murders and mass deportations, reveal to what pitiable state the Finnish people would have been condemned under Soviet rule, insofar as they had not, in conformity with the fate that befell Estonia and other states annexed by the Bolsheviks, been partly or wholly physically liquidated. All this serves to show the fate that would befall Finland if she neglected the proper care of her security.

It is for this reason that the men of Finland elect rather to fall in a defensive war than passively await the execution of their families and themselves.

It is understandable that it has been extremely difficult for the United States to conceive the situation Finland is in, especially as the United States have never directly experienced the danger Bolshevism constitutes to a community built up on Western principles.

The character of Finland's struggle is not altered by the circumstance that, on the grounds of her natural views of her own security, Finland is striving to render innocuous and to occupy the enemy's offensive positions also beyond the 1939 frontier. Precisely the same considerations would have made it urgently necessary for Finland, in the interests of the effectivity of her defence, to undertake such measures already in 1939—40 during the first phase of the war, if only her strength had been equal to the task. On that occasion there would hardly have been any doubt as to the justification of these Finnish military operations.

For the appreciable material aid Finland received from America during the Winter War, the Finnish people feel the greatest gratitude, but this is[t] still more the case in regard to the understanding and the moral support which the American people lent Finland in her struggle against the Bolshevist invasion. On that occasion the unjustified attack on Finland by the Soviet Union aroused great indignation in the United States.

Finland notes with satisfaction that the Government of the United States has intimated its willingness to continue to lend its support to the vital interests of Finland. The Finnish Government fails, however, to see how the said noble principle actuating the Government of the United States could be reconciled with the demand that the Finnish Army should withdraw from the areas it has, for reasons of security, occupied beyond the 1939 frontier, which the Soviet Union would then immediately be in a position to utilize again for aggression on Finland. On the contrary, Finland is compelled to establish that the measures recommended by the Government of the United States would be fateful to the security of Finland and accordingly in conflict with the vital interests of Finland.

The attitude of the Finnish Government in regard to the war begun by the Soviet Union has been and is, that Finland is desirous of terminating the struggle as soon as the danger threatening her existence has been averted and guarantees created for a continuous security. If it is being assumed that Finland has any wider aims than these, then Finland's conception of her own resources is being exaggerated.

II.

During the military phase of 1939—40 proposals for the mediation of peace made by the United States did not, any more than those from other neutral sources, prevent the Soviet Union from pursuing her attack on Finland. The Soviet Union replied to those proposals that she had already concluded a treaty of assistance and friendship with a Government alleged to represent Finland, a puppet Government, which the Soviet Government had itself appointed, in which connection areas settled by Finns beyond the 1939 frontier — areas which Finnish troops have now occupied — were amalgamated, as being Finnish, with Finland.

The population of the areas beyond the 1939 frontier now occupied by Finnish troops, areas which have been under Bolshevik administration for 23 years, has been and is for by far the most part Finnish. Depending on historical circumstances part of the Finnish nation has been left to live outside of the frontiers of Finland, and the areas in question belong to the dwelling-areas of just this part of the nation. In connection with the Peace of Tartu in 1920 the Soviet Government promised to guarantee this Finnish population considerably wide rights of national self-determination, which promises she has meanwhile left unfulfilled.

To what pitiable state the measures recommended by the Government of the United States would reduce the civilian population that has remained behind in these areas, the history of the Bolshevik regime provides frightful examples. This consideration too supports the view that there is cause to keep the areas in question occupied by Finnish troops, in order that freedom and security can be guaranteed to this population. Taking into account the national composition of the population of these areas, this would be in conformity with the principles enunciated in the declaration given by the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Great Britain on the Atlantic Ocean on August 14th 1941.

III.

The Government of the United States has intimated that it must hold Finland responsible for not even having attempted to explore the possibilities of peace held out by the information given by Mr. Sumner Welles on August 18th 1941 to the Finnish Minister in Washington.

According to the information in the possession of the Finnish Government, Mr. Welles stated in the conversation that took place

between him and Mr. Procopé on the said date, that he had been asked to convey to the knowledge of the Finnish Government that »the Soviet Government would be disposed to make territorial concessions and negotiate a new peace treaty». On Mr. Procopé's asking whether the Soviet Government had requested the Government of the United States to transmit this information, the answer was in the negative, Mr. Welles amending his statement as follows: »I know that the Soviet Government would be disposed to discuss a new peace treaty with Finland through which territorial concessions would be made». He added that his statement was not a recommendation on the part of the United States, but information. To Mr. Procopé's question as to what territorial concessions might possibly be intended, Mr. Welles was unable to reply. Equally unclear remained the views of the Government of the United States as to what guarantees would exist that the Soviet Union did not again attack Finland. Mr. Welles stated, however, in this connection that at the end of the war the Soviet Union would be the preponderant power in Eastern Europe. When in this same connection Mr. Procopé asked whether the clause relating to disarmament in the well-known declaration by Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill referred also to the Soviet Union, Mr. Welles stated that the question was a hypothetical one and that up to 1939 the Soviet Union had been a state striving for peace and international order.

In the early days of September Mr. Procopé, acting on instructions received by him, explained in the Department of State of the United States the attitude of his Government in regard to Finland's defensive war. In the ensuing conversations the grave doubts of Finland, based on many bitter experiences, regarding the trust that can be reposed in promises given by the Soviet Union, were explained to the Government of the United States on behalf of the Finnish Government. To the observations made by Finland regarding the essential promises for an eventual peace, no elucidation[h]as been forthcoming from the Government of the United States. In particular, no guarantees of security have even been offered to Finland as a pledge of a new peace between Finland and the Soviet Union.

In the view of the Finnish Government, Mr. Welles's statement to Mr. Procopé on August 18th 1941, was not intended as an offer of peace by the Soviet Union or as an offer of mediation or even a recommendation on the part of the United States, but merely as a piece of information on the basis of which Finland was to sue for peace. In the circumstances the Finnish Government, at that stage of the military operations, when even Viipuri had not yet been taken, continued to await the development of events.

While these conversations were in progress, a spate of unfounded rumours began to be apparent in the Press abroad to the effect that Finland intended to conclude a separate peace with the Soviet Union, and that certain prominent Finns had been conducting negotiations to that end with the Governments of third Powers. On the 5th of the present month of November the British Broadcasting Corporation circulated reports of peace terms in detail alleged to have been brought to the knowledge of the Finnish Government in the aforesaid conversation on August 18th 1941. Neither these nor other offers of peace terms were made to Finland through the Government of the United States on August 18th or later. Nor have such peace terms been proposed to the Finnish Government from any other quarters.

IV.

The Government of the United States, in its Memorandum of October 30th 1941, has intimated that it regards recent military operations on the part of Finland as a direct threat to the security of the United States. Finnish troops cannot threaten the United States, which constitute a mighty Power protected by two oceans and secured by numerous bases, of which some are situated thousands of miles beyond the frontiers of the United States. Nor can the Finnish Government either see that the occupation by Finnish troops of certain areas from which the security of Finland is permanently threatened, could conflict with American interests in regard to security. Nevertheless the anxiety felt by the United States for her own security gives Finland the right to expect from the Government and people of the United States understanding for Finland's strivings to protect her existence, to secure her future and to defend her ancient democratic freedom after being subjected on two separate occasions within the space of less than two years to unjustified armed attacks on the part of a mighty Bolshevist terrorist state, with neither United States nor any other country able either to prevent them or to provide guarantees that such attacks would not be renewed. Finland hopes that the great American nation will recognize the right also of a small nation to live and to defend itself. During the course of centuries Finland[s] has indeed been compelled to make abundant use of the right of self-defence in shedding her blood in defensive wars on her eastern flank, the aggregate term of which in Finnish history exceed one hundred years.

It is probably difficult for a nation of 140 millions living on the other side of the globe, whose resources of money and industrial capa-

city are illimitable, to understand the position, from the military point of view, of a nation of 3.8 millions with a coastline 1 500 kilometers long, exposed to attack, and a 1 000-kilometers long land frontier against a neighbour of two hundred millions, regarding whose inimical intentions there is not the slightest doubt.

It is almost inconceivable that the great American democracy can demand of a small nation which has again been attacked by its fifty times bigger neighbour and is fighting for its existence, that it should, while hostilities are in progress, withdraw to await a new attack within frontiers the defence of which, if the advantages gained are given up for the benefit of the enemy, may easily, in view of the resources on each side, become an overwhelming task.

In the Memorandum of October 27th and in other connections the assumption has been made by the Government of the United States that Finland's freedom of action and even her independence are imperilled by Germany. Finland herself has no reason to assume that she is in any such danger. Finland is desirous of conducting her own affairs in the shelter of that national unity, based on a centuries-old farmer and citizen democracy, which especially in the war periods of recent years has proved to be a dependable force also in the defence of the nation.

The significance to Finland of the circumstance, now that she has been drawn into a resumed war of defence against the Soviet Union, that Germany is simultaneously at war with this enemy of Finland, is obvious. When the offensive preparations directed against Finland by the Soviet Union, to which that country again resorted after the Peace of Moscow, carrying them out at even accelerating speed, are taken into account, and also the fact that the enormous industries of the Soviet Union had been directed almost entirely to the production of war material, there can be no doubt but that a new war, if Finland had again had to stand alone, would have denoted the doom of Finland and of the entire North.

The President of the Republic of Finland stated to the Minister of the United States on October 23rd 1941 that the Finnish nation, which has not violated the rights of any other party and has not asked for more than to be allowed to live and work in peace, will continue her war with the Soviet Union only until her security and working peace have been achieved. The President added that the Finnish Government hoped that it would be possible before long to release on leave a certain number of men from the Army for work on the home front.

This is indeed the case, but Finland in her fight for existence cannot enter into any engagements that would denote an imperilling of the national security by the artificial suspension or annulment of fully justified military operations.

Viewing the immense trials and sufferings mankind now has to endure, and then observing in the prevailing situation the Government of the United States fixing its attention on the individual fateful problems of a small nation, the thought arises that the supreme task which Providence, at the present juncture, has assigned to the United States, for the remedying of the prevailing conditions and ensuring the existence of millions of human beings, would be the achievement of a permanent state of law between the nations that would enable also a small nation to feel its existence secure.

Helsinki. November 11th 1941.

APPENDIX.

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