

Urho Kekkonen, MP, speaks about the Moscow Peace Treaty

in the closed session of the Finnish Parliament, March 15, 1940

Deputy K e k k o n e n: The present Government was confronted with a harder decision than any other previous state body responsible for the fate of the people of Finland. One can only imagine, how hard it has been to approve the present choice, in the face of which the Parliament and the people of Finland now stand as powerless witnesses. But choosing the other alternative, continuing the war, had neither been an easy one. Despite of this, I venture to believe that the people of Finland had still chosen the latter path, if it had been in the position to give the decisive opinion, how hard this ever might have been. During the hard days of war, an ever stronger belief in our just cause grew constantly among our people, expressed also by growing will to sacrifice everything for our righteous cause. It is just this preparedness to fight until the very end, and aversion to any reconciliation when the vital interests, and moreover, when the very foundation for the existence of the nation is at stake, is to my mind a clear indication of the true spiritual basis of our people. This basis we must keep strong. Therefore, we should avoid teaching a philosophy of submission as a justification for making peace. If this kind of philosophy becomes the official philosophy of the state and the people, the spiritual upright for keeping up the will to independence will be broken.

Every Finn wholeheartedly hopes that the path chosen by the Government will be the right one, as rarely as a peace coerced by violence can ever be a right one. Neither in this case, this cannot be assured. I, as a member of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee, was privileged to express my opinion, before agreeing on peace, before its reading here. My opinion has been that a peace dictated by Moscow should not be adopted and that the struggle for independence must be continued. Nothing has been able to change my position since those days. That my opinion is no adventurist policy is witnessed by the fact the Government has considered it quite seriously. But when the Parliament stands in front of a fait accompli, any criticism against the path chosen by the Government, and setting forth contradicting arguments would have only a historical interest, so it must be left as it is. But it could not reasonably be demanded that a member of the Parliament, who opposed to this peace already then when his position still might have had influence on the outcome, should now vote in favour of it. And yet this neither can be proposed to be rejected. The Government has implemented it undeniably contrary to the indisputable rule in the Constitution, but for justifiable reasons and after reliably acquiring the Parliament's consent in advance. The fact is that though the Parliament has a formal right to reject the peace treaty, it is outside my comprehension if a deputy, in full seriousness, would suggest rejecting the peace treaty.

When we last Autumn were forced into this war, a unanimous oath was devotedly sworn by the people: in front of violence we will not give up our Fatherland, for it we will fight to the last man. "To the very end and even beyond it", those words by Prime Minister Ryti described the mood how the people met and fought its struggle, and this mood has not until this day changed at front or neither among the population behind the frontlines. No sacrifice seemed to be too high to carry on the struggle up to a victorious end. Rather death than submission, was the parole up to the end. Still last Tuesday, the same day when the names of Finnish men were signed on that fateful paper, a provincial newspaper wrote: "In the unfortunate case when the aggressor with its mass power could after years of struggle break our resistance, it would be a desolate country it will conquer." And the writer was a man who himself had seen, what the destruction caused by the enemy means and had personally experienced that. We all know that at the time of the peace we had a victorious, truly invincible army and we still possessed the people's unyielding will to victory, feeling no fear, and a spirit ready for struggle and sacrifices. As we put these elements against this horribly harsh peace, it makes this peace totally incomprehensible to the majority of our people. The Field

Marshal's impressive order of the day gives us a reliable picture of the fact that our army was not on the brink of a disaster. The last bulletin of the Headquarters is indeed a rare piece of history: "All enemy attacks were repelled." But in spite of that, we now have here a peace, which moves the eastern border of our territory to the very center of the Finnish Fatherland. Densely populated areas, throughout the history inhabited by Finns, never laid under an enemy foot, and, as our soldiers behind the Lake Ladoga and on the Karelian Isthmus can clearly prove, were neither threatened by a foreign foot in any near future, will now to be ceded to the enemy. The peace does not reflect that what happened in the war. It falls short of the deeds of the Finnish soldier, it does not correspond to the heroic sacrifices made by the families of the fallen and the whole nation.

Although national unanimity cannot be brought to support the Moscow peace, and I see any efforts to try this as wrong, we all have to submit to this as it is accomplished by state organs authorised to do so. Our nation has during the war lived a serious and dangerous time. The post-war period is, in a sense, even more serious and dangerous. The situation in the foreign and defense policies, to which we are brought by the Russian peace, requires from our people such kind of self-restraint and calmness that only the people of Finland is capable of doing that, despite after that all what happened in the war. Iron-strong public order must be maintained just in these days and can be preserved only by national self-discipline. The admirable tranquility and peace of mind, with the help of which the will for victory on the homefront was preserved during murder bombings, is what is now required to face the shock brought by this peace given to us, the intensity of which was maybe best described by words I heard from an old lady, "Rather one hundred bombings than that sort of peace."

The people of Finland has in its biggest grievances always been able to grow up to the measures needed. The task set by the concluded peace to our country is equally obliging with a task in the war. In these aggravated circumstances we have to be capable in safeguarding our independence and sovereignty, we have to be able to heal the wounds inflicted by the war, to give a new piece of the Fatherland to those hundreds of thousands from whom this peace took it away. All this can be attained only by the same readiness to make sacrifices and the unanimity that brought us success in the war. These tasks are such the people of Finland, despite the disagreeing opinions concerning the conclusion of the peace, can gather together around. That confidence in victory, unshakable until these fateful days, must be redirected into equally strong, equally unshakable confidence in our ability to reconstruct, with unyielding effort and the right social mood, our truncated Finland into a common Fatherland of all Finns. We may not, after this all, be able speak about a happy Fatherland, but we should to work so that we can speak about a Fatherland, firmly believing in finding happiness and a better future.