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Porkkala – Hanko – Aaland

A contribution to the history of the Finnish-Russian cease-fire negotiations, September 1944

On 12 January 1945, the Stockholm evening paper, *Aftontidningen*, printed a telegram from Helsinki which said that the people of Aaland planned to boycott the Finnish parliamentary elections which were due to take place in March. The background was said to be that the people of Aaland had got the impression that, at the cease-fire negotiations between Finland and the Soviet Union in September the previous year, the Finnish government had been willing to exchange Aaland for the Porkkala area claimed by the Russians.¹ The next day the newspaper, *Morgontidningen*, gave the news a prominent place under the heading, "Aaland does not wish to be exchanged for Porkkala".² A more detailed account then followed, which the newspaper claimed to have got from sources on Aaland.

"Even before the Finnish-Russian cease-fire negotiations, there was lively discussion in certain Finnish circles of the suitability of offering Moscow Aaland in exchange for Hanko, on which the Soviet Union was then expected to renew its claims. The Finns thereby argued that it would not be such a sacrifice to hand over Aaland to the Soviet Union as it would be to lease out Hanko or any other part of the Finnish mainland. Nor did certain Finnish circles miss the

¹ Aftontidningen 12/1 1945.

² Morgontidningen 13/1 1945.

opportunity for malicious insinuations that ‘it would serve the Swedes right to get the Russians as next-door neighbours, since they are so anxious for us to make peace with them’.”

The article then went on to say that, from a Finnish point of view, it was naturally more advantageous to relinquish Aaland rather than Hanko or Porkkala. According to *Morgontidningen*, the people of Aaland claimed that the matter was discussed within the Finnish government, but the article pointed out that the suggestion did not appear to have been put forward at the negotiations in Moscow, since the Russians were not willing to discuss any alternatives.

Morgontidningen's information was said, as mentioned above, to emanate from Aaland. On 14 January, *Hufvudstadsbladet* in Helsinki wrote that it was ‘a persistent rumour’ which had circulated in Stockholm for some time before it was brought into the open in *Morgontidningen*.³ The very same day that *Morgontidningen* printed the sensational news, *Aftonbladet* was able to publish an interview with the Finnish foreign minister, Carl Enckell. The interview contained a categorical denial of the startling report in *Morgontidningen*. “Aaland rumours pure fantasy. Categorical denial by Finnish foreign minister” was the heading of the interview. Enckell had personally led the cease-fire negotiations in Moscow and could now give full assurance that Aaland had not even been mentioned in this connection. The Finnish government had never had any plans to exchange Aaland. Enckell also gave an explanation of the origin of the rumour. Just before the delegation left for the negotiations in Moscow, “a small Finnish group suggested to the government then in office that a proposition be made in Moscow that the Russians accept some of the groups of islands around Aaland instead of bases on the Finnish mainland”. This suggestion was naturally never taken up by the government, emphasised

³ Hufvudstadsbladet 14/1 1945.

Enckell.⁴ Enckell's statement was also given wide publicity in Finland, where the Finland-Swedes were naturally extremely anxious to put an end to these rumours and prevent an election-strike on Aaland, since this would result in a loss of seats for the Swedes in parliament.⁵ Enckell's denial reassured Swedish public opinion, but the people of Aaland were not satisfied.⁶ Not until the minister for home affairs, Ernst von Born, chairman of *Svenska folkpartiet*, the Swedish party, had visited Aaland and had discussions with representatives for Aaland's 'landstinget' (council for local government), did Aaland's voters agree to participate in the election.⁷ These rumours were naturally extremely damaging, not least through the effect they had on public opinion in Aaland and Sweden, but was there any substance to them?

I

Peace probes had been made as early as autumn 1941¹ and the efforts to pull Finland out of the war started to play a more significant part in Finnish politics, at least after the beginning of 1943. The coming of the new Linkomies government in February should be seen partly against this background. The first chance of sounding the possibility of a separate peace treaty came in July through the mediation of the Belgian minister in Stockholm, but this came to nothing.² More important, though also without result, were the contacts made in November the same year. Erik Boheman, cabinet secretary in the Swedish foreign department, played an important role as mediator in

⁴ Aftonbladet 13/1 1945.

⁵ Cf. the leader in Nya Pressen 16/1 and Hufvudstadsbladet 17/1 1945.

⁶ Dagens Nyheter 23/1, Morgontidningen and Svenska Dagbladet 24/1, Stockholms-Tidningen 25/1 och 20/1 1945.

⁷ Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet 5/2 1945. See page 12 below.

¹ H.J. J. PROCOPE, Fällande dom som friar. Dokument ur Finlands krigsansvarighetsprocess (1946), p. 74 ff.

² On this see e.g. G. A. GRIFENBERG, London–Vatikanen–Stockholm. En beskickningschef's minnen II (1960), p. 153 ff.

these and subsequent Finnish-Russian contacts in Stockholm.³ It soon became obvious that Moscow took the boundaries of the Moscow Peace Treaty as the starting-point for all negotiations. The Finnish response to the first Russian lead was considered unsatisfactory by the Russians.

When contact was renewed at the beginning of 1944, the Finns' military situation had deteriorated. During a conversation between Ryti and Mannerheim at the beginning of February, the commander-in-chief strongly recommended peace, even on the terms of the Moscow Peace Treaty. Ryti followed the same line.⁴ On 12 February, Paasikivi went to Stockholm on behalf of the government to make contact with the Russian envoy, Madame Kollontay.⁵ The conditions he took back to Finland included a demand for the boundaries of 1940. Furthermore, prisoners of war and internees in concentration camps were to be released and all connections with Germany were to be severed. No German troops were to be allowed on Finnish territory, but were to be interned, with Russian help if necessary. Questions such as the future of the Petsamo area and an indemnity would be dealt with at the negotiations in Moscow. According to Boheman, Madame Kollontay stated that if Finland accepted these terms in principle, "the question of Hanko could be taken into consideration".⁶

The majority of the government and Mannerheim regarded the Russian conditions as unacceptable, especially the demand that the German troops should be interned. In his statement to a full sitting of parliament on 29 February, Prime Minister Lin-

³ GRIPENBERG p. 176 ff., ERIK BOHEMAN, På vakt. Kabinettssekreterare under andra världskriget (1964), p. 248 ff.

⁴ G. MANNERHEIM, Minnen II (Stockholm 1952, in English, The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim, London 1953, in German, Marshal Mannerheim, Erinnerungen, Zürich 1952), p. 374.

⁵ The negotiations in Stockholm are described by GRIPENBERG, p. 186 ff. and BOHEMAN, p. 252 ff.

⁶ BOHEMAN, p. 254. Cf. GRIPENBERG p. 193 ff.

komies declared another of the points to be unacceptable also: “with regard to Hanko, it is impossible for us voluntarily to surrender this area to foreign occupation”.⁷

Linkomies wanted the negotiations to continue, however, and the government was given powers for this. On 4 March, the Finnish ambassador in Stockholm, Gripenberg, gave the Finnish reply to Günther, who was to forward it to Madame Kolontay. The reply was expressed in such negative terms, however, that Günther and Boheman advised against its being handed over and managed to get the wording changed.⁸ But even this version was found completely unacceptable by the Russians. After the Finns had asked for an interpretation of the Russian demands, it was agreed that this should take place in Moscow.

Paasikivi and Carl Enckell flew to Moscow on 25 March. The terms they returned with were decidedly harsh compared to the preliminary conditions, above all in the demand for an indemnity of 600 million dollars, which was to be paid within five years. The German troops were to be put to flight or interned before the end of April. The Finnish army was to return to the 1940 boundaries and gradually be put on a peace footing. Furthermore, the Petsamo region was to be surrendered to the Soviet Union, who would, however, if Finland accepted the other conditions, abstain from “its right to lease Hanko”.⁹ The government decided to reject these conditions, a decision which was accepted by the Finnish parliament on 12 April.

In June, however, the military situation was such that a separate Finnish peace treaty with the Soviet Union was obviously necessary. Ramsay, the minister for foreign affairs, sent a message to Boheman that Finland was now prepared to withdraw from the war and sever its connections with Germany.¹⁰ This

⁷ Cf. V. TANNER, *Vägen till fred 1943–1944* (Helsinki 1952) p. 130 f.

⁸ BOHEMAN p. 255, GRIPENBERG p. 200 ff.

⁹ BOHEMAN p. 256 ff. TANNER p. 158 f. GRIPENBERG p. 215.

¹⁰ GRIPENBERG p. 237 ff.

brought no result, however. It was made impossible by the rather strange interlude of the Ryti-Ribbentrop Pact. This German-Finnish pact meant that German aid to Finland was to be greatly increased. In return, the Finnish president promised not to conclude a separate peace treaty with the Soviet Union. The making of the pact was certainly largely due to Mannerheim's recommendation of it. Both he and Ryti seem to have intended from the start to use it to stabilise the front, so as to be able to renew the peace negotiations from a more advantageous position. In other words, it was a kind of deliberate 'double-dealing', using an interpretation of international law, by which a contract ratified by the head of state alone, only binds him personally and not his successor. Such an interpretation could not in any event have been seriously considered by the Germans when they concluded the treaty, since it naturally made the pact quite worthless from a German point of view.¹¹

The plan was carried through successfully. The German contribution produced the intended result, a stabilisation of the military situation. The German envoy, von Blücher, was informed on 1 August that Ryti was leaving his post, and when von Blücher confirmed that the contract between Ryti and Germany would naturally also bind his successor, he was given an evasive answer.^{11a} By the middle of the month, however, the significance of the Finnish manoeuvre was clear.¹²

On 4 August, Mannerheim took the oath as president and four days later a new government was formed with Antti Hack-

¹¹ C. LEONARD LUNDIN presents a different interpretation, *Finland och andra världskriget* (Helsinki 1958, in English, *Finland in the Second World War*, Bloomington 1957), p. 445 ff. Cf. also ANATOLE G. MAZOUR, *Finland between East and West* (Princeton, 1956), p. 165 f.

^{11a} WIPERT VON BLÜCHER, *Ödesdigra år*, p. 419 ff (Helsinki 1950, in German, *Gesandter zwischen Diktatur und Demokratie*, Wiesbaden 1950). At this point, the Finns had already made inquiries via Stockholm for assurance that the Russians were prepared to negotiate. See GRIPENBERG, p. 251 ff., BOHEMAN, p. 258 f.

¹² VON BLÜCHER, p. 419 ff. W. ERFURTH, *Der finnische Krieg 1941-1944* (1951), p. 173 ff.

zell at its head. Its main task was to guide Finland out of the war.

On 25 August, the Finnish government sent an inquiry via Stockholm to the government of the Soviet Union as to whether it would be willing to receive a Finnish delegation to negotiate for a cease-fire and peace.¹³ The Russian answer, which arrived in Helsinki August 30, was positive with certain stipulations. These were that the Finnish government was to sever all connections with Germany and demand that the German troops within two weeks, or by September 15 at the latest, should be withdrawn from Finnish territory. If the Germans did not agree to this, the German troops were to be captured and handed over to the Soviet Union as prisoners of war. The terms were extremely severe, partly of course because of the situation which would arise if the Germans attacked, partly because acceptance would leave Finland a very small chance of refusing the cease-fire and peace conditions, whatever they were, which the Russians could then put forward. At a full session on 2 September, the Finnish parliament decided by a large majority to follow the government's and the president's advice to accept the conditions. Some members of *Samlingspartiet* (the Conservative party), the Agrarian party and ILK¹⁴ voted against the proposition.¹⁵

The defence minister, Walden, the chief of the general staff, Heinrich, and Lieutenant-general Oscar Enckell were appointed members of the delegation to Moscow, with the prime minister, Antti Hackzell, as chairman. The delegation arrived in Moscow 7 September, but did not gain a hearing until 14 September. The same day, the delegation's chairman, Antti Hackzell, suffered a stroke. He was later replaced in the delegation by the minister for foreign affairs, Carl Enckell, who flew to Moscow

¹³ Detailed account by GRIPENBERG, p. 264 ff

¹⁴ "The Patriotic People's Movement", a small rightest, semi-fascist party.

¹⁵ TANNNER, p. 267. GRIPENBERG, p. 269 ff. BOHEMAN, p. 260.

16 September. The post of prime minister and head of the foreign ministry were temporarily filled by Ernst von Born. The former minister for foreign affairs, Ramsay, however, took charge of the foreign ministry in effect.¹⁶ According to Heinrich, the conditions for a cease-fire which were presented to the Finnish delegation were clearly intended to be accepted the very same evening. Compared to the terms which Finland had refused in April, those now offered were more severe on certain points, but milder in one respect, namely over the indemnity, which had been reduced from 600 million to 300 million dollars. The most important instance of the increased severity was that, instead of Hanko,¹⁷ the Russians were now demanding that the Porkkala area, which lay only 17 kilometers from the capital, should be leased to them. The Finnish delegation managed to obtain a respite and during the conferences which followed, the terms were discussed point by point. The delegation had no chance of effecting any alteration, however, and on 19 September the cease-fire agreement was signed.

2

The literature on the Finnish-Russian negotiations in September 1944 is extremely meagre, mainly because of the lack of accessible source material. But even making allowances for this, the accounts are extremely summary. None of them mention any plans for offering bases on Aaland instead of the Porkkala area desired by the Russians. If we go to the narrative sources, we find that of the memoir writers who describe the events in September, there is actually one who mentions these 'Aaland plans', namely Ernst von Born in his *Levnadsminnen*.¹ As mentioned above, von Born served temporarily at that time as both

¹⁶ GRIPENBERG, p. 290.

¹⁷ As already mentioned, the Russians appear to have been prepared to relinquish their demand for Hanko if an agreement had been made at the beginning of the year. See above p. 5.

¹ E. VON BORN, *Levnadsminnen* (1954) p. 388 f.

prime minister and foreign minister, which naturally makes his account of the greatest possible interest. The extract in question reads as follows:

“A delegation led by the prime minister was sent to Moscow, where the negotiations were opened on the 8 of the said month. But it was not until 19 September that the final agreement was reached. During the trying days in Moscow, Prime Minister Hackzell suffered a stroke which made it impossible for him to continue the negotiations, which were then completed by the ministers of defence and foreign affairs. It was a hectic finish. Telegrams were exchanged continuously, though with some difficulty, by the ministry for foreign affairs in Helsinki and the delegation in Moscow, mostly through Swedish agency. Suggestions and alternatives were put forward. The government was kept assembled most of the time so that it could decide where it stood on the various questions. In the desperate situation in which we found ourselves, it even happened that suggestions were made during our discussions which had to be rejected immediately. Thus finally the thought was even voiced that, instead of the Porkkala area which lay so near Helsinki, we should offer Hanko Point plus base rights on Aaland and possibly even more of the archipelago. I refused to consider this, explaining that for one thing such a suggestion would never be accepted, for another it would disrupt our international relations (primarily with Sweden), and that thirdly the situation would be uncomfortably reminiscent of the mother who throws her child into the wolf’s mouth in order to save herself. This idea was never taken seriously by the great majority of the government, but the very fact that it could arise caused much ill-will among the people of Aaland. As a result of this, I went over to Mariehamn in January 1945 to calm the atmosphere and try to persuade the people of Aaland, despite their discontent and bitterness, to participate in the parliamentary election together with Åboland, so that if possible our third Swedish mandate in the constituency should be assured.”²

Ernst von Born’s account is at the same time summary and rather vague. If we concentrate on what is of primary interest to us here, the suggestion of an exchange, we can see that von

² Ibid. p. 388 f.

Born's account reveals rather more than Enckell's statement in the interview mentioned above.³

Enckell said that the suggestion originated from 'a minor Finnish group', which approached the government, while von Born writes that 'suggestions were made', leaving their origin completely open. The suggestion was naturally never accepted by the government, declared Enckell, while von Born says that it was never taken seriously by the great majority of the government. The differences are not great. But while von Born to some extent gives an account of the discussion on government level, Enckell gives more an impression of its being a private initiative, which had nothing to do with the government. There is also a degree of difference between what Enckell said about 'some of the groups of islands around Aaland' which were to be offered instead of bases on the mainland, and von Born's naming of Hanko Point plus 'base rights on Aaland and possibly even more of the archipelago'.

Ernst von Born's *Levnadsminnen* do not give any significant help in elucidating the problem.

It is not easy, from the source material published so far, which is essentially biographical, to get any idea of what happened in Helsinki during the critical days between the night of 15 September, when the Russian cease-fire terms reached the government, and 19 September, when the treaty was finally signed. As we have already noted, the accounts are very summary and usually vague as well. Mannerheim states that in the course of the next few days the reports made the Russian terms clear, which seems rather strange since they had presumably been presented as a whole when the delegation first met the Russian representatives on the evening of 14 September and when, according to Heinrich, they were intended to be accepted immediately.⁴ According to Gripenberg, however, the complete text together with all the appendices did not reach Helsinki

³ See above p. 2.

until September 17, when it arrived by air.⁵ von Born speaks of 'a hectic finish', 'telegrams were exchanged continuously', 'suggestions and alternatives were put forward', 'the government was kept assembled most of the time so that it could decide where it stood on the various questions' etc.⁶ In addition, it must be misleading to speak of suggestions and alternatives, considering that the Russian terms were definite from the start and never put forward as suggestions. And instead of a hectic finish, one rather gets an impression of a certain passivity in Helsinki, at least up to Sunday 17, probably partly due to lack of information. It should be emphasised that the technical problems of communication were very great. It had been arranged that the delegation's telegraph correspondence should go through the Swedish Embassy in Moscow to the Swedish department of foreign affairs, which would send them on to the Finnish legation in Stockholm, which would in its turn telephone them to the foreign ministry in Helsinki. The reply telegrams were to be sent in a corresponding fashion.⁷ It is obvious that, because of the difficulties of communication, the Finnish government suffered from a lack of information.⁸

3

By comparing the various accounts of the critical days, together with some previously unused source material, it is possible, however, to cast more light on what happened in Helsinki during the decisive days before the cease-fire treaty was signed in Moscow on 19 September. When Ernst von Born visited Aaland at the end of January 1945, as mentioned above, in order to

⁴ MANNERHEIM, p. 419. E. HEINRICH, *Mannerheimgestalten, Marskalken av Finland* (1959), p. 408.

⁵ GRIFENBERG, p. 290.

⁶ VON BORN, p. 388 f.

⁷ GRIFENBERG, p. 289.

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 290 f.

prevent the threatened election boycott there, he met on 24 January about forty of the leading inhabitants of Aaland, mainly representatives for the Aaland 'landstinget'. He then gave them an account of the cease-fire negotiations, an account recorded in detail in the minutes of the meeting. This gives us a picture which on several essential points is new, considerably fuller and more detailed.

On Saturday 16 September, the second meeting took place between the Finnish delegation and the Russian representatives, among whom was Molotov. The Finns then asked for a respite until the following evening. Their request was supported by the English ambassador, who was also present, and the Russians agreed. On the Sunday the Finnish government received a telegram from the Finnish military head-quarters: "The commander-in-chief requests the delegation to consider that Porkkala is situated near Helsinki. It would be more suitable to relinquish Hanko or naval bases on Aaland." According to von Born, the telegram was sent on to the Moscow delegation.

Neither Mannerheim, Heinrich, Tanner nor any other account mention this telegram from military head-quarters or its being sent on to Moscow. Tanner, who also says that he did not know about the Russian cease-fire conditions until the evening of 15 September, spent the Sunday in the country as already mentioned, and his description of the handling of the cease-fire question is really only concerned with the Monday.

Ernst von Born's statement, as recorded in the minutes, does not say whether the telegram was accompanied by any comment when it was forwarded, or what the government's reaction to it was. During the Sunday, Tanner was out of town and we have no knowledge of any meeting of the government that day. The forwarding of the telegram must in itself have meant a decision, however, and implied that the delegation was free to follow the line recommended by the telegram if they judged it suitable.¹

On the Sunday evening, a meeting took place between the Finnish delegation and the Russians. After the meeting, the delegation sent the Finnish government a telegram, which arrived on the Monday morning. In it the delegation stated that they had been trying to make the Russians agree to some changes in the terms, including the question of the Porkkala area. They had offered Hanko instead, but Molotov had made it quite clear that the Russian conditions were minimum conditions and that the delegation could return home if they were not prepared to sign. They had, however, succeeded in getting a further respite until nine o'clock Monday evening.

It is not apparent from the delegation's telegram whether or not it had received the telegram forwarded by the government on the Sunday about the exchange of Porkkala for Hanko and bases on Aaland. Aaland is in any event not named in the delegation's report such as it was recounted by von Born on 24 January.

On the Monday morning, the Finnish government met to discuss the cease-fire conditions. The above-named report from the Moscow delegation had just been received and the discussion centred around the question of Porkkala. Mannerheim's narrative is utterly meagre when it comes to the government meeting. He merely states that the government could not reach agreement, but left the question open, implying that they would wait to see the attitude taken by parliament, which was to be informed the same day, after which the respective parties would decide their standpoint.²

At the meeting with the representatives for Aaland on 24 January, von Born touched on the discussion at the government meeting. He told them that at the meeting the suggestion was made that Hanko and bases on Aaland might be substituted for Porkkala, a suggestion which was said "earlier and in another

¹ Cf. below p. 15 and 20 f.

² MANNERHEIM, p. 420.

context to have been put forward by the commander-in-chief". von Born had been the only one who had made any reservation to this. The government decided in favour of the suggestion, however, and a telegram was sent to the Moscow delegation: "If you have not yet forwarded the suggestion in the earlier telegram (Hanko and naval bases on Aaland), you may make it now as you deem fit, even on a wider basis".³ The President was also present at the government meeting.

Ernst von Born's account here makes it evident that the telegram which had been sent the day before, or forwarded as it was in von Born's version, could have been regarded as an authorisation, since the possibility was admitted by the government that the delegation might have already suggested the exchange *also* including Aaland, and his could only have happened at the meeting on the Sunday evening. This must mean that the Sunday telegram must in some way have been authorised by the government. But in any case the Finnish government now decided, contrary to what Enckell decisively stated in the interview with *Aftonbladet* on 13 January 1945 and von Born wrote in his *Levnadsminnen*, that the Soviet Union should be offered Hanko and bases on Aaland—"even on a wider basis"—in exchange for Porkkala.

On the morning of Monday 18 September, Tanner had, according to his own account, a consultation with the President and commander-in-chief, Mannerheim, on the situation which had arisen and the Russian peace conditions. Mannerheim described the conditions as terribly severe "from a military point of view". Their fulfilment would leave Finland entirely at the mercy of the Soviet Union. Tanner makes it clear that in Mannerheim's opinion the worst point in the conditions was the Porkkala clause.

"Mannerheim declared . . . the eastern boundary of the Pork-

³ This is how the telegram is set out in the minutes from von Born's meeting with the Aaland representatives 24/1 1945.

kala region lay seventeen kilometers from the country's capital. It was a large area, where two army divisions could be stationed. He went so far as to consider that the capital should be moved after this.⁴

According to Tanner, Mannerheim claimed that the peace conditions would lead to Finland being brought under Bolshevik influence. He saw no alternative, however. Even if the army could be persuaded to continue fighting, it could not hold out more than three months at the most. When questioned by the president, Tanner replied that the Social Democrats in parliament no longer wanted to continue the struggle and that though the Agrarian party and the Conservative party would certainly be dissatisfied with the conditions, it was doubtful if even they would oppose their acceptance.

At four o'clock on the Monday afternoon, the parliamentary foreign affairs committee met and von Born, who as mentioned above also served as temporary foreign minister while Enckell was in Moscow, described the cease-fire conditions. "There is nothing special to say about the way in which the subject was handled", says Tanner.⁵ The conditions were described again for a full parliamentary sitting the same evening, and afterwards the different party groups met to consider the terms. Tanner relates that there was only a brief discussion at the meeting of the Social Democratic group. All agreed that there was no alternative to accepting the severe conditions.

On the afternoon of 18 September, at the same time as the foreign affairs committee was meeting in Helsinki, Carl Enckell was received by Molotov in Moscow. He tried to obtain a further respite, partly by claiming that the Finnish constitution necessitated parliamentary consent before any surrender of territory. However, the report that Enckell later sent to Mannerheim said that Molotov had been extremely agitated, had at-

⁴ TANNER, p. 276.

⁵ TANNER, p. 278.

tacked the “blood-stained, criminal” Finnish government and declared that either the delegation signed or else they could go home, in which case Finland would be occupied. Noon the following day would be the last chance to sign.

This meeting, at which Dekanosov was also present, had been obtained by Enckell for the purpose of gaining extra respite. The only result was that the evening meeting which had been arranged the day before was cancelled and a final meeting was fixed for twelve o'clock the next day, 19 September, when the Finns had to sign or return home. According to the telegram which Enckell sent to the Finnish government after his meeting with Molotov, he had not had a chance to make any objections. The Finnish delegation could only choose between signing or returning home, and the second alternative would mean the occupation of Finland. “Since it is obvious that we shall not be given time to wait for parliament’s decision, we urge the president and the government to authorise us to sign without delay. Reply immediately and by noon tomorrow at the latest”.⁶ Thus concluded Enckell’s telegram, which reached Helsinki late on the Monday evening.

Mannerheim relates that on the Monday evening—presumably before Enckell’s telegram about the Russians’ final ultimatum had arrived—he discussed the Russian conditions with Ramsay, the former foreign minister. Ramsay advised accepting the conditions, even if they appeared daunting.⁷

After the telegram had arrived late in the evening, the government was called to a nocturnal meeting between three and four o'clock.⁸ The government decided—with great hesitation, according to von Born—to approve the conditions for their own

⁶ Copied from VON BORN, p. 390, and HEINRICH, *Mannerheimgestalten II*, p. 409. The wording here is that used by von Born. Heinrichs’ version differs somewhat, but only linguistically. The differences are probably due to the fact that the original is a code-telegram.

⁷ MANNERHEIM, p. 420, GRIPENBERG, p. 292.

⁸ Tanner gives different times, TANNER, p. 280.

part, and recommend that parliament accept them and empower the delegation to sign the treaty.⁹ It is clear, however, that immediately after its meeting, the government empowered the delegation by telegram to sign the cease-fire treaty without waiting for the parliamentary decision. This action was deemed necessary because of the lack of time. At four o'clock the next morning, Gripenberg, the Finnish minister in Stockholm, had a telephone conversation with Ramsay in the Finnish foreign ministry. The latter asked Gripenberg to check that a telegram which the other had just received was forwarded to Moscow without delay.¹⁰ This was undoubtedly the government's telegram authorising the delegation to sign. The action proved to be well-advised, since parliament's authorisation did not reach the delegation until after the time was up and the treaty already signed.

An extra parliamentary sitting was held at six o'clock in the morning, after the members had been called by telephone and by police messengers. The parliamentary groups had already met the evening before to discuss the conditions and decide on a standpoint. At the full sitting in the morning, von Born gave a further account of the position and described the situation after the Russians' ultimatum. There was no doubt as to the result of the parliamentary debate. The question was adjourned until a new sitting at seven o'clock, when the government's decision was approved. According to Tanner, there was sharp criticism from the Agrarian party and the Conservative party, but only J. O. Ikola from the Conservative party declared that he was unable to accept the conditions for the cease-fire.¹¹ The IKL parliamentary group expressed the same opinion.¹² Thus

⁹ At the meeting, the first hearing was given the military experts, Lieutenant-general A. F. Airo and Colonel A. Paasonen. Neither of them could recommend continuing the struggle. MANNERHEIM, p. 420, VON BORN (1954), p. 390.

¹⁰ GRIPENBERG, p. 292 f.

¹¹ TANNER, p. 280.

parliament approved the signing of the cease-fire treaty, but as stated above, the treaty was signed on the basis of an authorisation from the government, since the telegram containing the parliamentary decision did not arrive in time.¹³

Enckell's telegram about the meeting with Molotov on the afternoon of 18 September states that there had been no opportunity on this occasion to suggest the possibility of an alternative to Porkkala. Nor was any discussion permitted at the final meeting on 19 September, in connection with the signing of the treaty. This means that the decision made by the government on the morning of Monday 18 September, that the Porkkala area could possibly be exchanged for either larger or smaller bases on Aaland among other things, had not been able to be put into effect. At least this is the conclusion one must reach from the material which has been available up to the present day. There is, however, a possibility that feelers had been put out in this direction on the Sunday. It seems that some kind of attempt was made to deliver the offer of an exchange, considering the extreme importance which both the government and the military leaders placed on this particular point in the conditions for the cease-fire.¹⁴

The suggestion of an exchange does not appear to have been discussed at either the government or parliamentary meetings of 19 September. On both occasions it was, after all, a question of making a decision on an ultimatum and there was no longer any time for alternatives. The Aaland alternative played a prominent part, on the other hand, at the meeting of the Swedish parliamentary group which took place at nine p.m. on the Monday, after the full parliamentary sitting. The minutes from this

¹³ VON BORN, p. 391. Wuorinen states incorrectly that the decision was unanimous. J. H. WUORINEN, *Finland and World War II, 1939-1944*, (1948), p. 180.

¹³ The telegram containing parliament's authorisation was supposed to have been sent from Stockholm at 7.16 a.m., according to Gripenberg. The reason why it did not reach the delegation in time is uncertain. GRIPENBERG, p. 293.

¹⁴ Cf. above p. 15 f. and below p. 21 f.

metting are of great importance. They contain among other things an account by von Born, the third by the same person, of the handling of the issue. This report was made immediately after the events. A comparison of this account from 18 September with that given by von Born on Januari 24 1945, discussed above, is naturally of the utmost interest.

4

The Swedish parliamentary group met shortly after parliament as a whole had, behind closed doors, been given an account by von Born of the course of the cease-fire negotiations and of the conditions. They now had to decide for or against the signing of the treaty. The severity of the conditions was emphasised during the debate, but all those who spoke on the issue (Hästbacka, Kullberg, Jern, Wickman, Johansson, Bonsdorff, Estlander, Mangs and Holmberg among others) were agreed that acceptance was the only course left open. The decision was made easier when von Born, who was present, emphasised that the commander-in-chief took a sombre view of Finland's chances if the struggle was prolonged. Frietsch, who arrived after the meeting had started, was also able to inform them that the Social Democratic parliamentary group was unanimously behind the idea of peace, and von Born assured that that this also applied to the Social Democrats of Karelen. The result was that the Swedish parliamentary group recommended acceptance of the ceasefire conditions. The decision is not described as unanimous, but no reservations are noted.

As mentioned above, a significant part of the debate concerned the plans for exchanging Aaland. These plans had obviously become known during the day, possibly in connection with the meeting of the foreign affairs committee that afternoon, and were brought up by the member for Aaland, Hugo Johansson. He declared that he wished to register a strong protest "against the government's attempt to offer Aaland to the Russians instead of

the Porkkala area which they demanded". He said that he was thinking not only of Aaland, but also of the possible effect on Sweden, who had promised to help Finland with provisions until the next harvest.

Johansson's protest was directed at the only representative of the government present, von Born, who then explained that he had an 'intimate' announcement to make. This 'intimate' announcement was a short resumé of the Aaland issue.

One of the problems discussed earlier is the origin of the suggestions that bases on Aaland should be offered to the Russians instead of Porkkala. The rumour which turned up in Stockholm in January pointed to "certain Finnish circles".¹ In his account to the representatives for Aaland on 24 January, von Born drew forward the military and placed the initiative with the commander-in-chief and military head-quarters.² In his statement to the Swedish parliamentary group on 18 September, however, he does not mention, so far as we can tell from the minutes, any military initiative:

"During our negotiations, said the Minister, Finnish non-socialist members of the government have suggested offering the Hanko region, which is already ruined, plus naval bases on Aaland (east and south-east Aaland archipelago) instead of Porkkala, which lies so close to Helsinki. When this was not accepted, it was suggested offering more extensive base concessions on Aaland."

The two versions given by von Born on 18 September and 24 January respectively are naturally not irreconcilable. It is obvious that the suggestion was supported by conservative Finnish elements within the government, but it was also accepted by the other members of the government, with the exception of von Born himself, all according to what he himself has said. What is remarkable, however, is that while in the January version the

¹ See above p. 1.

² See above p. 12 f.

commander-in-chief and his officers were said to be mainly responsible for the suggestion, on 18 September Mannerheim was described as being opposed to the project. He was supposed to be against it personally “mainly because such an offer would not succeed and would at the same time jeopardize our foreign relations”.

Ernst von Born was on the defensive when giving both accounts, so one must count on his being tendentious to a certain degree. This could explain why the president-commander-in-chief was described as being against the suggestion of an exchange when it was necessary to smooth over the indignation within the Swedish parliamentary group. In January, when Mannerheim was no longer commander-in-chief, military headquarters and military considerations were pushed to the fore.

Ernst von Born’s statement to the Swedish parliamentary group is also of great interest from another aspect. We have discussed above whether the suggestion of an exchange was ever put forward in Moscow.³ We came to the conclusion that there was no proof that the decision reached by the government on the Monday morning was ever put into effect. It appeared possible and even probable that a feeler in that direction was put out during the negotiations on the Sunday afternoon, possibly backed by the “forwarded” telegram from the commander-in-chief and military head-quarters. That that is what really happened is supported by what von Born, according to the minutes, said on 18 September. We must here obviously differentiate between two separate items: first, an offer of Hanko plus a base on Aaland, secondly, “*when this had not been accepted*”, the decision to offer more extensive base concessions in the archipelago. Even if the statement does not necessarily mean that the offer was actually made, it shows that von Born, acting head of the government and minister for foreign affairs, counted on its having been made.

³ See above p. 18 f.

The government was harshly criticised for its attitude to the proposed exchange, not only by Hugo Johansson, but also by Estlander, seconded by Wickman. Not all were so indignant, however. Thus Hildén gave his opinion: "Hanko rather than Porkkala. It does not matter so much having the Russians on Aaland. They are used to all kinds of nationalities there already".

Frietsch, supported by Österholm, emphasised the necessity of complete secrecy about the suggestion of an exchange. It was naturally a matter of the utmost delicacy, and it is understandable that they tried to avoid its coming into the open. They were not wholly successful, however. Already at the beginning of October, the rumours started to appear in the press.⁴ No special attention was paid to the matter, however, since other questions and events dominated the public interest. Hugo Johansson had been pledged to full secrecy with regard to the people of Aaland, but somewhere there was a leak. According to Julius Sundblom's statement at the meeting on 24 January, leading circles on Aaland knew what had happened right from the end of September. It was not until the New Year, however, that the matter became more generally known, when the rumours reached the Stockholm press. And the violent reaction among Aaland's inhabitants is not difficult to understand. In Julius Sundblom's words, they saw the matter as "an attack on the internationally guaranteed position of the people of Aaland".

The Finnish-Russian cease-fire negotiations of 1944 contain obscurities and problems which cannot be solved with the sources available today. But despite the somewhat fragile and problematic nature of the source material used here, we have been able to establish that despite the official denials, there was

⁴ See Svenska Dagbladet 5/10 1944.

a foundation to the rumours that the Finnish government had decided to offer bases on Aaland in exchange for Porkkala, in connection with the cease-fire negotiations in September. In a desperate situation, when the demand for Porkkala was felt to be a disastrous threat to the nation's future independence, a death-blow to the hope for peace with freedom intact, a decision was made as a last resort to attempt such an exchange, which the majority of the government saw, despite everything, as a lesser evil.