Mr. R. A. Palmer, General Secretary of the British Co-operative Union, recently broadcast a talk to Finland in the Finnish service of the B.B.C. The talk was addressed to Mr. Väinö Tanner, our Minister of Trade and Industry, who is President of the International Co-operative Alliance.

You will now hear Mr. Tanner's reply.

I send my kindest regards to my friend R. A. Palmer, General Secretary of the British Co-operative Union, and my thanks for his broadcast greeting of October 23rd. It is a long time since we two were last able to exchange views. All that stopped when mail and even telegraphic communications between our two countries were suspended.

In addition, however, to sending a greeting, my friend Palmer said things in his broadcast about Finland and her present and future in which we Finns cannot concur. So perhaps I may be permitted, as the person to whom his talk was addressed, to state briefly our views on the same subjects.

My friend Palmer recalled to mind our Winter War and the great sympathy which Great Britain then showed us. Well, we shall never cease to be grateful for the funds collected by British co-operatives in aid of our war-distressed. They met an urgent need, and enabled us to help the children of very
many families. Nor have we forgotten the visit to Finland during our Winter War of the British Labour Delegation, with Mr. Downie representing the co-operative movement, Mr. Noel-Baker the Labour Party, and Sir Walter Citrine the British Trade Unions. This delegation and the information it brought did much to encourage us in our hard struggle against the invading Bolshevik hordes. The members of the Delegation were unanimous in condemning the attack, and no less the entire Soviet political system and social order. We retain particularly lively memories of Sir Walter Citrine’s trenchant criticisms of the Soviet Union, the Soviet system and the Soviet leaders. He promised us, on behalf of Great Britain, all possible aid in our struggle against this barbaric state.

Today Finland is again at war with the barbaric state. But on this occasion Sir Walter is not among us, breathing encouragement, but - in Moscow, devising means of helping the Bolsheviks to wage war on, among others, Finland. Nothing could better bring home to us the tragedy of the present situation.

What has happened in the meantime. Why this reversal of roles. Let me try to explain in all brevity.

Our Winter War lasted 105 days. In that war, with the support of, among others, Great Britain Finland fought for her life, and to the astonishment of the whole world, succeeded for long in holding her own. As, however, we could not hope, alone as we fought, to go on indefinitely, we were forced to conclude peace with the Soviet Union. It was a sad peace for us, for it dismembered our country and left our frontier practically defenceless. Yet we accepted it in the belief that by our resistance
and the heavy terms of the peace we had purchased for ourselves the right to live in undisturbed peace.

In this belief we were sorely disappointed. The Soviet Government proved as treacherous towards us as towards everybody else, friends and foes alike. It never honestly meant to honour the peace; its sole aim was the total subjugation of Finland. It set to work at once to prepare a new invasion of Finland. And at the same time it took steps to weaken Finland from within, in the same manner which had already proved effective in the case of the Baltic States. Communist cells, plentifully supplied with money, tried to create disturbances. The Soviet Government itself applied to Finland a policy of unconscionable extortion, intended to keep Finnish nerves on edge. It went so far as to interfere in the composition of the Finnish Cabinet and the Presidential elections. All this, my friend Palmer, you could have learned in detail from the second volume of Finno-Soviet Relations, if the British Government - apparently for compelling propaganda reasons - had not prevented its publication in English.

Then when war broke out between Germany and the Soviet Union, Soviet aircraft attacked this country on the very first day. The pretext was the presence in Finland of German troops. There were German troops here, I am not denying that, but in small numbers only, and they were in the far north, near the Arctic coast, where the spheres of interest of several Great Powers intersect. Those attacks compelled Finland to resort to arms again in defence of her independence.

The new defensive struggle has been hard, and has taxed all our powers. We have meanwhile succeeded in driving out the Soviet forces from the territory previously occupied by them - though not from all of it - and have penetrated some distance beyond our former frontier, into the areas where the attacks on
Finland used to be organized. We have waged this defensive war without entering into political commitments of any kind. It has been a struggle on behalf of Finland's own interests and no more.

All this should serve to show that so far as Finland is concerned, nothing has changed since Britain gave us her wholehearted support. We are the same democratic freedom-loving country we have always been. We continue the same defensive struggle as in the hopeless circumstances of our Winter War. Our opponent is the same barbaric state, envious of its neighbours' property, against which Britain offered to help us. All that has changed is that Great Britain is now the Soviet Union's ally. But how, in the name or sanity, can that affect our position? In our opinion, it does not make us Britain's enemy. On the contrary, we continue to set value on good relations with Great Britain.

Yet you, Mr. Palmer, find fault with us because, by our defensive war, we are helping the Soviet Union's enemy, Germany. Quite possibly, Germany is benefitting to some extent by our action. But try to put yourself in our position. Can anyone seriously expect us to neglect the proper care of our interests merely because somebody else might benefit if we do so? Our interests demand that we ensure peace on our frontier for a long time ahead. There you have the sole reason why Finnish troops have thrust beyond our old frontier in repelling attacks threatening from that direction.

You also draw a gloomy picture of our fate if we fail to repent. Just now, however, the future of every state is wrapped in uncertainty. No one can be quite sure of anything. And our immediate task is to repulse the tangible danger close at hand and to
You further depict a dismal future for the co-operative movement in Finland, and hint at the fate of the movement in Germany and the occupied countries. Finland, however, is not a country that has been conquered by Germany, but a country freely governed under its own constitutional laws. Naturally I regret that it has been found necessary in Germany to supersede the co-operative organization. But in Denmark and Norway the movement continues to exist.

You seem meanwhile to have forgotten the fate of the co-operative movement in the Soviet Union and the countries that have fallen into her power. You and I have had trouble enough repelling in the International Co-operative Alliance the numerous demands put forward by the Russians. In the Soviet Union the co-operative movement never has been free, and in recent years it has been closed down altogether in the cities, and strictly fettered in the rural areas.

Whereas here in Finland the movement goes on as before. Its chief task at the moment is to restore the co-operative organization in the areas where Britain's present ally has razed almost everything to the ground.

The wireless is an admirable invention. It gives you and me this chance to discuss matters in spite of suspended communications. But this invention can also be put to wrong uses. We have had ample experience of such abuses during the fifteen months interval between our former war and this. The Soviet wireless hammered away daily at Finland, her social system and political leaders, in propaganda broadcasts in the Finnish language. And of late, I regret to say, it has seemed as though the B.B.C. had found her example worth copying, allowing for the civilized tone of the B.B.C. broadcasts. We are being subjected
almost daily to propaganda broadcasts in the Finnish language, in which attempts are sometimes made to scare us. This is a free country, and no one is prevented in any way from listening to propaganda from any source, even enemy sources. But we cannot help finding it difficult to reconcile the present British broadcasts with what we know of British ideals of behaviour. Is it impossible for Great Britain to believe that we are perfectly capable of using our brains, and that we have thought out what is our proper course? True democracy recognizes the right of small nations, as well as Great Powers, to consider their own interests. What would you say if we were to broadcast criticisms of conditions in Great Britain, and of your alliance with the Soviet Union, which has never been a friend of democracy, but its bitterest enemy?

If only, my friend Palmer, you could visit Finland and see for yourself what the conditions are here, I am sure you would think differently of us. We have had representatives of several Scandinavian Labour organisations on visits here, a very important one only a week ago. The result is that they perfectly understand the Finnish attitude and that of Finnish Labour.

In conclusion, I would like to say that there is nothing we in Finland hope for more than that peace would return to Europa. Then we co-operators too could turn our energies to constructive work. Then, too, I hope it will be possible for us to collaborate in restoring the International Co-operative Alliance, a body Europe will be in greater need of than ever.