

Mr. Chairman,

Representatives of the Finnish people.

After a short holiday, you have again arrived to perform your important and responsible task. For the first time in the history of the Parliament, it will convene for the fourth regular session during the same election period. The Act of 31 October 1941 on the postponement of the parliamentary elections stipulates that, in accordance with Article 3 (1) of the Parliament Act, the 1940 parliamentary elections will be conducted in a statutory order in 1944. Parliament will thus continue its activities holding the same conditions and powers as if it would have been elected in the 1944 election.

The current parliament is a real war parliament. It convened for its first session at the same time as the Great Power war in Europe broke out. Some of all its sessions so far have been held while our own country has been at war, and now, as it begins its fourth session, we are still ourselves in war, and the Great Power war has expanded into a world war the like of which has never been seen before. It is thus clear that the majority of the issues that will be dealt with by the Parliament during this session derive directly or indirectly from the war or its consequential phenomena or in their content are adapted to the demands of the war. I will not touch on these issues further now. Instead, it may be appropriate to say a few words about our foreign policy.

Throughout our independence, we have sought to strengthen in our foreign policy our security by building friendly, confidential relations with all peoples and developing fruitful economic and cultural interaction with them. We have asked nothing more than to be allowed to live and work within our borders in peace and security, to elevate our people to ever greater spiritual and material prosperity. It is clear that we have no provision or strength to interfere in large-scale international disputes. It is therefore natural that we have wanted to remain neutral in the conflicts between the Great Powers. We joined the League of Nations, on which we like other small nations, placed great hopes for the development of peaceful co-operation and the creation of a solid legal foundation between the nations. In 1935, in line with the unanimously adopted position of Parliament, we oriented to the Scandinavian neutrality group.

In these our foreign policy aspirations, the success has not found the way to us and our hopes have been dashed. On November 30, 1939, the Soviet Union attacked us with the intention of conquering our country and destroying our people. It launched its attack without the slightest reason caused by us, in violation of the non-aggression pact it had entered into with us on its own initiative, as well as its other treaties and obligations. After having forced us, who were compelled to fight alone against the mighty military forces of a superpower, to conclude a peace dictation at Moscow, it tried to treat our country as its vassal state, pursuing a constant policy of intimidation and blackmail against us and interfering in our internal affairs. At the end of June 1941, it again, after going to war with Germany, launched an armed attack on us. On December 6, 1941, Britain, which had made a military alliance with the Bolsheviks, on the initiative and benefit of the Soviet Union, declared with her dominions a war against us, thus drawing us into a new contradiction. The League of Nations did not become the creator of the international legal order and the security that the small nations had hoped for, but failed in its efforts and has virtually ceased to function. It made its first significant political decision on the Åland question, and its last significant act also concerned Finland. The unanimous condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Finland and the exclusion of the Soviet Union from membership in the League of Nations remained a kind of a conciliatory wreath on its tomb overshadowed by its political failures.

The common, sincere neutrality will of the Nordic countries could not secure the survival of Nordic nations outside the Great War, as it was not supported by sufficient, together welded armed force. The Nordic region seems to be in fragments.

The position of small nations has steadily weakened since the First World War. International law, which before the First World War had a considerable authority, encouraged by the enlightened public opinion, and which was generally respected even during the Great War, has since increasingly lost its significance. Despite the wartime promises, the Peace of Versailles could not create an esteemed international legal order and no effective enforcement power in support of international law. Also the public opinion lost interest in its value and significance. Partly, this has been due to what has become an important weapon of war already in the First World War and the ever since evolving propaganda. It enables large masses, even in enlightened countries, who have no opportunity or time to form motivated opinions on international issues, to adopt perceptions that do not correspond to the whole truth but are based on deliberately distorted arguments. The state of affairs that international activities are not subject to the same moral standards as between citizens' mutual relations works also on the same effect. The motto: right or wrong, my country, is an expression of this position. In times of peace, a certain balance prevails among countries in their equilibriums of power and interests. The threat of shattering this has a decisive impact on restraining from the use of violent methods. But when the Great Powers go to war, this balance of power is spoiled and it gives an outside, expansion-minded country an opportunity to realize its conquest plans towards weaker nations. In such circumstances, international law is nothing more than the law of the jungle. The Soviet behaviour towards Finland, the Baltic countries and Romania is an illustrative example in this respect.

Also, the freedom of the seas, so important for peaceful international trade in goods, has proved during the war to be just an empty phrase. Freedom of the seas belongs only to those who have a strong enough navy to secure their shipping. The seafaring and merchant ships of small neutral countries are completely dependent on the discretion of the warring navies. In the difficult time after our Winter War, we have bitterly experienced this.

So, what is the path of our people in such circumstances? We cannot influence much of the huge world events of today, neither have we to take responsibility for them. But also in times like this, it is us alone who will bear the full responsibility for the fate of our own country. We have learned from the bitter experiences of recent years that the world is colder and harder than we had believed in peacetime, and that the perceptions of whole nations about right and wrong may vary depending on what might be temporarily considered advantageous. Therefore, we need to keep our heads cool, avoid emotional and wishful thinking, build only on facts. Without indulging in calculations for a passing moment, we must unswervingly follow justice, honor, and honesty requirements. Only in this way can we permanently enjoy the trust and esteem of other nations. Our immediate goal is to lead our people intact and viably through the current through storms, to provide it with permanent security and peace of mind and thus to create a sustainable foundation for its happy future. But we cannot expect that some other nation out of kindness of its heart might secure for us all of this with its blood and sacrifices, while we ourselves from a comfortable spectator seat watch the most shocking drama mankind has ever experienced. In order to achieve these goals common to all of us, we must, above all, trust God first and then foremost in ourselves and in our own efforts. And we ourselves must also bear the indispensable sacrifices. Others will not bear them, and a people will receive nothing for free. This does not mean that we should isolate ourselves from other nations and go our own way alone. On the contrary, our long-standing desire to build friendly relations with all nations is right and we wish it to be realized so once again. But now it is impossible to implement, to the same extent as before. It is all the more important now that economic, cultural and other relations are maintained and developed wherever possible in these circumstances. To a gratifying extent, a deeper understanding and a positive attitude to our aspirations and our difficulties has also come out. With particular pleasure should be mentioned the sympathy and helpfulness shown to us in the economic field, especially by Germany and Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland and Hungary. The lessons of history and our

own experience, as well as the location of our country, single out a few among the states in relation to which our relations are more important than any other and require from us special attention.

Throughout our history, no enemy except Russia has ever sought to conquer our country in war. Contrary to this, Russia has waged about 25 wars against us for this purpose, some of those heavy wars lasting for decades. Fully three of these wars have been received by the current generation. In the future we hardly need to fear conquest attempts from any other side.

Our Winter War was the most critical phase in our defensive wars. Left alone, weakly armed, our position seemed almost hopeless. Undauntedly, however, we went into the uneven battle. Thousands upon thousands of our best men went like the champions of the faith with the transcendental readiness to sacrifice their lives for their people and their fatherland. Their sacrifices became a huge source of strength for our cause. Its radiations welded even the home front as strong as iron and cleansed the soul of our people, creating strong solidarity, a spirit of mutual helpfulness and selfless sacrifice. We must keep this spiritual legacy of the Winter War intact in our current defensive struggle, which we now with confidence wage, alongside Germany and its allies, against aggressive Bolshevism. The struggle, the goal of which for us is to ensure our own security, must now be brought to a victorious end, for Bolshevism is still the greatest danger that threatens us and the whole of Europe. There has been a lot of talk recently about the negotiation and possible agreement on the division of Europe between Foreign Minister Eden and Prime Minister Stalin. We do not have official information on the outcome of this negotiation, but based on the experience of recent years, we can guess, without any risk of error, Stalin's aspirations concerning Finland. He wants to continue where he got through through Moscow's dictated peace. And we know his both regional and political goals for a mutilated Finland from the time between our wars. Foreign Minister Eden does not seem to have had any objections to Stalin's program. The plans for a division of Europe show what the Bolsheviks are striving for and how far England, at the expense of others, is prepared to accommodate them. They, however, have no other value either, because they will never materialize.

In the face of the attack we can only hope for effective help from those countries which have a genuine interest in maintaining Finland's independence and which are geographically located so that they can provide such assistance. Today, such countries are primarily Germany and Sweden.

The Swedish people are historically closer to us than any other nation. As an equal part of the Kingdom of Sweden and Finland, we have had common destinies with the Swedes for 650 years. We have similar legal and social perceptions and cultural traditions. The economic and cultural interaction between our countries has always been lively and unites us to each other with countless other ties. In our defensive wars against the Soviet Union during our time of independence, brave Swedish men have volunteered to renew the brotherhood of arms that has a tradition in all the wars our nations have waged for more than seven centuries. Finland's struggle in the East is more and more taken as defending the entire Nordic region, and Sweden in particular has a permanent advantage in the fact that Finland's defense will hold at all stages. So, it is important for Finland that Sweden is strong both militarily and economically. It is therefore quite natural that close friendship and trusted cooperation prevail between our countries. We are grateful for the support and assistance that Sweden has given us in many forms in the last fateful years.

Germany is again the only Great Power, which in the eastern direction has the same interests to guard as we do, the protection of its own security. It has a vital interest in maintaining our independence and, due to its geographical position, to work effectively for our cause in the East as well. Over the centuries, Finland has been in close cultural and economic interaction with Germany. Its valiant defense forces, as our faithful brothers-in-arms, are fighting against imperialist

Bolshevism. Friendly and confidential relations between Germany and Finland are therefore natural in all circumstances. They have never been hindered by the fact that the German political and social order has been different from ours, and this fact must not either now become any kind of obstacle. Every civilized country has a political and social order based on the country's historical destinies and the necessities and the current upbringing, way of thinking and intellectual structure of the people. A system that is natural and appropriate in one country may in another be incompatible with its conditions. Our political and social order is the result of centuries of historical development. It is based on the rare and socially precious age-old freedom of the peasant. For more than five hundred years, our peasants, through their representatives in the then-time representative body, have also been involved in the deliberations and decisions of any matter, and earlier they even participated in the royal election. Of these traditions is the current political as well as our social order evolved, grown and shaped. Just as we consider it natural that no one from the outside should interfere in our internal affairs or seek to change the system that we have developed for ourselves and what we continue to want to develop freely, in the same way it is our duty to respect the systems other peoples have embraced and accepted and to hand over the decision about them to each of those people alone.

The terms of the Versailles dictated peace were dictated under the influence of hatred and revenge. A strange curse plagued its constructions. They have collapsed and vanished, leaving behind disappointments, bitterness, suffering and ruins. This peace contained the seed of a new war and created an atmosphere in which this seed, by logical necessity, developed into the present world war. We must hope that those men who come to decide on the terms of peace after the current wars will succeed in making it free from hate and revenge and are able to create a permanent state of justice in the world in which even small nations can live and work. to work without fear and suffering.

Wishing the work of the Parliament the guidance and blessing of the Supreme Being, I declare the 1942 Parliament session open.