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O.M.I., European Analysis and News Digest, August 29, 1945

FINNISH PARLIAMENTARY BILL ON WAR CRIMINALS

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THE FINNISH PARLIAMENT, August 24: "Yesterday's first debate on the War Guilty Bill lasted five hours, Guy Stadenrom, Deputy Speaker, presiding. Various party leaders spoke. Social Democratic Peltonen admitted the urgency of settling the question of war guilt. It would have been desirable to reach a settlement within the framework of already existing legislation. The Government proposal involved a serious change of the constitution. The Social Democrats reserve the right to propose modifications, particularly to extend the responsibility to all guilty parties. Herta Kuusinen of the Democratic Union said that the newly drafted bill is indispensable, as the existing laws and courts are inadequate for prosecution of war criminals. War responsibility should not be limited to members of the government alone. However, the Democratic Union Diet group will not demand mass prosecutions. The Agrarian leader, Heijes, had hoped for a solution based on constitutional law, but obviously the Government has decided otherwise. The Agrarians are not committing themselves on the government bill, but hope for a solution based on a restricted number of cases. Mr. Salminen (Conservative) expressed serious concern over the departure from Finland's legal traditions. Execution of the armistice terms is, however, a vital necessity. Mr. John Osterholm, of the Swedish party, emphasized his anxiety over the bill's departure from constitutional law, but admitted the urgency of political considerations. The liberal deputy, Prof. Kalle Kauppi, expressed the dissatisfaction of his party (the Progressive Party) with the violations of the constitution in the government bill, which caused many of its members to oppose it. Numerous speakers felt that, despite all objections, political pressure made a solution necessary. The bill was transmitted to the Constitutional Committee of the Diet."

G.C.C. Daily Report, August 31, 1945
TRIAL OF 1939 FINNISH LEADERS PROPOSED

Lahti, in the Finnish Home Service, broadcasts a Press Review, of which the following is an excerpt: "Two of this morning's papers, HUFVUDSTADSBLADET and ILTA SANOMAT, deal with the motion of 24 Social Democrat Diet Deputies who propose that the law about war guilt be widened so that the persons for whom punishment is demanded include all those who, in responsible positions, took part in the planning, preparation, commencement, and execution of the war against the U.S.S.R. in 1939 and against the U.S.S.R. and Britain in 1941. This news is so fresh that only two of the above-mentioned papers have had time to deal with it editorially.

HUFVUDSTADSBLADET has headed its article, 'The Principles of Justice and Politics', and concludes its article by saying that it is evident that there is a causal connection between Finnish policy from 1939 right up to the second war on the side of Germany. 'We are to blame for much when it is a question of political farsightedness and tactical wisdom. Certain circles are to blame still much more; when it is a question of irresponsible blindness also ... with great values. But an attempt to place the men of 1939, juridically, in the same group as those who now are sitting on the bench of the accused cannot in any way be considered fair play.

Unfair Means

The ILTA SANOMAT article, entitled 'A Remarkable Proposal', says that one result of this proposal would mean that the number of persons to be tried would be greatly increased; 'this despite the fact that the signatories consider that the Government's interpretation of the 13th clause of the Armistice Agreement, which clause is the basis of the proposed special legislation, is wrong, and despite the fact that at least some of the signatories during the Diet debate on the War Guilt Bill expressed their sharp opposition toward the whole proposal.' The paper concludes by stating that no matter what the intentions of the proposal are the means employed for carrying them out do not conform to the Finnish sense of fair play.