

**REPORT PRESENTED TO THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF
NATIONS BY THE COMMISSION OF RAPPORTEURS**

[After receiving the report of the Commission of Jurists on the question of jurisdiction, the Council appointed a second commission, known as the Commission of Rapporteurs, to advise the Council on the resolution of the dispute on the merits. The following passages have been excerpted from the Rapporteurs' decision.]

The arguments of each of the three parties can be summarised as follows:

Aaland claims the right to hold a third plebiscite which could leave no doubt as to the unanimous wish of the population for reunion with Sweden, to whom she is bound by the traditions of her Swedish past and an unswerving affection which has survived a separation of more than a century. This claim is based on the right of people to dispose freely of their own destinies, proclaimed by President Wilson and used to the advantage of several nationalities in the treaties which ended the great war. In justice to the Aaland Islanders, it cannot be too often stated that they have entirely refrained from all actions and demonstrations of a revolutionary nature. Peaceable and law-abiding, they have only employed the means most calculated to gain the sympathies of civilised nations in order to win their case.

Finland refuses to authorise a plebiscite and to recognise its validity, in virtue of the sovereign rights of the Finnish State on its own territory. Aspirations which envisage the possibility of a change from the *status quo* are not well founded, she argues, and the principle of self-determination cannot be applied in the case of the Aaland Islands. Finland holds to this juridical field, where she considers that nothing can shake her position.

Sweden has no selfish rights to maintain with regard to the Islands, neither does she hold annexationist views, but she considers the wish of the Aalanders to be legitimate, and claims on their behalf the right to hold a public expression of opinion in accordance with a principle which is universally recognised. She is moved by the profound interest aroused by men of her own race and by the fear that their fate may be a precarious and unhappy one if they remain tied to another nationality.

III.

COMPETENCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

At a meeting of the 20th September, 1920, the Council of the League of Nations, having studied the report made at its request and in a consultative capacity by an International Commission of Jurists, in accordance with the conclusions of this report, declared itself competent to recommend the solution which it considered as most equitable and most appropriate to the question of the Aaland Islands.

We have been delegated to present it, after the necessary consultations, with a report upon which it could base a recommendation of a nature calculated to establish conditions favourable to the maintenance of peace in this part of the world by an arrangement, whether final or provisional, taking the legitimate interests of all parties in the case into consideration.

The enquiry which we have made, by virtue of this mandate, has given us the absolute conviction that the only method to adopt in order to obtain a solution of the question in accordance with these lofty views, is to entrust it to impartial examination by the Council. It is therefore within its rights in declaring its competence. **Although we cannot share the opinion stated by the Commission of Jurists on all points, we agree with their declaration that the Aaland question is one that extends beyond the sphere of domestic policy. But, in our opinion, it is because it had acquired such considerable international importance that it was necessary to submit it to the high authority which the League of Nations represents in the eyes of the world. On its equitable settlement depend, not only the re-establishment of the spirit of peace where feeling has been running high among this interesting Baltic population, and the resumption of the good relations which should exist between two nations which have all the conditions for a mutual understanding, Sweden and Finland, but also the consolidation of the peace which the population of this part of Europe need as much as others to efface the deep traces left by the war, to reconstitute their forces of production and to establish their economic development upon solid foundations.**

Without losing sight of these considerations, we come first of all to this statement; the primary question at issue, and which no ethnical or political considerations allow to be brushed aside, is a legal one -- that of Finland's right of sovereignty with regard to the Aaland Islands.

The summary we have made of the successive transformations through which Finland has passed has shown that more than a hundred years ago this country was constituted a Grand-Duchy under a sovereign who was at once Emperor of Russia and Grand Duke. We shall first of all see whether Finland was a sovereign State after the dissolution of the bonds which attached her to Russia, and, secondly, whether her sovereignty extended over the Aaland Islands just as over the other parts of her territory.

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THE PRINCIPLE OF FREE DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION IN THE CASE OF THE AALAND POPULATION

It is just this principle of free determination (or self-determination) which is as the Swedish memorandum states, at the bottom of the Aaland question.

This principle is not, properly speaking a rule of international law and the League of Nations has not entered it in its Covenant. This is also the opinion of the International Commission of Jurists. "The recognition of this principle in a certain number of international Treaties cannot be considered as sufficient to put it upon the same footing as a positive rule of the Law of Nations."¹ It is a principle of justice and of liberty, expressed by a vague and general formula which has given rise to the most varied interpretations and differences of opinion. It is no part of our duty or pretensions to treat these interesting theoretic discussions exhaustively. We shall confine ourselves to stating the considerations which arise out of its application to the Aaland problem.

First of all, we must eliminate an analogy which cannot be pleaded justly.

The Aalanders and the Swedes are wrong in citing the example of Finland, which, in determining her own fate, has succeeded, thanks to the results of the great war, in freeing herself from her dependence on Russia. **As we think we have fully proved, Finland has been an autonomous State since long before the war, i.e. from 1809.** But even if one persisted in thinking that she only became a State on proclaiming herself independent and after this proclamation, one would none the less be forced to admit that the Finnish people, with their clearly defined territory and a well-developed national life, fulfilled all the conditions necessary for constitution as an independent State. Whichever view is taken, no one will dispute the natural right of the Finns, born of inherent justice, to proclaim their independence; but this right which Finland possessed does not provide any evidence in support of the demand of the Aalanders. The Aaland Archipelago is only a small part of the Finnish territory, and the Aaland population a small fraction of the Finnish nation. Now, it is evident that one cannot treat a small minority, a small fraction of a people, in the same manner and on the same footing as a nation taken as a whole.

There is another consideration which excludes the analogy which it is wished to establish between the Finnish people and the Aaland population. Finland has been oppressed and persecuted, her tenderest feelings have been wounded by the disloyal and brutal conduct of Russia. The Aalanders have neither been persecuted nor oppressed by Finland. We have asked the Executive Committee of the Landsting what were its

¹ Report of the International Commission of Jurists (already communicated to the Members of the Council).

grievances against the Finnish administration before the war. It was able to formulate only insignificant reproaches. As for persecutions, it is impossible to define by this term the arrest of M. Sundblom and M. Björkman, in justification of which Finland cites specific clauses of her penal code. It is true that as a result of quite exceptional conditions, the Aaland population is threatened in its language and its culture. But this is not the result of a policy of oppression; on the contrary, we feel certain that it is possible to appeal to the good will of the Finnish Government to preserve and protect the language and the culture which are so precious to the Aalanders.

The example of Finland is, therefore, in no way a conclusive argument for the case put forward by the Aaland Landsting.

Let us turn to the question of principle as it stands in relation to the Aaland problem bearing in mind that Finland has existed as a State for a century with the same frontiers, and that she has given striking proofs of her national strength and solidarity. Is it possible to admit as an absolute rule that a minority of the population of a State, which is definitely constituted and perfectly capable of fulfilling its duties as such, has the right of separating itself from her in order to be incorporated in another State or to declare its independence? The answer can only be in the negative. To concede to minorities, either of language or religion, or to any fractions of a population the right of withdrawing from the community to which they belong, because it is their wish or their good pleasure, would be to destroy order and stability within States and to inaugurate anarchy in international life; it would be to uphold a theory incompatible with the very idea of the State as a territorial and political unity.

The idea of justice and of liberty, embodied in the formula of self-determination, must be applied in a reasonable manner to the relations between States and the minorities they include. It is just that the ethnical character and the ancient traditions of these minorities should be respected as much as possible, and that they should be specially authorised to practise freely their religion and to cultivate their language. This postulate marks one of the most noble advances of modern civilisation and, as it is clear that there can be no lasting peace apart from justice, constitutes one of the most powerful means of strengthening peace and combating hatred and dissensions both within the State and in international relations. **But what reasons would there be for allowing a minority to separate itself from the State to which it is united, if this State gives it the guarantees which it is within its rights in demanding, for the preservation of its social, ethnical or religious character?** Such indulgence, apart from every political consideration, would be supremely unjust to the State prepared to make these concessions.

The separation of a minority from the State of which it forms a part and its incorporation in another State can only be considered as an altogether exceptional solution, a last resort when the State lacks either the will or the power to enact and apply just and effective guarantees.

In the case of the Aalanders, the important question is the protection of their language -- the Swedish language. Its language is the very soul of a people. We appreciate the ardent desire, the resolute wish of the Aaland population, proud in its democratic simplicity and eager for independence, to preserve intact the Swedish language and culture -- their heritage from their ancestors. The conviction that their language is threatened and can only be saved by union with Sweden has profoundly moved this gallant little race, which inhabits, from an international point of view, one of the most interesting regions of Europe. They have expressed their fears and their aspirations with such force that they have succeeded in carrying with them into the controversy, apart from the whole of Finland and of Sweden -- the two conflicting parties -- the public opinion of a great part of the civilised world. It is thus undoubtedly that the Aaland question has gained the importance and the character of an international dispute, the first problem of this nature with which the League of Nations has had to deal.

In spite of the lively sympathy with which the Aalanders inspired us, we yet cannot, in view of the heavy responsibility which is laid to us, accede to their request.

We recognise that the Aaland population, by reason of its insular position and its strong tradition, forms a group apart in Finland, not only distinct from the Finnish population, but also in certain respects distinct from the Swedish-speaking population. They deserve all the more protection and support in that they are, because of their great remoteness from the Finnish mainland, left to themselves, so to speak, in their struggle for the preservation of their ethnical heritage. We admit also that the fear fostered by the Aalanders of being little by little submerged by the Finnish invasion has good grounds, and that effective measures should be taken with a view to eliminating this danger. If it were true that incorporation with Sweden was the only means of preserving its Swedish language for Aaland, we should not have hesitated to consider this solution. But such is not the case. There is no need for a separation. The Finnish State is ready to grant the inhabitants satisfactory guarantees and faithfully to observe the engagement which it will enter into with them: of this we have no doubt. To take the Aaland Islands away from Finland in these circumstances would be the more unjust inasmuch as from the point of view of history, geography and politics, all the arguments militate in favour of the *status quo*.

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ARGUMENTS AND CONSIDERATIONS

We shall now review the arguments which support our conclusion.

Historically, the Islands belonged throughout the Middle Ages and modern times, like the Finnish provinces, to the Swedish Crown. With the exception of short periods and apart from certain peculiarities of their fiscal regime, they have been administered as though they formed part of these provinces. It may be questioned whether, in the eyes of

the Swedish monarchs and their Ministers, the Gulf of Bothnia and the Aaland Sea did not form for the royal administration and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, a kind of line of demarcation between the countries which were the ancient cradle of the monarchy and those which it had conquered successively, beginning with the Baltic Archipelagoes, on the opposite shore of the Gulf. The fact is that these different countries were grouped from the year 1634 in separate governments. The Treaty of Fredrikshamn sanctioned from a territorial and political point of view a separation which already existed for administrative and religious purposes. Since that time the Aaland Islands have followed the destiny of Finland, enjoying the same autonomy under the Czars who were faithful to their promise, oppressed like her by the Sovereign who broke his, and freed at length from the Russians by the events of the Great War and by the Revolution at Petrograd.

If one studies the geographical situation and the geological formation of these Islands, one is convinced that they connect with the neighbouring archipelagoes and through them with the Finnish mainland, but not with the Scandinavian peninsula.....

We have seen that the Aalanders form in Finland a group which in certain respects is not one with those which are Swedish-speaking. They are distinguished from them above all in their separatist spirit, which carries them towards Sweden, alienating them from their brothers in race who have remained Finnish at heart. But they do not form a different ethnical group: in reality they constitute the fifth part of the Swedes of Finland, from whom they are not isolated geographically. The Islands, situated at the eastern boundary of the Archipelago, lie next to the islands of the Abo Archipelago, the three largest of which, Houtskär, Korpo and Nago, are almost exclusively Swedish so that the Skiftet is no more an ethnographical than a natural frontier.

Insufficient account has been taken, in the memoranda dealing with the Aaland question, of the opinion of the 350,000 Finnish Swedes, which, however, should not be neglected. It is strongly pronounced against the separation of the Islands, except in the case of a section of the press in Ostrobothnia and Nyland. The Swedes form a minority in Finland which has long governed the country, formerly possessing the monopoly of intellectual culture and the privilege of the official language. Today this minority is striving to maintain the character of its original nationality by the side of the preponderant Finnish majority, and to preserve cordial relations with it, while at the same time keeping up close ties with Scandinavia.

The question of languages is not an easy one to settle completely and satisfactorily in Finland, because there are in this country many mixed or bilingual districts, in which the majority is most frequently Finnish. The new Finnish Constitution seems, it is true, to establish clearly enough equality between the two languages. The essential point is, however, the application of this principle, and it is incontestable that there exists a certain tension -- even a certain distrust -- between the two linguistic groups. We greatly hope that the Finnish majority, whose predominance is assured for ever, will see its way, without abdicating its own rights, to be liberal and generous towards the minority. Only in this way will all distrust disappear -- only in this way can there reign a peace and

friendship proof against every attack between the Swedish-speaking and the Finnish-speaking Finns in the supreme interest of their country, to which they are all deeply devoted.

The leaders of the Swedish party have not concealed from us the fact that the agreement between the two unequal fractions of the nation would be irretrievably compromised if Aaland were ceded to Sweden. It would result in a diminution of the national territory, against which the Swedes would protest as vehemently as the Finns. But, further, the bitter resentment of the latter would be swift to change to hatred both against their fellow-citizens of Swedish stock and against the Swedes of the Kingdom. The Finns are vindictive and their vengeance would turn first of all on their unfortunate associates. Consequently, the loss of Aaland would cause an irreparable blow to the Swedish minority. Nor is this all: it would sow the seeds of irritation and rancour in the hearts of the Finnish majority, which might perhaps drive the Republic into political combinations and alliances directed against Sweden.

It seems that if European public opinion attaches importance to the fate of 25,000 Aaland Islanders, for still stronger reasons it cannot ignore that of 350,000 Swedes in Finland -- their brothers who cannot possibly exist separated from the rest of Finland, where the groups in which they live often blend with the Finnish population.

Some of these Swedes maintain that before according the Aaland Islanders the opportunity of a plebiscite, it would be just to consult the whole Swedish population in Finland on a question so important for its future as that of the loss of Aaland. Others would wish to intermingle the question of autonomy for Aaland with that of a general autonomy, claimed by the delegates of the Swedish Communes in their own Assembly, the Folkting, which corresponds to the Landsting of the Islands. But the autonomy which they demand is a matter of domestic policy in which the League of Nations has no right to interfere. Nevertheless, it may be seen thereby what justifiable feelings the Aaland question has provoked amongst the Swedes of Finland, and what disastrous consequences a solution contrary to their wishes might have for them.

From a strategic point of view, the position of both countries is about the same. Sweden and Finland have both an obvious interest in being mistress of the Aaland Islands. But we do not see why the Swedish interest should take precedence over the Finnish interest and the latter be sacrificed to the former.

Aaland in the hands of the Finns does not constitute a danger for Sweden, and the reverse would be equally true. That the two Baltic States should be driven to make war upon one another is an idea that can hardly be taken seriously. The possession of the Islands is only of unquestionable military importance in the eyes of the Swedes and the Finns inasmuch as they fear to see them falling into the possession of a great Power. In anticipation of such a contingency, there are means of defence quite apart from the granting of the Archipelago to the one State or the other, and of which we shall speak when dealing with their neutralisation.

Political reasons in support of our conclusions are not lacking.

The services which Finland rendered to others as well as to herself, in repelling the attacks of Bolshevist Communism after a bloody struggle, should not be forgotten. Had she succumbed, the gate would have been opened to revolutionary expansion and Scandinavia would undoubtedly have been the first to be menaced.

It would be an extraordinary form of gratitude towards the Finnish Republic to wish to despoil her of territory to which she attaches the greatest value. Such a humiliation would be cruelly painful to every country, but more so still perhaps to a State which has the pride and the susceptibility of youth. She would thus be alienated from the Scandinavian countries, which have need of her as she has of them.

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The Helsingfors Cabinet has signed a Treaty of peace with the Socialist Federal Republic of the Soviets at Dorpat, which will allow it to devote itself to the economic development of the country and to the settlement of its internal affairs. Finland is none the less exposed to the subtle penetration of Bolshevist propaganda. We have no certain knowledge of what is going on in Russia. Even at Helsingfors when we were staying there, there were but uncertain rumours as to possibilities of duration or of transformation of the Soviet regime. In the field of conjectures which we are surveying, a long period of anarchy is not altogether unthinkable. But sooner or later Russia will rise from this chaos to become once again one of the important factors in the future of Europe. Shall we then see a restoration of pan-Slavist imperialism, as in the time of the Romanoffs? Whatever happens, it is in the general interest to hasten the consolidation of the States which have freed themselves from the Empire of the Czars to live an independent existence, and to help them to live and to prosper. Finland, in particular, is one of these bulwarks of peace in Northern Europe. We can only wish that she will grow strong under the happy influence of the League of Nations and that she will enter into the constellation of the Scandinavian States after the settlement of the Aaland question. It will have been an honourable task for us to have contributed to this restoration of peace and at the same time to win still more sympathy for a State which has made such noble endeavours to rank among the most energetic, the most hard-working and the most cultivated of nations.

It is true that in Stockholm another view is taken of the result which would ensue from a solution different from that which we propose. Aaland restored to Sweden would, so we were told, form a bridge between the two shores of the Baltic, on which Sweden and Finland would eventually meet in friendship. The Finns only see in the Aaland question the loss of certain islands: they do not see what they would gain thereby -- the friendship of Sweden. But if Aaland were left to Finland, the relations of the inhabitants with the Finns, whether Swedish or Finnish in speech, would become as bad as those which existed between them and the Russians during the last years of the Czar's sovereignty. Finland could only keep the islands by force; disputes would arise which

would make themselves felt in Sweden, for the Swedish people would not lose their interest in the lot of the Aalanders.

Sooner than share in these fears, we prefer to consider the great rôle which would then fall to Sweden -- a rôle truly worthy of her civilising mission, of the generous manner in which she has unloosed her union with Norway and of the example which for more than a century she has set Europe in keeping outside every war. It would consist in calming the violently excited feelings of her protégés, and in seeking to extinguish the fire rather than to let it burn. Sweden consented to submit the dispute to the Council of the League of Nations. She must bow with good grace to its opinion, if it is not in accordance with her hopes and must use her good influence over the Aalanders in persuading them to accept the decision without too much complaint.

We cannot pretend that their disillusion will be anything but great. So sure are they of their right and so certain of success that they have been at pains to warn us of the consequences which would ensue from the rejection of their claims. "Never will the Aaland Islanders submit to a sovereignty which they detest," exclaims the Executive Committee of the Landsting in a document which was sent to us after our departure.¹ They will sooner emigrate in large numbers to escape from this intolerable situation. Irredentism will never cease, from which will arise the most serious complications.

These forecasts are too pessimistic, these presages too gloomy. We have a better opinion of the Aalanders, of their judgment and their common sense. We think also that emigration, which has always existed in Aaland, will only be caused in the future as it has been in the past, by the enterprising nature of the Islanders and by their desire to enrich themselves abroad.

The opinion of the Aalanders who are loyal to Finland -- there is quite an intellectual colony at Helsingfors and we met several at Mariehamn -- is that the violence of the protests against a decision contrary to general expectation would gradually die down and that feeling would again grow calm on the express condition that the denationalisation which this brave people so greatly dread no longer threatens them. It is to dispel their apprehensions that we have turned our attention, in formulating a certain number of guarantees to be demanded of the Finnish Government, in favour of the inhabitants of Aaland.

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INTERNATIONAL GUARANTEES

Before expressing an opinion as to the most suitable measures for the preservation of its national character for this population, we ought to mention two suggestions which

¹ Annex 6: Statement submitted by the Aaland Landsting.

have been made, but which must be rejected because, in reality, they would not solve the question: the first aims at a definite solution, the second only at a provisional arrangement.

It has been proposed, as the best means of solving the question between Sweden and Finland, to grant the Aaland Islands complete independence.

The Executive Committee of the Landsting would rally to this idea in despair of its cause, if its dearest wish, return to Sweden, proved unrealisable, and in preference to accepting the sovereignty of Finland¹. But does the Aaland Archipelago possess the necessary capacity to survive as an independent State? We think not. Even if we suppose that prominent citizens of the Island possess the necessary experience and impartiality for government amid the difficulties of their geographical and political position, the Archipelago has not the certain resources which would enable it to bear all the expenses both of internal administration and communications with abroad.

These reasons would suffice for the rejection of such a solution -- even supposing that Finland would consent to abandon her right of sovereignty over the Archipelago, which is outside all probability.

A transitory expedient has also been thought of, which would consist of leaving matters as they are for a number of years, five or less, at the end of which a plebiscite should take place. This arrangement, in the opinion of its sponsors, would have the advantage of ending the state of tension which exists at present and giving time for matters to calm down and for the inhabitants to reflect more dispassionately over the guarantees which union with Finland would offer for the preservation of their Swedish individuality.

But the Aaland Islanders are not in favour of it, and the idea was similarly rejected by the Helsingfors Government.

The Aaland Islanders are anxious to bring matters to a head: the idea of a plebiscite, which arose at a time of distress, has attained the persistence of an obsession with them. It engrosses their will, which aims only at this end. Patience for a period of years would be more than they can achieve. Further, the men who have given the impulse to the movement would not remain idle. The partisans of Sweden would not cease to keep up separatist agitation or to exploit the causes of discontent as they have done hitherto, whether in public meetings or through their newspaper "Aaland." Stormy manifestations and unexpected incidents might provoke repressive measures by the Finnish authorities. It could therefore hardly be hoped that peace would be established pending a final solution. The Aaland question would continue to trouble the peace of the Baltic countries.

¹ Annex 6: Statement submitted by the Aaland Landsting.

In the acute phase which has been reached in this question, a final solution cannot be deferred, and it can only be based on the maintenance of the sovereignty of Finland.

Once this principle is recognised, some essential guarantees -- to which we have already referred -- ought to complete the Law of Autonomy voted by the Diet on the 7th May, 1920, in favour of the province of Aaland. They aim, above all, at the preservation of the Swedish language by teaching in the schools. To this fundamental condition we would add the maintenance of the territorial property in the hands of the natives, and in the region of politics, in measures against the premature exercise of the franchise granted to new inhabitants. Finally, we would suggest conditions for the nomination of a Governor who has the entire confidence of the population.

With regard to teaching, the Autonomy Law (Article 9) only stipulates that it should be given on the basis of public instruction in Finland. This assimilation does not content us. We propose that in the province of Aaland the primary schools and even the technical school, the Volksschule of Finström, should only give instruction in Swedish. If this is already the case in the primary schools, it is because the children who go there are all Swedish-speaking, but this teaching in Swedish ought to take the form of the obligatory exclusion of Finnish, confirmed by law. A similar guarantee has been inserted in several peace treaties as a measure necessary for the protection of minorities. The only objection made to this by some of the members of the Finnish Government is that such a stipulation might work to the disadvantage of the Swedish population in certain communes of the country. But we do not ask that the basis of public instruction in Finland should be modified: we would only request that such an exception should be stipulated in favour of Aaland by reason of a situation which is quite peculiar to itself.

To preserve for the communes and their inhabitants the exclusive ownership and enjoyment of their property the right of pre-emption should be accorded to them on every occasion that offers of purchase are made by a person or company foreign to the Islands. It may be asked why such a restriction on the liberty of business should be necessary. The Islands do not contain mineral riches capable of tempting foreign capitalists, and their wealth in timber is not comparable to that of the neighbouring countries. This is true. But Aaland, by its situation in the middle of the Baltic and by the excellence of its harbours, is destined to become a shipbuilding centre. The development of this industry is to be foreseen, as it has already been successfully established by the Islanders. Finnish Companies will seek to acquire land for the construction of more important building yards there. This would involve the influx of Finnish workmen into the country, and with them all the consequences feared by the Aaland Islanders. The right of pre-emption granted to the communes and to the inhabitants would remove this danger. To prevent out-bidding, the purchase price could be equitably fixed according to current prices by a Commission to be appointed by the General Council, the provincial Assembly instituted by the law of autonomy.

The Aaland Islanders complain that every newcomer who has recently taken residence in one of their communes takes part in the elections. According to Article 2 of

the law of autonomy, "all persons having their legal domicile in one of the communes of the province shall be considered as forming part of the population"; while Article 5 lays down that "members of the General Council shall be elected by universal and legal suffrage of all electors, male and female, over 21 years of age by direct, proportional and secret ballot. These arrangements are obviously in favour of the Finnish immigration, in giving strangers to the country the same rights as natives. We propose that the franchise should only be granted to newcomers after a stay of five years. This term of probation appears to us the most suitable. We have reason to suppose that it would not be opposed by the Finnish Government, which would likewise consent to the concession of the right of pre-emption for the communes and the inhabitants.

Article 4 attributes the nomination of the Governor of the province to the President of the Republic. The designation of its representative is incontestably one of the privileges belonging to the central power. But, on the other hand, the choice of a person sympathetic to the whole population and possessing a perfect knowledge of its mentality and its aspirations is of great importance for the maintenance of good relations between the Government and the province. On his tact and personal influence over the citizens whom he governs will depend in part the return of tranquillity and final pacification. We would suggest that the General Council of the Aaland Islands should be invested with the right of presenting a list of three candidates to the Government for the post of Governor, and that the latter should not be chosen outside this list.

In the matter of the provincial budget, Article 21 lays down that the General Council can vote conjointly with the general State tax an additional tax, fixed on the same basis and to be levied simultaneously. We were told at Mariehamn that the taxes levied by the State are already so heavy that little or nothing is left for the requirements of the province, and that the right conceded by Article 21 is a concession which is more apparent than real. It is impossible for us to say whether these criticisms are well founded or not, but we have confidence in the Finnish Government, that it is determined to win over the Aaland Islanders by its justice and moderation, and will treat them in a perfectly equitable manner.

In conclusion, we will venture to address some words of advice to the Aalanders. The prevention of Finnish immigration depends greatly on them and their strength of will. Legislative measures alone would be powerless. The first Finnish workmen were called to Aaland by Aaland Islanders, owners of saw-mills, because Finnish labour was cheaper, or because this manual labour was uncongenial to the natives. Finns will not go to the Archipelago if they find no work there and if they are not attracted by the enticement of certain gain. Instead of seeking their fortunes afar, the inhabitants must apply all their energy and all their efforts in making the most of their own soil and their own industries. In this way they will have much less to fear from the invasion of foreign workmen.

The guarantees which we have just enumerated will contribute to the work of making peace -- of this we are convinced -- a work in which the Finnish Government took the initiative on the day on which it voted a special law of autonomy for the province of

Aaland in the Diet. This act of goodwill was not understood at that time by the inhabitants, and they disdainfully rejected the olive branch which was held out to them, striving after another ideal as they were. But if they leave the heights of their dreams for the *terra firma* of reality, the privileges which have been offered to them will no longer appear so worthless. To ensure their better appreciation of the advantages of the exceptional situation which would be granted to them in the Finnish community, it is necessary that the Government and Parliament of Finland on their side consent to make some steps on the road towards pacification, by adopting the international guarantees which we consider indispensable. They will certainly do this if they recognise, as do we, that by reason of this proximity to its ancient Swedish fatherland, by the closer bonds of union which it has kept with her, of the patriotism which it has shown intimes of war with a traditional enemy, and which has not been extinguished by separation, Aaland deserves a place apart in the midst of the other Finnish provinces. These concessions will not appear too dear when Finland gains at this price both the peace which she needs to strengthen her interior organisation and the friendship of the Scandinavian nations which will be useful for her against the destructive forces of Russia. Doubtless pacification will not be achieved in a day: the hopes which have been sustained throughout three years of discussion and uncertainty will not easily subside into silence. But time is a great healer, and a solution based upon right will appeal both to the actors and spectators in this long conflict, provided that the victorious party makes a generous and gentle use of its victory and abstains from reprisals of every kind. The good will of Finland towards the Aaland Islanders will not fail to bring her closer to Sweden, and the more speedily friendship between these two nations is established the sooner will the tension in the relations between the central power and the province of Aaland be diminished.

However, in the event that Finland, contrary to our expectations and to what we have been given to understand, refused to grant the Aaland population the guarantees which we have just detailed, there would be another possible solution, and it is exactly the one which we wish to eliminate. The interest of the Aalanders, the interests of a durable peace in the Baltic, would then force us to advise the separation of the islands from Finland, based on the wishes of the inhabitants which would be freely expressed by means of a plebiscite. But we refuse to think that the Government and Parliament of Helsingfors would not be animated by a broad spirit of conciliation, with a view to effacing all the traces of this long conflict, from which the international position of the young Republic has certainly suffered. It is of importance in this respect to recall that even the Aalanders who are opposed to the separatist movement declare with a unanimity and an insistence which is most striking that efficacious guarantees with regard to language and autonomy are absolutely indispensable to reassure the Aaland population and to establish a durable peace.

If the Council of the League of Nations were to share our views and recommend their adoption to the Finnish Government, certain amendments to the law of autonomy

would be sufficient to give a legal force to the new guarantees granted to Aaland which would thus assume an international character.

Further, we believe that the rôle of the League of Nations ought not to stop there. It would not be enough for it to have given its powerful aid to the solution of the conflict. If difficulties, always to be apprehended, and disagreements in the application of the new guarantees which would be added to the fundamental law were to arise, it would then be the duty of the Council of the League of Nations to intervene to put an end to this. The Finnish Government, too, ought to grant the General Council of Aaland the right of direct recourse to this Council for its good offices. In asking admission to the League of Nations, Finland has shown her full appreciation of its intervention in the international disputes in which she has been involved, and the importance which she attaches to its great moral force. No doubt she will in the same way understand the use of its support for the settlement of internal differences to which the Aaland question may still give rise.

Instead of authorising the Aaland Islanders themselves to approach the Council of the League of Nations in the possible differences concerning the application of the guarantees, this right might be reserved to Sweden or to each of the three Scandinavian States. But we think Finland would prefer a procedure by which the Aalanders would not have to demand the intervention of a foreign Power. As to the part played by the Council of the League of Nations, we suppose that it would aim in the first instance at settling the difference submitted to it as an impartial mediator. But if this proved unsuccessful, Finland, as well as the Aaland Islanders, ought to have the opportunity of recourse to the International Court of Justice and request it to pronounce judgment.