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SPEECH BY MR. JØRGEN PEDER HANSEN, (SOC. DEM.,  
DENMARK,) BEFORE THE CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY

25th September - Afternoon



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Mr. President,

I have a message to you, Mr. President, and a message to all members of the Assembly and to all involved in our work. Perhaps you will find it a little unusual, but I am instructed by Mr. Zigdis and Michael Papaconstantinou to convey their greetings to all of us here in this Assembly.

The special background for this message is that I together with other members of the Scandinavian Parliaments went to Greece in August to meet - if possible - representatives from the coup-regime and investigate the actual political conditions in Greece....

We met with the Prime Minister, Mr. Kollias and the Minister for Internal Affairs, Mr. Patakus, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Economou - Grimaud and the Minister for Justice, Mr. Razakos.

I have, Mr. President, no message from them.

But we also met with some of our colleagues, now in house arrest or prison, my message is from them.

I visited these brave friends of ours in their temporary placements - the Amaroussi-barracks.

Here they are kept together with other Parliamentarians in Greece belonging to the Center Union, and together with the former chairman of the Council of the municipality of Athens and together with 3 generals and the Secretary General of the CU.

Some of the prisoners are very old, nearly 80, and some others are young of age. They are under arrest there, but they themselves do not know the reason why, nobody has told them, they are only sitting there without any official complaint against them.

Under what circumstances are they living?

There is no fresh air in the rooms, the sunshine and the daylight cannot get in. The windows have got shutters and they can only be opened from the outside. But, Mr. President, our friends legally chosen as members of the Greek parliament - which is out of order at present, their treatment at present in their custody, provides them with very small chances to see the sky and breathe the air. Twice one hour a day their exercise takes place in a garden so narrow and small that nobody here would accept the name "garden" for such a place. Everybody can easily understand it is not possible to maintain health under these circumstances. - They are living with the electric light on all day and night, light coming from a poor, dusty bulb without lampshade, hanging down from the ceiling. - Their sleeping-rooms are very small and stuffed with beds. 6 persons in each room. They are allowed to receive relatives twice a week - but not privately, gendarmes are present all the time. There will be more than 60 persons during such a visit-hour in that small room. Only once our friends have had the chance to get a little cool and fresh air, which happened during our stay with them.

- Our friends are allowed to read in jail. They may read the official newspapers, censored by the government. The government in Greece today decides which news is allowed to appear in the newspapers - they decide the headlines and they decide the priority of the news in the newspapers. - We must also remember, that the articles in the newspapers will only be written by people authorised by the government. - The prisoners are also allowed to read some newspapers from abroad, but they are censored in the way that they are full of holes. Very often the newspapers look like a framework of paper. In spite of this situation members of the coup-regime told us, there is freedom in Greece. - The Greek press of today is an expression of the government only. As an example of that, our friends are only able to read about the ancient Greece, but not dramas from the classic period, - "the chained Prometheus" by Ayschylos and works by some other poets from those days are forbidden in Greece today. But we saw, Mr. Chairman, "The chained Prometheus", because to us our friends and with them thousands of others are in fact chained Prometheus.

- They suffer much from these conditions. As mentioned by one of the prisoners, the older ones among them suffer physically by being locked up under these circumstances. The younger ones suffer psychologically, because they feel that their morale might be undermined without their possibility to realise it. They are afraid that their material conditions and ignorance about their destiny will cause the loss of their identity.

- Mr. Chairman, there are many ways to be inhuman. The present Greek government seems to be experts in several ways!

- You will understand from this, Mr. President, that our friends and colleagues suffer from inhuman conditions. But I am happy, Mr. President, to tell you that in spite of this our friends and colleagues have maintained their human dignity. And they have maintained a very strong belief in the fact that the present government in Greece can be only a short and unpleasant episode in the history of Greece. They all believe in a democratic Greece in the near future. Today thousands of brave Greeks are locked up under similar or even worse conditions.

- We have heard that the prisoners on the Isle of Yioura have been transferred to the Isle of Leros. I consider that to be an improvement, because in the Isle of Yioura the conditions were the poorest thinkable. There is no water on the island. The water had to be brought there by boat. There is no hospital for the hundreds of prisoners, who needed treatment. Only if the prisoners signed a declaration of loyalty it was possible to leave the island for medical care. In the declaration of loyalty they must tell if they know of somebody in their family or somewhere else who will be a communist or sympathisers of the communists. This demand has led to many tragedies.

- I know, Mr. President, about a well-known actress and a young girl suffering from very serious diseases, which need special care, and who are deprived this care, because they won't sign the notorious declaration.

- Most certainly many prisoners live under these conditions.

- In the prison of Averof, Andreas Papandreu is placed under very severe conditions. There is not doubt that the coup-regime tries to break his physical and psychological health. If he should break down in the prison it seems that the regime would be pleased. The regime promised us, that the trial against him would be a fair trial, the whole time for open doors, and that he would be allowed to speak under four eyes with his counsellor for the defence, and that there would be an opportunity for observers from abroad to follow the trial, and that it would be possible to call witnesses from Greece and eventually other countries, and that these should not feel threatened in any way.

- Mr. President, many other events could be mentioned from the darkened Greece of to-day. But let me only mention one more important question. The question is about the proclaimed constitution. The old one was so brutally put out of order on the 21st of April. The coup-regime claims that there will soon be issued a new constitution, and that they will hold a referendum about the question. It's obvious that a constitution, made by advocates, who the Greek coup-regime has chosen themselves for the purpose will not represent the views of the Greek people. It will only be a duplicate of the opinion of the government. The representatives of the people have not taken part in the preparations. The real representatives of the people are to-day locked up. They are silenced. Especially here in this Council we must be aware of this very important fact.

- I thank you, Mr. Chairman, because you have cancelled your travel to Athens this summer. I take it that you agree that no democrat can show the slightest sign of sympathy with a regime which attains its power by bayonets and not the least by the 200 tanks Mr. Patakos is in charge of, to a regime, which arrests and imprisons the democratic forces of the country, a regime, which by help of the secret police, informing, tapping the telephone and other police methods brings the opponents to silence.

- I am very glad to see the question about Greece put forward to the Commission of the Human Rights of the Council. I am very glad because it seems that the case is improving from a democratic point of view.

- With me many have been pleased to see the growing approval of this international trial, which everybody hopes will result in the fact that the Greek coup-regime of today is a pure dictatorship.

- The eyes of the whole world rest to-day upon the coup-regime of Greece, and here they should be fixed. Furthermore, we must remember, that the regime has threatened to break the commercial connections with the Scandinavian countries - which is against the international agreements, and which should also be followed by Greece. It is important that we all clearly understand that it is necessary to dissociate oneself from a coup-regime which has trampled the democracy so carelessly under foot. When we at the same time within different international organisations are co-operating with the country in

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question and the aim of such a co-operation is to defend the freedom of the people and their democratic rights. If we don't do so it is meaningless words in our part of the world, when we claim that democracy is a necessity for human beings.

- Now we have to decide on the draft resolution from the political Committee on Greece.

- It is my hope that the Assembly with great majority will pass the resolution and thereby underline the views expressed in it.

- The Scandinavian countries have placed the Greek question before the European Commission on Human Rights.

- We found this natural and we feel that it was not only necessary but also without such an act there would be no meaning with the Convention on Human Rights.

- The draft resolution expresses support for this initiative. We must remember, it is not only the result which the Commission will arrive at in due time . that is important. It is even more the fact that the Greek Junta is accused for violation of the Greek constitution and the fundamental Human Rights.

The eyes of the world will be directed towards the Junta in Athens as long as the case is pursued. The Junta will know quite precisely that we condemn them and their acts that we feel they don't belong in the democratic family of the Council of Europe.

- It will be of significant political importance that the Assembly with full strength support the draft resolution including the initiative taken by the Scandinavian countries.

The voice of the Council of Europe must be outspoken and full of strength. It must be heard in Athens - in London - in Washington and all over where democratic thinking and feeling people are living. The voice of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg must be so strong that it is heard by our friends in the Greek prisons. We must make them feel that they are not left alone. We must strengthen their belief in democracy and assure them of our solidarity in their fight for a better future for the great Greek people.