It is an honour for me to have this opportunity of addressing you this evening in this assembly. The Paasikivi Society is named after a statesman whose achievements for his own country in times of peril, and thus too for all the Nordic countries, have an important place in history. It is a source of satisfaction that it has been possible to continue to pursue with vigour and resolution President Paasikivi's chosen main line of foreign policy.

My task this evening, however, is not to comment upon Finland's foreign policy but to speak of Sweden's. I want to try to explain, in the light of our country's special circumstances, what is our view of and how we apply our policy of neutrality in the world today. Our foreign policy has sometimes been characterized as a policy of non-alliance, sometimes as a policy of neutrality, sometimes as both. Specialists on international law have objected to the designation policy of neutrality's maintaining that neutrality refers to a state or condition in war-time and that, properly speaking, it ought not therefore to be used to describe a country's foreign policy in peacetime. I am not myself an expert on international law, but I venture nevertheless to subscribe to the judgment made by my predecessor Osten Undén a number of years ago. He, even though thoroughly familiar with international law, found that the objection referred to had not sufficient weight. As a matter of fact, the alternative expressions 'non-alliance' or 'policy of non-alliance' might give rise to misunderstandings. Formrale, of course, a State can conduct a policy of non-alliance and yet not have the definite aim of preserving its neutrality in war-time. If, as Sweden, a country is firmly resolved to defend its neutrality even in the face of strong external pressure, the term »policy of neutrality« seems a more correct description. This is not saying that one cannot use the variant »a policy of non-alliance« but in such a case it should be made clear that the aim of this policy is neutrality in war-time. What is essential –

*) Address to the Paasikivi Society in Helsinki on March 11th, 1965.
(English translation of above article on the same subject.)
whether we use the one or the other designation for our policy – is that it should be framed in such a way that the world at large has confidence in our determination and ability to maintain our neutrality.

We all know that many nations in the world of today are striving to pursue a policy of neutrality and that there is some variation in how the import and obligations of such a policy are interpreted. Probably the strictest exponent of neutrality is Switzerland, which has found membership of the United Nations incompatible with its neutrality. Formally, it is of course true that such membership does mean a fundamental curtailment of a policy of neutrality, since a member state cannot avoid participation in military actions agreed upon by the Great Powers in the United Nation’s Security Council. In practice, however, this limitation has not so far given rise to any difficulties for neutral states that are members of the United Nations. Sweden, for its part, has found a policy of neutrality perfectly compatible with active support to the United Nations. We are very anxious to be able to supplement our efforts to preserve the peace of our own country by doing whatever even a small country can do within the framework of the world organization to help to preserve peace in general.

Sweden’s policy of neutrality differs, further more, from that of several other neutral States in that it has not been laid down in our Constitution or in any kind of agreement with outside Powers. It is a policy of our choosing that has evolved from our own historical experience and one that, theoretically, we might abandon without consulting other states. You may well ask the question whether there is a risk that this lack of formal ties will make our line of neutrality less firm than that of states whose neutrality is guaranteed or bound by treaty. Any claim however that such is the case can be refuted by the fact that the tradition of neutrality is so strongly anchored in our history and in popular opinion that any attempt to abandon it would meet with overwhelming resistance. When on occasion certain Swedish politicians have entertained thoughts that have appeared difficult to reconcile with our line of neutrality, they have soon found out that such deviations have not had any prospects of success. There is agreement between all the democratic parties in Sweden on the main lines of our foreign policy and that this policy must be supported by a strong defence. We regard it as a great asset for our country that its foreign and defence policy has a secure basis in popular opinion and is supported by strong domestic unity.