

**Secret**

25X1



DIRECTORATE OF  
INTELLIGENCE

# *WEEKLY SUMMARY*

## *Special Report*

*Finland's Controversial President Kekkonen*  
*A Certainty for Re-election*

**Secret**

№ 40

5 January 1968

No. 0001/68A

25X1

Approved For Release 2005/02/14 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006200040003-9

Approved For Release 2005/02/14 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006200040003-9

SECRET

## FINLAND'S CONTROVERSIAL PRESIDENT KEKKONEN--A CERTAINTY FOR RE-ELECTION

In mid-January, Finnish voters will begin an electoral process that is certain to culminate in the formal re-election a month later of President Urho Kekkonen to another six-year term in office. Kekkonen, who has been president since 1956, has no serious challengers--largely because aspiring Finnish politicians do not want to jeopardize their future prospects in a race they cannot win. Kekkonen does not dominate the Finnish political scene because of his personal image, but rather because of his success in maintaining a cordial relationship with Moscow, a policy he has convinced the Finnish people is a necessity for survival. The Soviet leadership in turn has made it clear that he is one of the few Finnish politicians who enjoys their confidence and support.

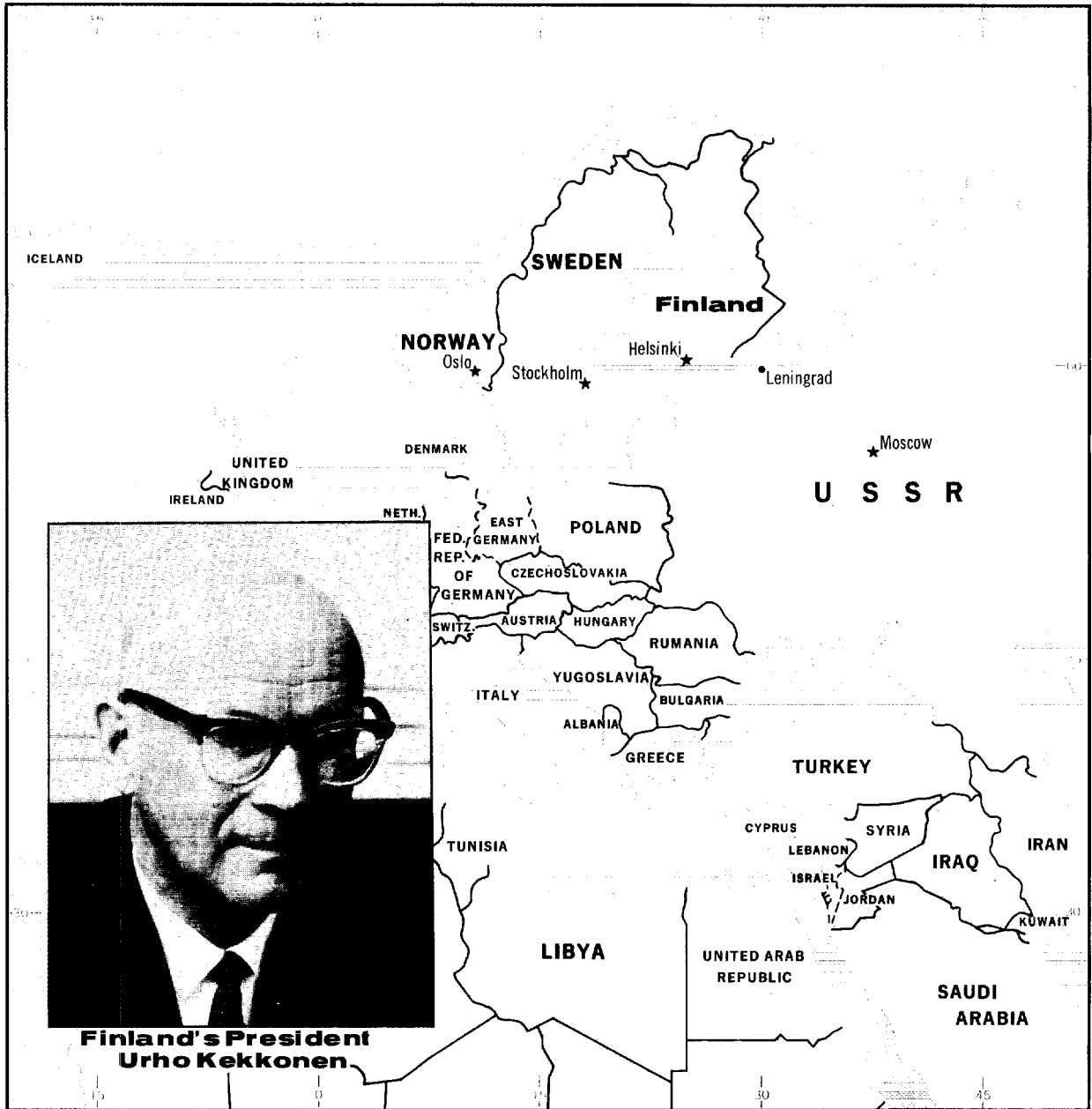
The next six years are likely to see a continuation of Finland's foreign policy, the main elements of which are standing aside from disputes involving the major powers and avoiding any action that would bring into question Finland's commitment to a policy of friendship and cooperation with Moscow. Recognizing that the Soviets require something more than verbal assurances on this score, Kekkonen can be expected periodically to make initiatives in the foreign policy field which his Scandinavian neighbors and others in the West will not like but which may gain him credit in Moscow.

### The Finnish Presidency-- Past and Present

The Finnish constitution gives supreme executive power to the president, and he appoints the premier and cabinet. Unlike most other European presidents, the Finnish president is a "strong" chief executive and the constitution specifies that he has the responsibility to "determine the relations of Finland to foreign powers."

In domestic affairs, the Finnish president has traditionally been regarded as a sort of pater familias who is expected to rise above partisan considerations and deal evenhandedly with all political, social, and economic groups. Because of his foreign as well as his domestic policies, Kekkonen has been a controversial president; although he commands strong support from many, he is deeply distrusted by others.

SECRET



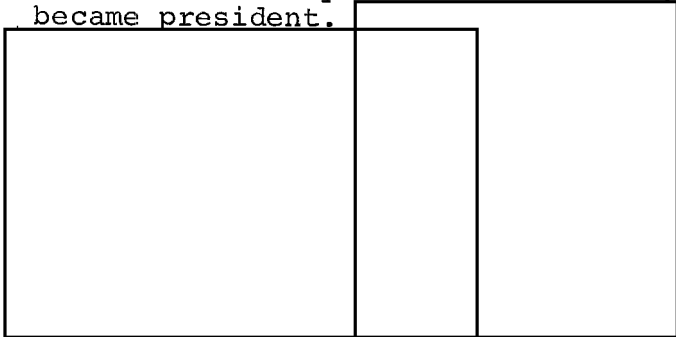
69072 1-68

SECRET

Finland has had eight presidents during its 50 years of independence. Whether a result of the development of the Finnish constitution and form of government or of the crises in domestic or foreign relations that have beset each president, almost all of the eight have been forceful personalities who have left a deep imprint on Finnish history. Kekkonen has been no exception.

Kekkonen--The Man  
And His Record

Kekkonen became president in 1956, succeeding J. K. Paasikivi, who is remembered in Finland for his success in stabilizing Helsinki's relations with the Soviet Union in the precarious years immediately after World War II. Even after 11 years in office, Kekkonen is still a controversial political figure because he has been unable or unwilling to rise above partisan interests and remains closely identified with the Center (Agrarian) Party which he headed for a number of years before he became president.



For years, he cooperated with the Soviets in maintaining the fiction that the rival Social Democrats did not support

Finland's official policy of friendly relations with Moscow, with the result that this major political party was barred from participation in the government for nearly eight years. By this means, he perpetuated the hegemony of his Center Party over the Finnish political scene, and prevented the emergence of a Social Democratic leader who might effectively challenge his hold on the presidency.

During his tenure, he has narrowed the limits of debate over foreign policy to a point where free discussion has been all but stifled, to be replaced by the reiteration of sterile, wooden formulations more characteristic of Soviet sloganeering than of the give and take associated with a democracy. Kekkonen justifies this approach on grounds that Finland's relations with the Soviet Union are of such overriding importance that all domestic and foreign policy issues must be subordinated to the primary goal of keeping relations with Moscow on an even keel.

Nevertheless, even those who are critical of him concede that there have been positive aspects to his tenure as president. Relations with the Soviet Union are stable, and a modus vivendi apparently has been established--admittedly at the cost of certain concessions to nationalist pride.

Kekkonen has also opened to debate a question that has long divided Finnish society: the role

SECRET

25X1  
25X1

SECRET

of the Communists in contemporary Finland. This is a controversial subject in the light of the history of embittered relations between the descendants of the victorious "Whites" and the defeated "Reds" of the civil war in 1918. Kekkonen has stressed reconciliation and the need to integrate the Communists into society, saying that a democracy can ill afford to treat a fifth of the electorate as second-class citizens merely because they hold a different political viewpoint.

He has sought to persuade and reassure the strongly anti-Communist elements by noting that many Communists loyally served Finland in recent wars with the Soviet Union. The Finnish Communists themselves increasingly appear to accept the view that their goals can be achieved only by parliamentary means and are turning away from the idea of overthrowing the existing form of government. A large segment of Finnish society remains unconvinced by Kekkonen's arguments and regards the Communists as disloyal and subordinate to Moscow, but suspicions and hatreds of the past have been reduced somewhat.

In the current presidential race, the field is limited to Kekkonen and two minor contenders--Matti Virkkunen, the Conservative Party candidate, and the maverick Veikko Vennamo, who has been feuding with Kekkonen and the Center Party for years. The lopsidedness of the race has been made even more pronounced by the fact that Kekkonen

is the candidate of the three major parties in Prime Minister Paasio's coalition government: the Social Democrats, the Center Party, and the Communist-front SKDL. In addition, Kekkonen has the independent backing of the Liberal Party as well as substantial support within the Swedish People's Party. The most recent poll showed 72 percent of the population supporting his candidacy.

#### Kekkonen's View of Foreign Relations--The East

Kekkonen's views on the important question of Finnish-Soviet relations have gone through a striking evolution. In March 1940 at the time of the Winter War, he was one of only three parliamentary deputies who favored rejecting the Soviet armistice terms and continuing the fight. During World War II and the years immediately thereafter, however, Kekkonen reanalyzed his views on Finland's foreign policy. He concluded that, to survive, the nation would have to put aside the enmity of centuries and do everything possible to establish and maintain an amicable relationship with the Soviet Union.

In common with his predecessor, former president Paasikivi, Kekkonen now contends that the traditional Russian concern with Finland has been of a strategic, self-protective nature. Thus Kekkonen now argues, the Russians in 1939 had a legitimate interest in seeking to alter the border so that they could better defend Leningrad against a German

SECRET

SECRET

assault. Although this objective was finally achieved when the Soviets redrew the border after World War II, it nevertheless remains imperative, in Kekkonen's view, for the Finns to demonstrate clearly that their independence does not constitute a potential threat to Soviet security--indeed, that it contributes to it by stabilizing the situation in northern Europe.

Kekkonen often lectures the Finns on the need to come to terms with the past and to accept the reality of Finland's geographical position. In a speech earlier this year to Lutheran clergymen, he reviewed Finland's past and present position in Europe, and particularly its relationships with the major powers. He reminded this conservative-minded and traditionally anti-Soviet group that Finland's so-called "eastern problem" is not of recent vintage. It is, he noted, the centuries-old problem of establishing a stable relationship with the neighbor to the east--"irrespective of whether its name has been Novgorod, Moscow, Russia, or the Soviet Union."

Kekkonen believes that the roots of potential conflict between the USSR and Finland have to a large extent been removed as a result of two post-war developments. First, the 1947 Peace Treaty under which both countries pledge not to join an alliance hostile to the other; second, the 1948 Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance, which com-

mits Finland to resist an attack against its own territory--or against the Soviet Union through Finland--by Germany or any power allied with it.

Although Finnish officials stress that the preamble of this latter agreement clearly declares Finland's desire to stay outside conflicts of interest between the major powers, the ambiguous wording--especially of that portion calling for "consultations" in the event that one party believes a threat of attack exists--raises doubts about Finland's ability to remain uninvolved if Moscow were determined otherwise.

#### Foreign Relations--The West

Kekkonen's attitude toward the West is colored by his view of Finland's military vulnerability and his belief that Helsinki can expect no outside assistance in the event of a crisis in relations with the Soviet Union. This position contrasts sharply with that of the other Scandinavian countries, for Denmark and Norway are members of NATO, and neutral Sweden has developed modern military defenses likely to give pause to a potential aggressor.

Although Finland is outside Western defense arrangements, Kekkonen probably appreciates NATO's role as a counterweight to what might otherwise be Soviet military and political domination of most of Europe. At the same time, he has indicated concern about certain NATO military activities in northern Europe

SECRET

SECRET

which he believes the USSR might regard as provocative. As far as Norway's and Denmark's membership in NATO is concerned, he insists that it is unrealistic to expect them to leave the alliance after 1969. He may, in fact, regard their continued membership as an essential element in the "balance" existing in northern Europe--offset by Sweden's policy of nonalliance and Finland's policy of neutrality and friendship with the Soviet Union.

His attitude toward the US is compounded of acknowledgement of the military shield it provides the European allies, along with his belief that its power cannot effectively be brought to bear to ease Soviet pressures on Finland. He probably regards the US military presence in Europe as a positive factor, if for no other reason than that it serves to keep a resurgent West Germany in check.

Kekkonen is especially concerned about the German question, because it could have a direct bearing on Finland's future relations with the Soviet Union. The German-Soviet relationship historically has been a fateful one for Finland. In 1939 the nonaggression pact between the two powers assigned Finland to the Soviet sphere of influence and paved the way for the Winter War. The postwar treaties Finland was compelled to sign with the Soviet Union are all directed at preventing Germany or its allies from threatening the security of the USSR or Finland. The continuing sensitivity of the

German issue for Finland accounts for Helsinki's not having established formal diplomatic relations with either East or West Germany.

Kekkonen has periodically floated proposals with the apparent purpose of demonstrating to the Soviets his concern about developments in northern Europe. In late 1965, he proposed the creation of a nuclear-free zone in the Scandinavian area, claiming that this would merely confirm the existing situation. He has also advocated--without being specific--a Finnish-Norwegian treaty for the "defense of the neutrality" of the northernmost areas of the two countries--the so-called North Calotte. Neither proposal generated any enthusiasm, however, for the Scandinavians tend to be skeptical of Kekkonen's forays into foreign policy, suspecting a Soviet push behind Finnish initiatives.

#### After Kekkonen

Kekkonen, at 67, has been in good health, but recently there have been reports that he is showing signs of fatigue and strain. This may account for his assertion that the forthcoming presidential election will definitely be his last.

He does not appear to have selected an heir but there are reports that Foreign Minister Ahti Karjalainen, a Center Party member and Kekkonen protégé, is the leading contender. A rather colorless professional economist by training and a technician rather than a politician,

SECRET



SECRET

Karjalainen has no broad political base and seems to lack the drive and forcefulness that the presidency requires. Although Karjalainen sees eye to eye with his mentor on foreign policy, especially with regard to relations with the USSR, there are some indications that the Soviets may not regard him highly.

In recent months, Soviet officials are reported to have advised the Finnish Communist Party that a candidate from "the working movement" should be groomed for the 1974 election. Neither the Finnish Communists nor the Soviets, however, are likely to harbor any illusions about the prospects of a Communist winning in a free election. They may hope that before

the next elections relations between the Communists and the dominant Social Democrats will have improved to a point where it will be possible for the two parties to agree on a joint presidential candidate.

Regardless of who succeeds Kekkonen, the guidelines within which he will have to operate in conducting Finland's foreign relations are likely to remain fairly rigid. For Kekkonen and his successors, the overriding concern will remain the Soviet Union and the ordering of relations with Moscow in such a manner as to leave no doubt of Finland's good will and commitment to maintain good relations with its neighbor.

25X1

\* \* \*

SECRET

---

Approved For Release 2005/02/14 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006200040003-9

**Secret**

**Secret**

Approved For Release 2005/02/14 : CIA-RDP79-00927A006200040003-9