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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
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CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Election of Finnish Presidential Electors
On 15 January 1962.

1. Offices to be filled: 300 presidential electors who will meet on 15 February to choose a president.

2. Background and principal issues: This is the regular presidential election held every six years. Although Finland has a parliamentary form of government, its constitution gives the president special responsibilities for conducting the country's foreign policy.

Developments in the last few weeks have reduced this election to a formal endorsement of President Kekkonen's policies for maintaining good relations with the USSR. All of Kekkonen's opponents, including Olavi Honka who has withdrawn from the campaign, agree on the overriding need to maintain such relations but differ with him on domestic questions. Moscow's interest in having Kekkonen re-elected was emphasized by the Soviet note of 30 October calling for military consultations, by the demand for assurances that Finland would continue its policy of friendly neutrality, and by the postponing of military talks after Kekkonen had gone to see Khrushchev in Novosibirsk.

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3. Principal parties in Finland:

| <u>Right</u> | Seats in Parliament (Elected 1958) |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Conservatives..... | 29 |
| <u>Right of Center</u> | |
| Small Farmers' party..... | 1 |
| Agrarians..... | 47 |
| <u>Center</u> | |
| Swedish People's party..... | 14 |
| Finnish People's party..... | 8 |
| <u>Left of Center</u> | |
| Social Democratic party..... | 37 |
| Social Democratic Opposition... | 14 |
| <u>Left</u> | |
| Finnish People's Democratic League (Communist-front).... | 50 |

4. Candidates:

Urho Kekkonen: incumbent and candidate of the Agrarian and Finnish People's parties.

Rafael Paasio: chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of parliament, a moderate Social Democrat not associated with the dominant Tanner-Leskinen wing of the party. This latter group is constantly castigated by the USSR as being anti-Soviet.

Emil Skog : candidate of the Opposition Social Democrats.

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Paavio Aitio: candidate of the Communist-front Finnish People's Democratic League.

The Social Democrats, the Conservatives, the Finnish People's party, the Swedish People's party, and the Small Farmers' party had formed a five-party coalition backing the candidacy of Olavi Honka, former attorney-general of Finland and not a member of any party. However, on 24 November Honka withdrew from the race in an effort to demonstrate that the Finnish people wholeheartedly supported President Kekkonen's policy of friendship with the USSR. Moscow had indicated it would consider a defeat for Kekkonen as signifying a change in Finland's attitude toward the USSR. The Honka coalition, which already before his withdrawal had been subject to strains, broke up. The Social Democrats then nominated Paasio; the Finnish People's party endorsed Kekkonen; the Conservatives decided to run uncommitted electors; the Swedish People's party is allowing its local branches to determine their own course of action; and the Small Farmers' party withdrew from the presidential race.

5. Informed opinion on election outcome:

Kekkonen may not receive the 151 votes needed for his re-election as president on the first ballot of the electoral college, since each elector on the initial ballot will vote for the candidate under whose banner he ran. However, Kekkonen was the favorite even before the Soviet note, and a majority of Finns evidently now feel that the country cannot risk defeating the candidate obviously favored by the USSR. The withdrawal of Honka and the breakup of the coalition behind him make Kekkonen's victory in February certain.

A better indication of the actual political divisions in Finland will be seen in the parliamentary election of 4-5 February. This election, which was to be held in the summer of 1962, was

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re-scheduled for February by President Kekkonen in an effort to produce for the USSR the assurances it was demanding regarding the continuity of Finland's policy of friendly neutrality.

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