

MEMORANDUM

October 19, 1995

To: Jeremy Gunn

From: Eric Scheinkopf

Re: Finland and intelligence agencies

Finland is an interesting location for intelligence agencies to conduct operations. During the Cold War, Finland was a nation that had to walk a delicate line between not offending the Soviet Union while retaining a degree of independence. Finland managed to retain much of its freedoms and democratic values in domestic affairs. Because Finland escaped the "satellite status" that Eastern Europe had to endure, it would therefore be much easier for Western intelligence agencies to operate there than it would be in Iron Curtain nations.

In Cold Warrior, Tom Mangold notes that Finland "was considered an easy-duty training assignment for KGB officers who needed supervision by headquarters." While that may be true, Finland is still an important intelligence outpost and for purposes of the ARRB's activities it is also important as it was in Helsinki that Oswald received his visa to enter the USSR. As Nechiporenko noted, the Soviet consulate in Helsinki issued visas "quickly." Nechiporenko attributed this to the closeness of Finland, location-wise, to the USSR as well as to the "good relations" that existed between the Soviet travel bureau, Intourist, and the local Finnish travel agencies.

With regard to Soviet relations with Finland, Oleg Kalugin acknowledges in his book, The First Directorate, that KGB penetration of the intelligence services in Finland has been widely reported. But while Kalugin describes the top levels of the Finnish government as being "riddled" with Soviet agents, (these "moles" would help the USSR if they thought it was in Finland's interests to do so) these same people would "snub" the KGB if they thought that was necessary. Kalugin writes that he was not impressed with the Finns attitude toward the KGB. While Kalugin writes that some Russian intelligence people were proud of their "deep penetration in Finland" Kalugin said "What kind of agents do we have there if they don't let us work aggressively against the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki? Real agents would help our work, and the Finns don't do that." The conclusion one can draw is that while the Finns had to cooperate with the Russians in order to preserve their independence, this same desire to preserve their independence will cause them to resist certain Russian requests. Finland was a cooperative neighbor of the USSR but not a satellite.

Other sources echo this viewpoint. While the KGB may have boasted about "active measures," its activities in Finland were, on occasion, hampered. The Finnish Security Police, which was outnumbered by Soviet intelligence officers, did bring a series of KGB and GRU individuals "to

book.” According to Christopher Andrews and Oleg Gordievsky in their book KGB - The Inside Story Finnish President Urho Kaleva Kekkonen never intervened in any of these cases. An old Finnish proverb expressed this best - “A Russian is a Russian, even when cooked in butter.”

However, the case of Finnish President Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, who was President from 1956-1981, was an interesting one. In KGB - The Inside Story, it is noted that the KGB regarded him as its highest ranking agent during and after the Cold War. However, it would be a mistake to say that he was in the Soviets “hip-pocket” so to speak. Kekkonen was one of many Finnish politicians who saw private Soviet contacts as a wise addition to their careers. While Kekkonen treated the KGB resident in such a way, he still did nothing to harm his nation’s independence. If Kekkonen suspected a Finnish official of doing so, that official was “sidelined” as soon as possible.

Despite these difficulties with Kekkonen and the ability of Finnish officials to maintain their nation’s independence, Finland was a nation heavily infiltrated by the USSR. By the 1970s the KGB had more people regarded as agents and “confidential contacts” there than in all the other First Chief Directorate Third Department nations combined (Britain, Ireland, Australasia and the rest of Scandinavia). Helsinki was also the location for a Soviet front organization called the World Peace Council which was expelled from Paris and Vienna for “subversive activities.” It set itself up in Helsinki in 1968.

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